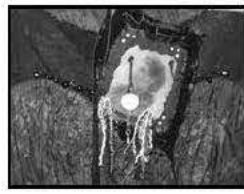




**HITCHCOCK AT HILLCREST**  
Diplopods and Walking Sticks /  
Page 7



**APPAREL ART**  
Outre blend of old and new /  
Page 12

LAKE PLEASANT MILLERS FALLS MONTAGUE CENTER MONTAGUE CITY TURNERS FALLS

# The Montague Reporter

YEAR 5 - NO. 23

also serving Gill, Erving and Wendell

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THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

MARCH 15, 2007

## Creative Economy Workshop Coming to a Theater Near You

**CHRISTOPHER SAWYER-LAUCANNO**  
**TURNERS FALLS**

Over the last several years, Montague has become the site of a burgeoning, and now flourishing, art culture. Painters, sculptors, photographers, ceramicists, writers, musicians and fiber artists all make their homes or have their studios in Montague. Turners Falls RiverCulture, the umbrella organization that seeks to unite aspects of the creative economy and push the town forward as a place for art and artists, has increasingly focused on marketing Turners Falls as a destination for art, and on marketing its artists to the larger world. The latest development on this front is a statewide Creative Economy Workshop to be held on Tuesday, April 10th, from 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Shea Theater on Avenue A.



*Joseph Thompson, director of MassMOCAs, is set to deliver the keynote address at noon during the Creative Economy Workshop at the Shea Theater on Tuesday, April 10th.*

The workshop, entitled "How Creative is Your Downtown?" is sponsored by the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (MDI); the Massachusetts Cultural Council; and Artist Link.

MDI is a newly-created division of Massachusetts Housing and Community Development (MHCD). Its mission is to provide assistance

**WORKSHOP pg 14**

## GMRS D RESCINDS ANOTHER VOTE

MONTAGUE SIXTH GRADERS STILL TO MOVE TO MIDDLE SCHOOL. TOWN MEETINGS TO CONSIDER INTRA-DISTRICT CHOICE, BUT SHEFFIELD STUDENTS MAY CHOICE TO GILL REGARDLESS



*School Committee members (left to right) Kris Boyle, Ted Castro-Santos, Deb Bourbeau, Mike Langknecht, Superintendent Sue Gee and Mary Kociela confer before the March 13th meeting*

**BY LISA MERKEL** - At the March 13th meeting, the Gill-Montague school committee rescinded their vote of January 23rd, 2007 to designate Montague Center and Sheffield elementary schools as kindergarten through fifth grade schools, and to move the Sheffield sixth grade to Great Falls Middle School. They subsequently passed a motion made

by Mike Langknecht to proceed with the plan to move the Sheffield sixth graders to the middle school.

On February 13th, the committee had voted to return to the present grade school configuration by rescinding a vote of December 19th, 2006 that would have closed part of Hillcrest School. But they neglected to rescind the January 23rd vote at the

same time.

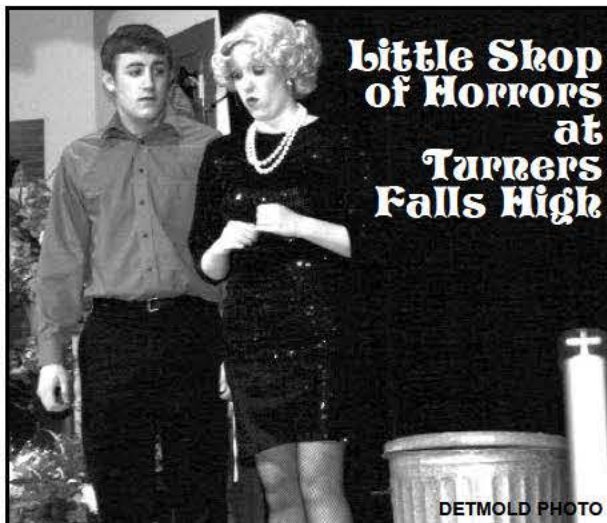
The complicated process to correct that oversight began when Richard Colton asked the committee to re-affirm its consensus, stated unanimously at public meetings last fall, favoring a broad grade span configuration for all district schools. At the elementary level, the school committee has frequently construed "broad grade span" to mean "K-

5, or K-6."

As the committee embarked on a review of their stated policy on broad grade span schools, questions arose about the exact meaning of the committee's February 13th decision to rescind the elementary school configuration they had adopted only six weeks before, on December 19th, to close part of

see **SCHOOLS pg 13**

## INVASION OF THE BOTANY MAJORS



**Little Shop of Horrors at Turners Falls High**

*Ben Garber and Cbelsea Isles star as Seymour and Audrey in Melissa Urey's production of Little Shop of Horrors.*

**BY DAVID DETMOLD** Remember at the end of the Steve McQueen classic *The Blob*, a giant question mark begs the audience to imagine what

might happen if the North Pole ever unfroze, along with the extraterrestrial glob of ectoplasm that had our heroes trapped

see **THEATER pg 14**

## Community

**BY SARAH THAYER** - What would you like to see in an ideal community center facility? This question, posed at the Gill-Montague senior center last Tuesday night, March 6th, generated a deluge of ideas; a brainstorm in the truest sense of the word. A public forum was held to get community input on a proposed community center in Montague to be shared by the senior center, the library and the parks and recreation department.

Facilitated by Michael Bosworth, business manager of the Brick House, and attended by 30 - 40 community members, the meeting was divided into

four sections. First came presentations by directors of the library, the senior center and the parks and recreation

department about the various needs their organizations are facing. They all described shortcomings in their current facilities and enthusiasm about an opportunity to address

those needs with a shared facility.

The library has already explored plans for renovation of the historic Carnegie Library on Avenue A; cost estimates

ran between \$4.6 and \$6.4 million to add a new wing to that building. The difficulty of adding onto an historic building led the library trustees to see **CENTER pg 9**

## Center Public Forum



*Left to right (facing front): Mike Sabarceski, Dennis Grader, Bunny Caldwell, Sue SanSoucie and Pat Allen participate in the March 6th community center public forum.*

**PET OF THE WEEK**

Here's Lookin at You



**Sugar**

Sugar is a three-year-old female Siamese cat in need of a good home. If you're looking for unusual, your taste might lean toward Sugar. We've seen Siamese cats, but never one like her come through Dakin. First you see her big round astonishingly blue kittenish eyes and then you'll notice her curious tortoiseshell points. Sugar is a friendly and happy cat, quick to purr and OK about being held.

For more information on adopting Sugar, please contact the Dakin Pioneer Valley

Humane Society at 413-548-9898 or via email at [lev-erett@dpvhs.org](mailto:lev-erett@dpvhs.org).

**PRECINCT 5 MEETING**

A meeting for town meeting members from downtown Turners (precinct 5) and downtown residents will be held on Sunday, March 18th, at 4:30 p.m., at 177 Avenue A, to discuss issues affecting our precinct and the town. For more information: call 863-9296. Precinct 5 is seeking three more candidates to run for town meeting this year. Come and meet your town meeting representatives, and tell them what's on your mind.

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**SLATE LIBRARY NEWS**

**Puppets and Storytelling**

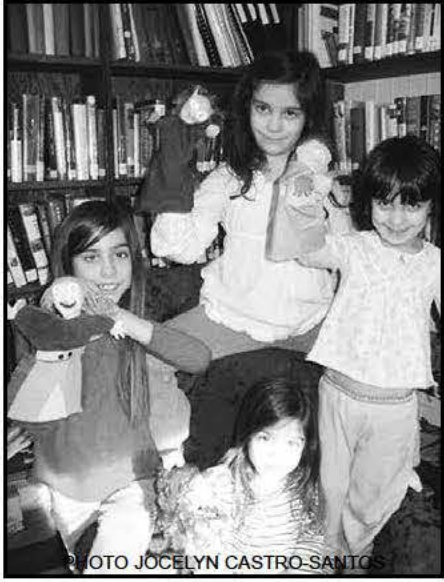


PHOTO JOCELYN CASTRO-SANTOS

Visitors at Slate Library in Gill hold puppets completed during a five week hand puppet workshop held on Mondays after school.

Spring Flowers, April 24th - Colors

Each storyhour has a corresponding art project and healthy snack!

Pictured right: Katie and Julie Sprinkle and Chloe and Maia Castro-Santos.

**Upcoming Events at the Slate Library**

Please note that Slate continues to host its CPC funded story hour every Tuesday morning at 10:00 a.m. The upcoming line-up includes: March 20th - Hats, March 27th - Maple Syrup, April 3rd - Dinosaurs, April 10th - Nature, April 17th -



LINDA HICKMAN PHOTO

**TURNERS FALLS** - Twins Derek and Daniel Lenois of Greenfield enjoyed modeling the St. Patrick's Day hats they made at the Preschool Story Hour on Wednesday, March 14th at the Carnegie Library.

The Montague Congregational Church of Montague will hold its annual

**Sugar on Snow supper on March 31st** at 6 p.m. Menu includes cornbeef hash, baked beans, cole slaw, Havard Beets, homemade breads and donuts, beverage, dill pickles. Ripley Farms will provide the maple sugar. Adults are \$9.00 and children under 12 are \$4.00. Reservations should be made by calling: 413-774-7256. Walk-ins are seated as space allows.

**Used Cell Phones Wanted for Seniors**

**MONTAGUE** - Calling all cell phones! The Montague TRIAD/S.A.L.T. Council are collecting used cell phones. These cell phones will then be distributed to elders in Montague, Gill and Erving for

911 calls only. Please help us by dropping your used cell phone at the Montague Senior Center or Turners Falls Fire Station. Cell phones will be refurbished and assigned to elders who need one. Volunteers will explain

how they should be used. Seniors wishing to receive a phone need to call the Senior Center to be notified of the exact date, time and place where you can pick up a phone. Questions? Call 413-863-9357.

**SENIOR CENTER ACTIVITIES March 19th - March 23rd**

**MONTAGUE Senior Center**, 62 Fifth St., Turners Falls, is open Mon. - Fri. from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. for activities and congregate meals. Make meal reservations a day in advance by 11 a.m. Messages can be left on the machine when the center is closed (863-9357). Mealsite manager is Chris Richer. The center offers a hot noon meal weekdays to any senior. Transportation to the center can be provided. Special trip coordinator is Jean Chase. Make trip reservations by calling 772-6356. Payment and menu choice is due three weeks prior to trip.

**Monday, 19th**  
9-11 a.m. Foot Screening  
10:00 a.m. Aerobics  
11:00 a.m. Easy Aerobics  
1:00 p.m. Canasta  
**Tuesday, 20th**  
Hemoglobin A1C Screening  
9:30 a.m. T'ai Chi

10:00 a.m. Brown Bag  
1:00 p.m. Council on Aging  
**Wednesday, 21st**  
9-11 a.m. Foot Screening  
10:00 a.m. Senior Aerobics  
11:15 a.m. Mealsite Meeting  
12:45 p.m. Bingo  
**Thursday, 22nd**  
Hemoglobin A1C Screening  
1:00 p.m. Pitch  
**Friday, 23rd**  
10:00 a.m. Senior Aerobics  
11 a.m. Easy Aerobics  
1:00 p.m. St. Patrick's Day Party. Wear your green! Music, food, fun. Ron Quinlin is back to play music for dancing.

**ERVING Senior Center**, 18 Pleasant St., Erving (Old Center School, 1st Floor), is open Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. for activities and congregate meals. For information and reservations call Polly Kiely, Senior Center director at 413 423-3308. Lunch daily

at 11:30 a.m. with reservations a day in advance by 11:00 a.m. Transportation can be provided for meals, Thursday shopping, or medical necessity by calling Dana Moore at 978 544-3898.

**Monday, 19th**  
9:30 a.m. Exercise  
9:45 a.m. Library  
12 Noon Pitch  
**Tuesday, 20th**  
9 a.m. Aerobics  
12:30 p.m. Painting  
**Wednesday, 21st**  
9:30 a.m. Line Dancing  
12 Noon Bingo  
**Thursday, 22nd**  
9 a.m. Aerobics  
12:30 p.m. Shopping

**WENDELL Senior Center**, located in the town offices on Wendell Depot Rd. Call Kathy Swaim at 978 544-2020 for info, schedule of events or to coordinate transportation.

**FACES & PLACES**

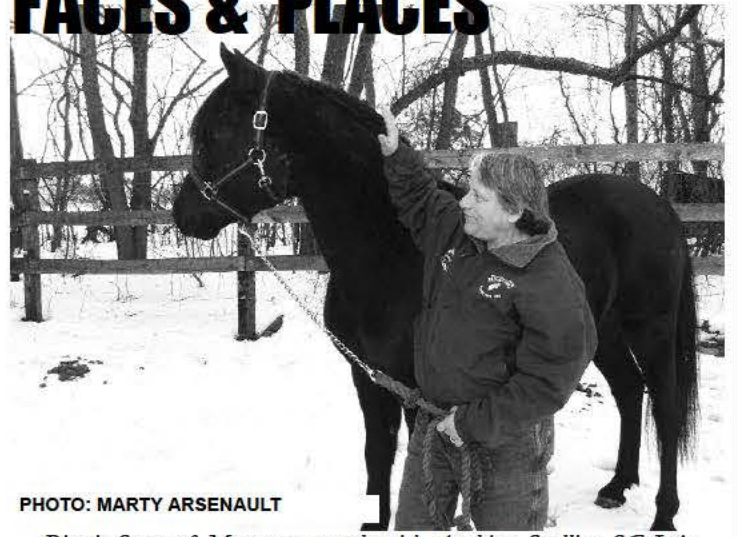


PHOTO: MARTY ARSENAULT

Pinnie Sears of Montague stands with Arabian Stallion SG Jet's Shadon, owned by Billye Davis. Pinnie is one of seven guest speakers at the NEECA New & Used Tack and Equipment Sale & Equine Expo on Saturday, March 24th from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Athol-Orange Elks, 2A, Orange, MA. For more information go to the website [www.equinecenter.org](http://www.equinecenter.org), or call Marty Arsenault at (978) 544-9944.

**Montague Reporter Friends Meeting**

The Friends of the Montague Reporter will meet on Monday, April 9th, at 7 p.m. at 24 3rd Street. Come one, come all. Make

some new friends and help support your community newspaper! All are welcome! Call 413-863-8666 for more info.

**Tranquility Zone**

BY SHAY COOPER

**WENDELL** - Readers are cordially invited to attend the first of an ongoing monthly "Tranquility Zone," an hour of music, meditation and prayer from the Writings of the Holy Scriptures of the World; Zoroastrian, Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Christian, Islam, Baha'i. The first meeting will focus on the theme of Peace. The time is Sunday, March 25th, at 10:00 a.m. at the home of Shay and Charles Cooper, 71

Kentfield Road in Wendell. Brunch will follow. Sponsored by the Baha'is of Wendell. Please call 978-544-2190 for more information or directions.

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# Nature Appreciation Rubs Off at Discovery Center

**BY LINDA HICKMAN**  
**TURNERS FALLS** - William Thompson of Turners Falls enjoyed making tree rubbings at the Great Falls Discovery Center during the half day after school program held on Wednesday, March 14th. The program is a collaboration of the Great Falls Discovery Center, the Kids Place after school program, the Montague Public Libraries and the Family Literacy in Montague project of the Montague Catholic Social Ministries, funded by the Community Development Block Grant for the Town of Montague.



LINDA HICKMAN PHOTO

## WMECO Extends Cut-off Date

Western Massachusetts Electric Company (WMECO) has extended its Winter Protection Plan until April 30th, for income eligible customers at the request of the Massachusetts Department of Telecommunications and Energy. With the extension, the company's limited-income residential customers with past due bills can receive protection for an additional 45 days from electric service shutoff to their home.

To be protected from shutoff, customers must be income eligible and have an established payment arrangement with WMECO. Income eligibility is defined as having a household income of up to 200 percent of the federal poverty level. Arrangements can be made by calling WMECO's Credit and

Collection Center at (413) 737-4600 within the Springfield calling area, or (800) 286-2828 if calling from outside the area.

WMECO also encourages its customers to also apply for Energy Bucks and NUSstart as soon as possible to help manage their payments and keep electricity flowing to their homes.

Energy Bucks is a statewide campaign to encourage customers in this income range to apply for fuel assistance, utility discounts and weatherization services through their local Community Action Agency. By packaging these benefits, customers maximize their energy savings.

Customers may qualify for a free energy-efficient refrigerator to replace their old one. The Community Action Agencies

serving Western Massachusetts include Community Action! at 413-774-2310 or 1-800-370-0940. Customers can call their local agency directly or call the statewide Energy Bucks hotline at 1-866-537-7267 or visit [www.energybucks.com](http://www.energybucks.com) for more information.

Customers who apply for and receive fuel assistance and owe WMECO at least \$100 that is at least 60 days old can apply for NUSstart, WMECO's arrearage forgiveness program. Customers who participate in NUSstart are set up on a budget to cover their current electric usage. Each month when their budget payment is paid on time, WMECO removes a portion of their arrearage. NUSstart helps customers manage their energy bills and helps keep their power on.

## Corrections

In an article about curbside recycling in last week's paper (MRV#23) Jay DiPucchio was inaccurately referred to as the chair of the Montague board of health. He is a member of that board; Chris Boutwell is the chair.

In that same issue, in a letter to the editor by the chair of the selectboard announcing her candidacy for re-election, Patricia Pruitt stated, "Jay DiPucchio printed the Democratic Caucus ballot last week with my name already on it..." In fact, in a press release to the *Montague Reporter* the week prior, (MRV#22),

DiPucchio listed the incumbent seats up for election in the Democratic Caucus, not the ballot for the caucus. In that same press release, DiPucchio noted the caucus ballot is not finalized until candidates notify him in writing of their intent to run. The deadline for doing so is March 30th, at 5 p.m. DiPucchio is reachable at: 35 Central Street, Turners Falls, MA 01376 or at [here.now@verizon.net](mailto:here.now@verizon.net).

In last week's issue (MRV#22), a typographical error in a letter to the editor resulted in the misspelling of Carolyn Prunier's last name. We apologize for the error.

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# The Montague Reporter

24 3rd Street, Turners Falls, Mass. 01376

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## Justice for all Gill-Montague Students

BY CHIP WOOD

The original guiding question set before the Elementary Study Group in its charge from the Gill-Montague Regional School Committee over two years ago was: "How should the district structure the elementary program to best insure the intellectual, ethical and social growth of all students?"

As I stated in my presentation to the public forum at Sheffield School on November 1st, 2006, there is one major configuration issue that has not received enough attention. This is the inadvertent barrier to educational equity, and thus achievement, placed before students in our district who live in poverty or have special education needs, or both. Currently these students are clustered in Sheffield/Hillcrest K-6 with more than a 50% free and reduced lunch income rate and 25% special needs. Montague Center has 26% free and reduced lunch figures and zero % special education students. Gill Elementary has 23% free and reduced lunch students and 13% special education students (the majority in one specialized program.)

At Sheffield, the clustering of over 125 students from families living in poverty and 60 children with special education in one building makes it very difficult to create the learning community and programs that would be best for all students, and would give the district a chance to elevate its student achievement and "annual yearly progress" under No Child Left Behind state mandates. Great Falls Middle School being declared a school in need of improvement in recent years is partially a function of receiving students concentrated in one school who have not had the benefits of a more economically, socially and intellectually diverse student body. Gill-Montague Regional School District has wonderful teachers in each of its buildings, but teachers at

Hillcrest and Sheffield are working against significant odds not present in our other two elementary schools.

The district's attendance policies and practices have impacted student performance according to MCAS results at Sheffield, which have fallen below the state's requirements for Annual Yearly Progress for the past two years. A legal consequence of this outcome under the No Child Left Behind Law is that the Gill-Montague School District must now offer School Choice to any Sheffield parent who wishes to have their child enrolled in another district elementary school that has openings in August 2007, and provide transportation costs of up to 15% of the district's Title I budget for this purpose.

The district can voluntarily work to further redistribute students within all elementary schools in a way that will represent a true cross section of the communities of Gill and Montague at large, establishing a special education population of approximately 14% in each school and a poverty rate of approximately 40 - 45%. Such a plan, of course, will depend on financial realities that often can override educational benefits for all our children. Tackling student reassignment as a significant variable in elementary configuration will not be an easy task, but that does not mean we should shy away from it. Some of it is now a requirement. We are a small district and we should be able to create a plan that allows us and our children to live by the ideals we pledge every morning about liberty and justice for all.

Chip Wood is the principal of Sheffield Elementary School

Editor's Note: Chip Wood delivered this speech to the GMRS school committee on March 13th. Reached later by phone, Superintendent Sue Gee said, "Three or four students with special needs are presently

## BUBBA and CARMINE

sages of Barton Cove



DENIS BORDEAUX CARTOON

receiving speech, language or physical therapy at Montague Center School," approximately 4% to 5% of the student population there.

Former Montague Center principal Anna Garbiel said two bus routes used to carry children from Turners Falls to Montague Center School until 2003. Children from Millers Falls and Lake Pleasant still attend school there.

According to Montague Center parent Marie Colton, in 2002, prior to the district's decision to halt bus routes from

Turners to Montague Center School, the population of students who qualified for free or reduced lunch at Montague Center School was 37.61%.

When the pre-K program at Montague Center was moved to Hillcrest in 2002, according to Colton and Garbiel, special needs students from the pre-K program no longer matriculated to Montague Center, which until then had maintained an active pre-K population and a higher percentage of SPED students.

Former school committee and longtime selectboard member

Clarkson Edwards said when the neighborhood elementary schools were closed in the 70s in Millers Falls and Montague City, bus lines were established to bring students from all five villages to Montague Center, with the intent of equalizing educational opportunities and federal funding at district elementary schools. That policy was maintained until 2003, Edwards said.

At public forums, Montague Center parents have consistently called for resuming the bus routes to bring Turners Falls pupils to Montague Center School.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Trustee Thanks

The Trustees of the Town of Montague Soldiers Memorial extend their sincere appreciation to the W. E. Aubuchon Company for its donation to the Soldiers Memorial Renovation Fund.

It is through the effort of the people of the Aubuchon Company, and especially of Stephen J. Valeski, manager of the Turners Falls Aubuchon, that we

will be able to reach our goal. Your company has always been supportive of this community.



Art Gilmore, left, thanks Turners Falls Aubuchon manager Stephen J. Valeski for the donation.

On behalf of the Trustees of the Soldiers Memorial, the veterans of the town of Montague, and all veterans, we again thank you for your support.

- Art Gilmore  
Soldiers Memorial Trustees  
Montague

## American Dead in Iraq as of 3/14/07



## Remembering Ed

The family and relatives of Ed Zewinski were truly touched and appreciative of the story, "Hail to the Blue and White," in your March 1st issue.

The story made us smile as well as cry. Ed was a special man, a friend, and, to me, a brother-in-law.

My many thanks to you and Denis Bordeaux.

We welcome your letters.  
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# GUEST EDITORIALS

## State Officials Just Don't Get It: Part 1 of a 2-part series

# Ed Reform Creates a Wrecking Ball for Local Government

**BY JEFF SINGLETON**  
**MONTAGUE CENTER** - Governor Deval Patrick's first state budget represents a complete disaster for many communities in Western Massachusetts. I am not blaming the new governor for this. His budget reflects fiscal con-

straints at the state level, and a dynamic set in motion a decade ago. But let's be honest about what is really going on here. The bottom line is that state aid increases do not come close to matching basic cost increases for level service school budgets. In some cases, such as the Gill-

Montague Regional School District, state aid is virtually level-funded. The result is that local school districts will, yet again, pass on huge cost increases to cities and towns, cost increases they cannot afford. Even in school districts that do well under the aid for-

mula, property tax overrides may well be required to pick up the burden left by the state.

### Basic Arithmetic and its Consequences

The local arithmetic is simple and stark, but seems to completely escape the notice of state officials, fixated on their own budget problems. The average local school district budget increases by between five and ten percent each year, just to maintain existing services. Health insurance, pensions, negotiated wage increases, special education and utilities account for most of this. For the Gill-Montague school district, with its budget of approximately \$16 million, this means an increase of nearly \$1,000,000 for '08, just to tread water. State aid should finance approximately 45% of this increase, since that is the portion of local spending bankrolled by the state. But this has rarely happened since the late 1990s.

After subtracting inadequate levels of state aid, school districts will then turn to local government for amounts that bear absolutely no relationship whatsoever to local revenues. In Montague's case, the GMRSD could request an assessment increase this year of over \$800,000, just to fund a "level services budget." However, our property tax revenues increase by only about \$300,000 annually, and at least half of this must finance cost increases in town services. In short, there is absolutely no relationship between the burden the state leaves to towns like Montague, and the towns' ability to pay.

The result will be depressingly familiar to anyone who has followed the politics of local government finance in recent years. We will see weeks of bruising budget battles that divide communities and undermine support for public education. School districts will request large increases in their assessments because "education and kids are important." They will say that if the gap is not covered, massive teacher layoffs, the elimination of popular

programs like art and music and the closing of good schools will occur. Cities and towns will react defensively to these perennial requests that seem to ignore the reality of local revenues. Should they once again cut fire protection, highway, library and police services to "save the schools"? Should they increase property taxes? These constant local budget battles pit town services against school districts, taxpayers against teachers and the elderly against young parents. Once again, it will be an ugly and divisive budget season.

### The Disconnect

What is astonishing about all this is the fact that the impact of chronically inadequate levels of state aid on both local public education and the fabric of local communities seems to almost completely escape state officials. For example, Governor Patrick is being widely applauded for increasing school aid by approximately 5% statewide. Despite the fact that this continues the meltdown that has been going on for nearly eight years, the governor is applauded because the state has its own budget crisis and local aid is faring better than other state services.

There is almost a total disconnect between what state officials, and many in the media, see and report and what those in the trenches at the local level annually experience. Why?

Part of the reason, as the example of Patrick's budget proposal suggests, is that state officials understandably see school aid in the context of their own budgets. From this perspective, Chapter 70 school aid has been doing rather well compared to, say, health care programs for the poor or the state college systems. And if you go back a few years to the mid-1990s, the state poured billions into local school aid. Yet local communities are still demanding more money and accusing state officials of not caring about education. And poor com-

see REFORM pg 6

## It's Good to Be Home

### Congratulations, Matt Robinson, our 650th Subscriber!

**BY KATHY LITCHFIELD**  
**TURNERS FALLS** - Matt Robinson has come home again. The 650th subscriber to the *Montague Reporter*, who graduated from Turners Falls High School in 1979, is living in the house he grew up in, running into former classmates at the grocery store and dreaming of a revitalized downtown with plenty of jobs and vitality.

"I was born in Montague, left for college at Bridgewater State and basically stayed away 22 years," said Robinson, who returned to Turners Falls before his mother passed away last year. "I have many memories here. It's good to be home."

Robinson has chosen to receive two \$20 gift subscriptions for his out-of-state brothers and a \$25 gift certificate to Foster's Market in Greenfield as his prize for being the *Montague Reporter's* 650th subscriber.

At Bridgewater State College, Robinson studied psychology, and he worked in human services and real estate in the Brockton area for two decades. Upon returning, he decided to subscribe to the *Montague Reporter* because he values its place in the community.

"I like the fact that we have a hometown newspaper. It gives us an identity. It's nice to get to read about our community instead of (snippets) about the town from the *Greenfield Recorder*, which is more of a county newspaper," he said. "I wanted to support our hometown paper to keep abreast of

town news. They did such a wonderful story on my mother. It was very important to the family. That was also one of the things that pulled us closer to the newspaper and gave us an appreciation of the newspaper; what a small town newspaper can do."

Robinson was recently elected a church deacon for the First Congregational Church at the corner of L and 7th streets, and would like to join one of the area's fraternal organizations. He also plans to join the Montague Community Band (he plays trumpet!); he was a member of the TFHS band years ago. He presently owns and manages four multi-family houses with a total of 17 units in downtown Turners Falls, an investment that is important to him.

"I think downtown revitalization is definitely necessary. There have been a lot of changes downtown, especially with the Shea Theater, and it looks great. I would like to see something that creates jobs within the town of Montague. People need places to live, but it seems like in Turners Falls there are more renters than there are



Matt Robinson

jobs," he said. "I'd like to see a number of jobs come that provide a living wage (for local residents)."

Robinson has a brother living in South Deerfield and a sister in Sunderland as well as brothers living in Pennsylvania and North Carolina. He is looking forward to re-investing in the community that supported him in his youth.

"It's so different here than in Brockton, it's awesome," he said. "I'm happy to be back and slowly I'll be catching up with my acquaintances. In Brockton you don't run into someone that you knew from Hillcrest Elementary School. I run into people now that I've known for over 40 years. It's much different living in the town that you grew up in. Living in the house I grew up in brings me back to my childhood. Yeah, it's good to be home," he said.

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## Montague Residents Push for Resolution vs. Genetically Modified Organisms

BY ALICE ARMEN - Residents from Turners Falls and Montague Center are working on a town meeting resolution to put the town on record opposing genetically engineered organisms in Montague.

If the drive succeeds, Montague would join 111 towns and cities in New England that have passed resolutions that put themselves on record questioning genetic engineering of food and crops since 2000. Massachusetts now has 21 towns, and one city, Boston, that have passed such resolutions. In Vermont, where these efforts first took off on a wide scale, 85 towns and cities have passed measures on the issue, along with 2 towns in Maine and 2 in New Hampshire. Montville, Maine voted to amend their town plan to prohibit growing of genetically engineered (GE)

crops, which may have been the first such resolution to carry the force of law in any New England town.

Each town placed slightly different wording on its warrant, but all called for three key policy changes: 1) mandatory labeling of all genetically engineered foods; 2) liability protection to strengthen farmers' legal rights when dealing with biotechnology corporations; and 3) a moratorium on further growing of GE crops until independent scientific evidence proves them to be safe, and they can be demonstrated not to harmfully affect family farms.

Montague residents are hoping to be a part of this movement by bringing forth a town meeting resolution to oppose genetically modified organisms.

"The success of these resolutions at town meetings

reflects a deepening opposition to genetic engineering in Massachusetts and across New England," according to Ben Grosscup, a field organizer for the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Massachusetts and a leader in petitioning for the resolution in Amherst.

Genetically engineered plants are known to cross-pollinate with closely related wild and domestic plants, leaving local ecosystems and farmers at risk. Farmers have been sued for the theft of plants with genetically engineered genes, even though their genetically altered crops resulted from wind-borne contamination. The liability issue has gained traction due to litigation by Monsanto, the largest developer of genetically engineered crop varieties. Monsanto patents novel gene sequences in their GE crops, which are able to affect non-GE

crops through wind pollination and seed spillage from trucks.

Organic farmer John Hoffman of Charlemont said, "This issue affects me directly because of the possible contamination of my corn crop. We know that with wind pollinated crops like corn, genetically engineered pollen will cross with non-genetically engineered varieties. For me, that means that my organically grown crop is no longer organic."

The corporate patent rights that come with these novel gene sequences pose liability threats that leave many farmers concerned. The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* reported in 2003 that Monsanto has an annual budget of \$10 million and a staff of 75 devoted to investigating and prosecuting farmers for patent infringement.

So far, Monsanto has filed 90 lawsuits against U.S.

farmers, according to a 2005 report by the Center for Food Safety, and has been awarded judgments totaling over \$15 million. Many farmers settle with the company out-of-court, accepting mandated gag orders and leaving scant information about their cases. Gloria Meluleni, an organic farmer who runs Coyote Hill Farm and brought forth resolutions on genetic engineering to the Bernardston town meeting said, "It is so unjust and ridiculous that Monsanto can sue people when its GE pollen crosses over to someone else's crop."

Montague residents will have an opportunity to make their voices heard on this important issue on town meeting day. A petition is being circulated to gather signatures to bring the resolution before the town. To sign the petition call: 367-2010 or write to: armens@crocker.com.

## REFORM

continued from pg 5

munities that got the most money are complaining the loudest. To many state officials, including our legislators, this makes no sense.

The disconnect is compounded by the rhetoric of local officials advocating for more state aid. They often seem unrealistic about their needs and throw unsupportable criticisms at the state. There is much talk about "cuts" in state aid that, with the exception of the 2002 recession, have not really occurred. The state and federal governments are constantly accused of imposing "unfunded mandates" like special education and No Child Left Behind on school districts. The state poured billions into local communities in part to help improve MCAS scores and has implemented a costly "circuit breaker" program to help finance out-of-district special education placements. While local districts are still unable to finance the cost of these mandates without cutting other programs, to call them "unfunded" undermines credibility.

There is also much complaining about "the formula," that complicated mechanism that determines how much local districts get in state aid. But fixing the formula

will not solve the basic problem - the constant gap between basic cost increases and revenues. It would only produce (marginal) winners and (big) losers, as inadequate aid is divvied up.

Perhaps most problematic is rhetoric that focuses on the value of education. We are told that "education matters" and "kids count," as if state officials do not care about education or kids. The court cases that led to education reform in the 1990s, focusing on hard-to-define notions of equity and adequacy, encouraged this rhetoric. The problem is that the state of Massachusetts certainly does care about kids, which is why it has poured billions into local schools in the 1990s. Furthermore, moralistically preaching the value of educating our children makes local school advocates seem like just another interest group - one that has done comparatively well over the past decade - demanding money. After all, don't the kids on MassHealth "deserve" the best health care? Don't the kids at UMass deserve an affordable education?

### Ed Reform and the Fiscal Crisis

I believe that a key cause of the problem is that local school advocates and state officials fail to appreciate the causes of the

problem we face, and its true social and political consequences. This is why there is such a gap between the perceptions of state officials and local reality.

Ironically, it is, to some degree, the generosity of the state that created the crisis. Education reform in the mid-1990s poured billions of dollars into local schools. School districts, understandably, reduced class sizes, raised teachers' salaries (while costs of pensions and health insurance skyrocketed) and experienced huge increases in the cost of special education. No doubt this increased spending improved education (as measured by standardized test scores) and reduced inequities between school districts. This was good. But the spending increases of the 90s have created the fiscal nightmare of today.

In essence, the state of Massachusetts ratcheted up local school district budgets to the point where their "fixed cost" increases for level service budgets could not be sustained without constant increases in state aid. But after 1998, these increases were no longer forthcoming. The state, with budget problems of its own, particularly in the area of health care, began to pull back. While education aid continued to fare well compared to other state

programs, Chapter 70 payments bore no clear relationship to the natural increases in local school spending. Yet state officials felt they had fulfilled their obligations under Education Reform, and when compared to the rest of the state budget were continuing to act in good faith in providing aid to local schools.

State officials do not seem to realize they have created a giant wrecking ball heading inexorably in the direction of local government. State aid increases, generous as they might have seemed from the point of view of our legislators, left the cities and towns holding a huge burden. And the consequences were constant annual local battles that lasted for weeks, even months, pitting various groups against one another. The problem was not that state aid was inadequate. The problem was that the state had created a systemic crisis that impacted entire communities.

For example, our legislators often seem to wonder why poorer school districts that received the most money under Education Reform are now complaining the loudest. But it is precisely because the poorer districts are the ones that received the most aid under Education Reform that they are now the most dependent on state aid, and thus are hurt the

most when state aid increases do not match their fixed cost increases. They also tend to be the school districts in localities least likely to pick up the deficit by raising property taxes via overrides. The resulting perennial budget battles and school closings cause many parents to pull their kids out and send them to more affluent districts. Resulting school choice and charter school losses exacerbate fiscal problems, and lead to lower MCAS scores. This dynamic creates a downward spiral affecting the poorest districts the most.

### What is to Be Done?

Well, that is a question that must be left to the next issue of the *Montague Reporter*. But the first thing we need to do, in the words of the recovery movement, is "Admit we have a problem." The state aid numbers in the governor's budget are not at all a step in the right direction, but a continuation of the crisis we have been seeing since the end of Education Reform. And there is an almost total disconnect between what we are experiencing at the local level and the perceptions of state officials.

*Jeff Singleton is chair of the Montague finance committee.*



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DETMOLD PHOTO

Hillcrest students Carlie Kretchmar, left, and Chloe Ellis, right, peer at a Thai Walking Stick brought to Mrs. Burnham's first grade class by Helen Ann Septhor of the Hitchcock Center in Amherst, on Tuesday, March 13th, as part of the Gill Montague Education Fund supported Animals in the Classroom program

## Hillcrest Students Investigate Bugs

BY DAVID DETMOLD

**TURNERS FALLS** - How many legs does a millipede have? Where are a snail's eyes? Can a turtle leave its shell? These and other important questions were asked, and a number of answers given, as the Amherst-based Hitchcock Center for the Environment brought naturalist Helen Ann Septhor and her traveling grab-bag of creepy-crawly critters to Mrs. Burnham's first grade classroom at Hillcrest Elementary School on March 13th, courtesy of a science curriculum enhancement mini-grant from the Gill-Montague Education Fund. The grant focused on defining features, characteristics, and adaptations of animals, and the young zoologists in Burnham's class focused on all that and more as a snail, a millipede, a Thai Walking Stick, and a Madagascar Hissing Cockroach made the rounds of the class, cradled carefully in Septhor's outstretched hand.

"A Madagascar Hissing Cockroach! What's a Madagascar Hissing Cockroach?!"

But first, capitalizing on

recent calls for intergenerational programming in town, Septhor allowed an elderly gentleman to make the students' acquaintance. His name was Speedy, and he was a 48-year-old Eastern Box Turtle, but a pretty sprightly one at that. The students were hunkered down in a circle, and Speedy kept trying to break out of his corral by crawling over their legs, a characteristic the students found highly amusing.

Can a turtle leave its shell? Not and live to tell the tale. Unlike a crab, a turtle's shell is part of the animal's exoskeleton, and not removable.

How does Shephton know Speedy is a male? "Boy turtles have orange or red eyes," she explained. "Girls have brown eyes." Simple as that.

Among the box turtle's other characteristics, if frightened, he has the ability of retracting all six extremities, head, tail and legs, and clamping his hinged plastron (undershell) shut, making himself into a fairly impregnable 'box'.

A turtle can have six extremities, but only four of them are legs. A boy named Javoni had the correct answer when Sephton asked what kind

of animal has six legs?

"An ant!"

"That's right. And what kind of animal is an ant?"

"An insect!"

Bingo. And Septhor handed around two insects that were paragons of adaptive evolution, each in their own right: a Madagascar Hissing Cockroach and a Thai Walking Stick.

The Thai Walking Stick is perfectly camouflaged to blend into the flora of its surroundings. The Hissing Cockroach has a fierce looking shield covering his diminutive head, and makes an alarming hissing sound of air expelled through holes in its carapace when threatened. The specimen Septhor passed around was as big as a mouse.

In contrast to the six-legged critters, the visiting naturalist also displayed a one-legged creature, a creature you could say pretty much lives all the time with its foot in its mouth: a snail! Snails, other than their shell, are pretty much one big foot, with a head at one end. Their eyes are found at the tip of antenna-like stalks, which can be retracted if they are scared.

Pick up snails slowly, if you pick them up at all, because their

sticky feet stick to surfaces, and you don't want to hurt them by suddenly detaching them. And it's a good thing the classrooms at Hillcrest have sinks near at hand: the kids were uniformly grossed out after the snail "slimed" them, and they lined up at the sink for a quick hand washing.

Now, about that millipede. How many feet does a millipede have? A million? No. That's an example of hyperbole in nomenclature, but Septhor didn't mention that. She said a millipede is divided into a great number of segments, and each segment has four legs. You have

to count each segment and multiply by four to find out exactly how many legs the little critter has, and the kids were too excited by the slimy snail and the camouflaged Thai Stick and the Hissing Cockroach to try to do that, although they examined the six inch millipede with considerable interest through their own little magnifying glasses.

One thing was certain. A millipede has more than six legs, and thus, can not be considered an insect. What is it then?

Well, any first grader could tell you that. It's a millipede.

## MCTV Schedule

Channel 17: March 16th - March 22nd

<b>Barton Cove Eagles:</b> 7A-8A Daily, 1P-5P Daily	"Prostate Health" 9:00 am Velocity 9:30 am On the Ridge: Tri State Sportsmen's Show 10:00 am Fall Town String Band 12:00 pm Montague Update: Tom Bergeron 6:00 pm Montague Update: TBD 7:00 pm On The Table: Cooking With Michael Collins 7:30 pm New Beginnings 8:00 pm Katie Clarke Band 10:00 pm Talking To The Wall	Humming Birds 6:00 pm GED Connection #32 6:30 pm Kidz Art #1 7:00 pm GMRSD 3/13/07 10:00 pm Prevailing Winds
<b>Friday, March 16</b> 8:00 am Brick House TV: Show #16 9:00 am Montague Select Board 3/12/07 10:30 am Valley Idol 12:30 pm Importance of Pollinators 6:00 pm NASA Destination Tomorrow #11 6:30 pm Kidz Art #1 7:00 pm GMRSD meeting 3/13/07 10:00 pm So Glad I Made It: An Evening With Roger Salloom	<b>Monday, March 19</b> 8:00 am Montague Update: TBD 9:00 am On the Table: Cooking With Michael Collins 9:30am New Beginnings 10:00 am Katie Clarke Band 6:00 pm Sheffield Elementary: "The Dancing Princess" 7:00 pm Montague Select Board (Live) 9:00 pm Discovery Center: Michael Nix 10:30 pm Discovery Center: Humming Birds	<b>Wednesday, March 21</b> 8:00 am GED Connection #32 8:30 am Kidz Art #1 9:00 am GMRSD 3/13/07 6:30 pm NASA Destination Tomorrow #11 7:00 pm GED Connection #33 7:30 pm The Well Being: "Prostate Health" 8:30 pm Montague Update: TBD 9:30 pm Valley Idol
<b>Saturday, March 17</b> 8:00 am NASA Destination Tomorrow #11 8:30 am Kidz Art #1 9:00 am GMRSD meeting 3/13/07 12:00 pm So Glad I Made It: An Evening With Roger Salloom 6:00 pm The Well Being: "Prostate Health" 7:00 pm Velocity 7:30 pm On the Ridge: Tri State Sportsmen's Show 8:00 pm Fall Town String Band 10:00 pm Montague Update: Tom Bergeron	<b>Tuesday, March 20</b> 8:00 am Sheffield Elementary: "The Dancing Princess" 9:00 am Discovery Center: Michael Nix 10:30 am Discovery Center:	<b>Thursday, March 22</b> 8:00 am NASA Destination Tomorrow #11 8:30 am GED Connection #33 9:00 am The Well Being: "Prostate Health" 10:00 am Montague Update: TBD 11:00 am Valley Idol 6:00 pm Source To Sea 7:00 pm Montague Select Board 3/19/07 9:00 pm So Glad I Made It: An Evening With Roger Salloom 10:00 pm Montague Music Train
<b>Sunday, March 18</b> 8:00 am The Well Being:	10:30 am Discovery Center:	

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## Gill Main Road Update

Construction on Main Road began anew Monday, March 12th. During the day, traffic on Main Road will detour over Boyle and North Cross Road.

As of Wednesday, March 14th, through traffic will be prohibited, even for residents who live along the construction route for a week to ten days until installation of a culvert by Upingill Farm is complete. Residents that live south of Upingill will be allowed access

from Main Road. Those that live on the north side of the culvert installation will be required to reach home by the Boyle to North Cross Road detour. The town apologizes for the inconvenience.

Any issues or questions should be directed to Mickey LaClaire, highway superintendent at 863-2324. If no one is available (they are often working on roads), please leave a message.

### HIGHLIGHTS OF THE GILL POLICE LOG

## Fire and Ice at Riverside

#### Wednesday 3-7

9:25 a.m. Single vehicle accident on Ben Hale Road. Car into utility pole, no injuries.

1:20 p.m. Medical assistance on Main Road, Baystate Ambulance transported.

3:15 p.m. 911 misdial on Main Road, all OK.

#### Thursday 3-8

10:15 a.m. Loose horse on Main Road, animal control officer contacted; will respond.

#### Friday 3-9

7:20 p.m. Vehicle vs. deer accident on French King Highway.

#### Saturday 3-10

8:45 a.m. Assisted animal control on West Gill Road.

12:30 p.m. Assisted Erving Police with alarm on Northfield Road.

9:02 p.m. Assisted Montague police and drug task force in

Montague with raid.

#### Sunday 3-11

5:03 a.m. Vehicle off of roadway on French King Highway. Unable to locate.

8:55 a.m. Vehicle off of Hoe Shop Road. Owner contacted, will remove same.

8:56 a.m. Car vs. guardrail on French King Highway, no injuries.

6:10 p.m. Assisted Montague police with suicidal subject with knife.

#### Monday 3-12

7:10 p.m. Report of subjects on ice in Barton Cove. Checked on same. All OK. Subject was ice fishing.

#### Tuesday 3-13

5:17 p.m. Vehicle fire at intersection of Walnut and Riverview Drive. Fire department responded.

## Western MA Republicans Gather at Cal Coolidge Banquet in Holyoke

GOP activists will gather at the Calvin Coolidge Banquet, Thursday, March 22nd, beginning at 5:30 p.m., to be hosted at the Log Cabin Restaurant on Route 141 on the Holyoke-Easthampton line. The Western Massachusetts Republican organization is sponsoring the event.

The annual celebration draws its inspiration from the "spirit of Calvin Coolidge," according to Mary Jenewin-Caplin, this year's Banquet Committee Chairwoman.

"This is an opportunity to honor those who serve their communities at the grassroots," Caplin said. The banquet committee put together a diverse array of award recipients and speakers from a selection of elected officials and party

activists.

The program will recognize individuals for the Western Massachusetts Republican of the Year, Distinguished Service, Outstanding Leadership and the Ronald Reagan awards, she said. The keynote speakers are state Senator Scott Brown of the Norfolk, Bristol, and Middlesex District and Brad Shepard, talk show co-host at WHY AM NewsTalk 560.

Paul Santaniello, WMR Chairman, said this is a first step in re-energizing the Republican party in Western Massachusetts, and it is just one of many exciting activities going on.

For more information, contact Marcia Evans at 1-413-221-7577.

### NOTES FROM THE WENDELL SELECTBOARD

# Homing In on New Wendell Town Offices

**BY JOSH HEINEMANN** - The Wendell selectboard had a short open agenda for its March 7th meeting, before going into executive session to discuss a legal issue. Town coordinator Nancy Aldrich told the board members that several departments have overspent their budgets, and a special town meeting will be necessary to fund those accounts for the rest of the fiscal year. That special town meeting will also have to move \$265,000 in free cash into stabilization, or into other accounts where it can be used.

Board members asked Aldrich to contact town clerk Anna Hartjens and town moderator Kathy Becker to find dates when both of them are available.

Board chair Ted Lewis said one of the back doors of the town hall needs repair or replacement. Aldrich thought there must be a separate account for door repair at the town hall. Lewis went on to say that when he tried, he could not get into the basement because ice held the door shut. He had to call the tank truck and get the tight tank pumped because the last users of the town hall had not shut the water off, and dripping toilets had filled the tank. Aldrich said that was the third time in a month the tank had been pumped, and two of those occasions resulted from the dripping toilets.

With the new water line connected, a plumber should now be able to clean the deposits from the old well

that are contributing to the build-up on the toilet seals in town hall, thereby stopping the drip.

Christine Texiera and Heather Reed of the planning board came to the selectboard's trailer office with news that a \$2,000 fee collected in keeping with the town's old secondary dwelling bylaw should have gone to the conservation commission, but did not. That money is now in free cash, and should be given to the conservation commission, or returned to the applicant at the next special town meeting. The bylaw has been changed since the fee was collected; the secondary dwelling fee is now obsolete.

Board member Dan Keller said the end of the building project for the new town office building is a challenge. The town office building looks complete, but technical and mechanical systems still need work. Controls to regulate the heat and hot water are not working. There are change orders and things that "fell through the cracks," copper flashing the architect now considers necessary, a wire to the bathroom exhaust fan not included in the original drawing and now required as a change order. Keller said the electrical subcontractor itemized the string tags that mark each circuit.

The first step before the move-in date is for the building inspector to issue a temporary certificate of occupation; the second step is for the architect to give a certificate

of substantial completion.

In spite the fact that our clerk of the works John Flemming has made numerous calls to Davenport Construction, the builders of the septic system, the controls for the system have not been installed. Davenport is delegating that work to a subcontractor. Keller suggested that board members discuss with Flemming whether the selectboard should call Davenport.

Lewis brought up the storage trailer at the WRATS. A discussion ensued over the logistics of bringing it to new town office parking lot, where furniture for the office building can be unloaded.

Board member Christine Heard said Handford missed their first construction deadline for completion of the town office building project, and now they are missing the second. Keller said a February letter to the town states Wendell has the right to assess damages for late completion in the amount of \$250 a day. He said it looks like Handford will have the job done by the end of next week, March 16th, and the total late fees would come to \$3,500, not much in the scope of a project this size. Aldrich said the most recent electric bill, largely heat for the temporary office trailers, equalled \$695.

Keller said the building project has been a long hard effort, and people are getting tired. Heard asked who was getting tired, and Keller answered, "Well, ... I am."

The selectboard then went into executive session.

### HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WENDELL POLICE LOG

## Nail Guns Stolen

#### Saturday 2-10

One car accident on Lockes Village Road; subject gone on arrival.

#### Thursday 2-15

Stone Road resident reported exchanging papers with person

who hit her car in her driveway.

#### Tuesday 2-20

One car accident on New Salem Road, subject transported to Athol Memorial Hospital with minor injuries.

#### Friday 2-23

Alarm going off at Country Store. All OK.

#### Saturday 2-24

Plain Road resident reported two Paslode nail guns stolen from his truck overnight.

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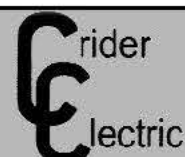
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**74 PROSPECT ST. TURNERS FALLS**



# Montague, Are You Developing a Safety Complex?

**MPSBC Update #2**  
**BY PAM HANOLD**

**TURNERS FALLS** - Last week, members of the Montague Public Safety Building Committee began the process of sharing information and making themselves available to answer questions from people in Montague about the proposed new safety complex/police station.

We attended meetings of the Turners Falls Fire Department's Prudential Committee, the selectboard, the finance committee, and the capital improvements committee to give our first report on the progress of the feasibility study. I would like to share some thoughts on two of the issues raised at these meetings.

The question of Bernardston's recently reported decision to use modular housing for their police station was raised by the capital improvements committee, to see if Montague could use that approach.

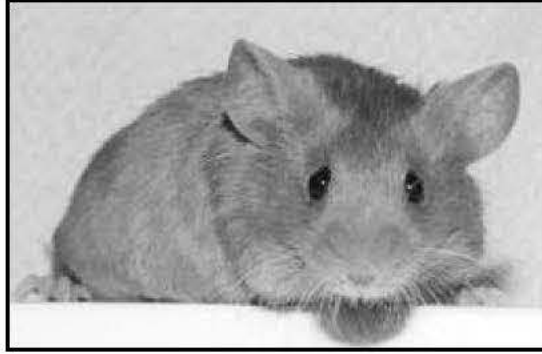
Bernardston's plan strikes me as a creative response to the

necessity of relocating their police department, after several prior proposals failed to pass.

However, Bernardston's position is different from ours in several important respects.

Bernardston's population is about a quarter of ours. They have three sworn police officers, as compared to our fifteen (plus seven reserve officers). They seem to need only office and administrative space, while we also have a dispatch function, and holding cells required. Both of those areas are very expensive to retrofit, as they have very specific building requirements. Dispatch centers must meet seismic requirements, and they require extensive wiring for the heavily integrated computerized systems.

Holding cell areas must be built to state regulations. Special plumbing and wiring are used to prevent certain problems, like



purposeful flooding of cell areas, and to facilitate more efficient management of flushing and lighting needs without unnecessarily entering an occupied cell.

Basic construction must also meet higher security standards.

Areas adjacent to these two functions also require specific security arrangements, including the need to secure weapons for officers before processing procedures. Some areas need to be lockable for security as well as to protect evidence for court.

These and other considerations would require extensive retrofitting of any regular building, adding considerable labor and construction costs to a modular building, assuming the pre-

existing construction would allow for those structural changes. I understand that some years back Northfield found these considerations so expensive that they ruled out modular housing as a viable option. I will, however, check this information out with the architect this week.

Another issue raised was the possibility of town hall acquiring much needed storage space when the police department moves. Currently there is a concern that town hall attic's weight-bearing capacity may be exceeded, and that records suffer from damp, moldy, and occasionally wet conditions in the basement. In addition, efficient accessibility to records is a problem. No one with whom I spoke mentioned mice, but I hear they are so prevalent in the basement of town hall (that would be the present police station) that they have been individually named and are the subject of spirited discussion between those who feed them and those who prefer traps. With the departure of their friends to a new location, who

knows what opportunities record storage might present for the town hall mice, if they haven't already burrowed into boxes in search of nutrition and new tunnels.

The police stations the building committee has toured feature in-office storage and secure, but less expensive, outbuilding storage space.

Perhaps additional room for town hall storage could be attached to the outbuilding space at a low cost. Our architect, Brian Humes, has in the past planned features like that for town needs, and undoubtedly has other ideas.

At any rate, both of these issues, excluding the mice, will be pursued with the architect. Humes will meet this Friday, March 16th with Police Chief Ray Zukowski and Turners Falls Fire Chief Ray Godin and others to look at the fire station site and make a final assessment of any possible benefit of shared spaces. That is the last step before putting all the assessment and information-gathering together as building plans.

## CENTER

continued from pg 1

look to other town departments in need of new facilities, with the idea of pooling resources. "The senior center and parks and recreation were obvious choices," explained library director Sue SanSoucie.

Gill-Montague senior center director Bunny Caldwell continued by detailing the factors the center is considering as they look ahead to the end of their 30-year lease at the former Turners Falls Athletic Club on 5th Street. Members of the Gill-Montague senior center have visited senior centers around the county to get ideas for a new facility. Finally, John Dobosz described the existing parks and recreation building, in the fieldhouse at Unity Park as "passive" and said parks and rec has been looking since the late 1980s for a way to provide a better site for indoor activities, and as a base for their department. "Things started to blossom when Sue called and we started looking at how we could work together."

Next came the chance to hear from the public, who were asked to think of resources that would be ideal for each organization. For the moment, money was no object. "The possibilities are

endless," said Les Cromack, chair of the Montague capital improvements committee. "Let's think positive, come up with the best ideas possible and see where we can go from there."

And so they did. Ideas ranged from practical needs that all the organizations face such as handicap accessibility, parking and utilities to the ideal: private nurses' offices, indoor walking tracks, garden space, a commercial kitchen, showers and a coffee shop. The suggestions that generated the most enthusiasm were those that clearly addressed unmet needs among all the organizations. The overall atmosphere of this portion of the meeting was relaxed and jovial; people seemed to enjoy making wish lists for the organizations they cared about. There were constant murmurs and nods throughout the room as folks recognized how many items on the lists could be shared.

The meeting then turned to focus on the pros and cons of a shared facility. Concerns such as finances, safety and scheduling logistics were raised. Dobosz described the summer as an extremely busy time for the recreation department, and said though scheduling use of a joint facility would work well during the school year for a shared facil-

ity that included a gymnasium, it would be more difficult during the summer. Members of all organizations agreed that soundproofing would be an essential element, as the boisterous nature of gym activities might not be compatible with library and senior center use.

Another architectural challenge would be providing a safe entrance for senior citizens. A separate entrance would likely be necessary to protect seniors, who might be unsteady on their feet, from youngsters moving quickly through a doorway.

There definitely were differing opinions on the issue of the cost of a new facility. Jeff Singleton, chair of the Montague finance committee, expressed concern about citizens' receptiveness to the cost of a new public building, "when there has been a mini taxpayer revolt over school renovations. Most of these needs could be satisfied by existing buildings. If we move ahead with a feasibility study, everything should be on the table," he said.

This remark contrasted with Cromack's assertion, "It makes sense to combine as much as possible. I would not see renovation of three separate buildings as being cost effective."

The pros were easy to enumer-

ate; it was clear that each of these departments have major unmet existing needs. Spaces such as computer labs and classrooms could be easily shared. Veronica Phaneuf, library trustee, likened it to "going to the mall for your recreational needs. You could go to the library while your children are involved at an activity at the rec." Attendees were enthusiastic about the intergenerational benefits of a shared site; seniors could help out with craft or reading programs and youth volunteers could provide assistance with computer classes.

The final component of the meeting was discussion of possible sites for such a facility. Again, all three organizations had common needs in terms of location; each placed an importance on being in downtown Turners Falls, near public transportation routes. Caldwell stated it was important for the senior center to be accessible to seniors from Gill as well. This raised the question of "What is the downtown area?" SanSoucie described the importance of families being able to walk to the library.

Richard Colton spoke to existing space that might be available for the senior center. "I would like to bring this back to a bit of recent history. School reconfiguration could provide a site (Hillcrest

Elementary) that physically meets many of these needs. It also provides for intergenerational interests."

Many people, including town administrator Frank Abbondanzio, pointed to the space behind the current town hall as a possible location for a new joint-use facility. He talked about closing 1st Street up to L Street, and utilizing existing parking space behind the Shady Glen. This would allow access to the bike path and the Connecticut River. Proximity to the river has its own issues, since any building within 200 feet of the river falls under the Rivers Act, explained Montague town planner Dan LaRoche. Dobosz stated it is necessary for the rec department to be located in the Unity Park area.

What's next? Is it time for a feasibility study? "Yes," said Abbondanzio.

In terms of a timetable, selectboard member Pat Allen asked for patience, reminding all that the Peskeomskut Park renovation project took at least 10 years to bring to fruition.

Whatever the outcome of the study, Cromack summed up the focus of those present, "It all must get the best value for the town of Montague - the whole town of Montague."





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**NOTES FROM THE ERVING SELECTBOARD**

# Estimate for Treatment Plant Grows by \$400,000

**BY KEVIN FOLEY** - Proposed renovations at the Ervingside wastewater treatment plant are now estimated at \$6.4 million dollars, about \$400,000 higher than the original estimate. The increase is due to additional engineering costs from Tighe & Bond, the company that will perform the plant renovations, if approved by town meeting.

Selectboard member Jeff Dubay expressed skepticism about the price of the renovations at the selectboard meeting on Monday, March 12th. Dubay and selectboard member Linda Downs-Bembury will meet at the Ervingside plant on Friday, March 13th at 7:00 a.m. with Ben Thompson, chief operator of the Erving Paper wastewater treatment plant, and take a tour

of the plant with an eye on possible ways the town could save money on the renovations. "(Dubay) wanted to take in a fresh pair of eyes," explained Tom Sharp, town administrative coordinator. "Ben is someone whose opinion he respects."

One suggestion of Dubay's was to use town employees to install new doors and windows in the plant, rather than have Tighe & Bond perform the installations. "I'm not sure at this point in time that some of these things couldn't be done on a different schedule," he said.

Having one company perform all of the renovations would be beneficial, according to Downs-Bembury. "To me, it's always easier when you hire somebody to do the whole thing

and let them take responsibility for it." One of her main concerns was if something went wrong during renovations, one contractor could be cleared of blame due to the presence of more than one agency working on the building.

Andy Tessier, chair of the selectboard, warned Dubay against costing the town more money in the long run. "You're not ready to make a \$6 million decision. You're going to start nickel and diming and save 50 cents, but you're going to throw \$50 out the window."

One reason why Tessier is concerned about spending more in the long run is because of a wastewater nitrogen level limit he expects will soon be set by the Environmental Protection

Agency (EPA). The limit would force wastewater treatment plants to eliminate a large portion of the nitrogen presently released in the effluent from treatment plants. In order to comply with a nitrogen limit, the town would have to spend more money. If the town performs treatment plant renovations now, they can claim that they have taken steps to improve the plant, Tessier reasoned.

The EPA is not expected to set a nitrogen limit in the next year, but Tessier said the town should still be concerned about this eventuality. "A couple of years ago they told us we were never going to have to worry about phosphorous. Guess what? Now there's a limit for

phosphorous."

The selectboard meeting on March 12th marked the last day to add an article to the annual town meeting warrant. Tessier expressed his displeasure with Dubay for not raising any issues he had with the renovations of the plant at an earlier date, when the selectboard first met with representatives from Tighe & Bond to go over the project.

"Either you want to do the \$6 million project or you're not comfortable with it. I'm not going to say it doesn't need to be done, but you need to be comfortable with it," Tessier said. "If you want to start nickel and diming it, you can take it off the warrant and put it off until next year. You can have twelve months to go over it."

**HIGHLIGHTS OF THE ERVING POLICE LOG**

## Drinking and Driving

**Wednesday 3-7**

9:00 p.m. Caller from a River Street address stated she believes her daughter's ex-boyfriend is in Turners Falls and is going to harm her daughter's children. Checked at Turners Falls address, subject not located. Officer was told by relative that subject was out of state and had not been in town for years.

**Friday 3-9**

7:10 p.m. Report of a car vs. deer accident at the bridge. Accident was on the Gill side; handled by Gill police.

**Saturday 3-10**

12:04 p.m. Report of a medical emergency on Route 2. Driver feeling dizzy and short of

breath. Fire department on scene.

1:30 p.m. After a motor vehicle stop on Route 2, a criminal application was issued to [redacted] for speeding and unlicensed operation.

9:47 p.m. [redacted] was arrested for operating under the influence of alcohol.

**Tuesday 3-13**

12:05 p.m. After a motor vehicle stop on Route 2, [redacted] was arrested and charged with operating a motor vehicle with a suspended license (subsequent offense), open container of alcohol, and speeding.

**MORE NOTES FROM THE ERVING SELECTBOARD**

## PARKS AND REC BUDGET DEBATED, DEFENDED

**BY KEVIN FOLEY** - The selectboard and the finance committee will hold an open meeting on Monday, March 19th at 6:00 p.m. in the evening at Erving town hall to discuss the fiscal year 2008 town budget. There are some parts of the budget that remain concerns for the selectboard.

The Franklin County Technical School still has not announced their final budget number, although it is expected to be a large increase from last year's figure. Selectboard chair Andy Tessier's patience with the Tech School appears to be running thin. "If we don't have the budget numbers for next Monday, I'm not supporting the budget," he declared.

"They need to come in and explain it," Tessier added. "It's getting ridiculous with 17 percent increases."

Selectboard member Jeff Dubay had his own concerns, particularly about the \$54,000 budget for the parks and recreations committee. "I think we're not getting much for our

money."

Dubay wants to zero out the amount of money parks and rec uses for the tennis program. Subsidizing tennis in Erving costs \$400 per person, according to Dubay. "You need the police department, but if you don't have a tennis racket you'll probably survive."

The tennis accounted for a large part of the committee's budget last year, partly because of the acquisition of a mechanical ball thrower. "I'm one of those people that plays tennis," said Linda Downs-Bembury, selectboard member. "You have to look at the ball thrower as a capital investment. You're not going to buy one next year."

"The recreation committee does not offer any programs for adults except for tennis," Downs-Bembury added. "There is no kayaking program or running group."

"If I want to go kayaking, I'll go and buy a kayak and go in solitude. I don't want to go with a club," said Andy

Tessier, selectboard chair. "If I want to go running, I'll throw on some earphones and go running down the road."

Downs-Bembury, whose husband is on the parks and recreations committee, thinks the tennis program is a good thing for kids and adults in town. "A lot of kids think they can't afford (tennis). I had one kid come in and pay in quarters. I was emotionally moved by affecting one kid's life."

The tennis program wasn't the only topic of debate around the parks and rec budget though. Dubay also brought up the summer parks program, which accounts for \$22,624.28 of the recreation department's budget, and had 34 enrollees last summer. "One could argue that it's subsidized daycare," Dubay said.

Jacquie Boyden, a member of the parks and recreations committee, said the program is important for the town. "The kids would be unsupervised if it weren't for the summer parks program," she said.

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**NOTES FROM THE MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD**

# \$10,000 Feasibility Study Approved for Dry Hill Cemetery Access

**BY DAVID DETMOLD** - The new Montague town planner, Dan LaRoche, is venturing boldly onto the shifting terrain of Dry Hill Road, with a proposal to spend \$10,000 on a feasibility study to determine the best means of access to the publicly owned cemetery on Dry Hill Road.

This is the same issue that various selectboards and town meetings have wrestled with for the better part of two decades. Some progress has been made.

At the March 12th selectboard meeting, town administrator Frank Abbondanzio reminded the board that the town had clearly established the right to use the historical layout of Dry Hill Road, which has now been surveyed and flagged. The physical barriers to access to the historic Dry Hill Cemetery, where Revolutionary War veterans and a number of the original inhabitants of this part of town are buried have been removed by the abutting landowner, Jim Senn, including barbed wire fences and No Trespassing signs. But the steep gradient of the old road where it intersects Wendell Road, and the fact that the old roadbed has been completely obliterated after decades of being blocked by Senn, makes access to the cemetery still a practical impossibility for relatives of those interred there, or to historians, genealogists, and the cemetery commissioners themselves, who need to perform routine maintenance on the badly overgrown burial place.

"My understanding is this project has been going on for 15 years," said LaRoche, "due to difficulties with the abutting landowner." LaRoche outlined a variety of "different options to get people up to the cemetery to maintain it and enjoy it." Among the possibilities he listed for the town to consider are: creating a footpath for a quarter to a third of a mile to the cemetery, with parking for visitors near the intersection of Wendell Road, constructing a "limited upgrade" of Dry Hill Road to allow 4-wheel drive vehicle access as far as the cemetery, or upgrading the road to "a gravel or paved surface to allow access for all sorts of vehicles," as far as the cemetery.

Along with those options, the feasibility study would examine the possibility of improving the road surface of Dry Hill Cross Road, and the spur from Dry Hill Cross Road down to the cemetery, a much longer (three to three and a half mile) route, partially on exposed ledge and crossing an intermittent stream.

Two other options for the town to consider would involve alternate routes to the cemetery, over milder grades, crossing

over land owned by Senn, which the town would have to take by eminent domain, unless an amicable land swap or easement could be arranged.

Abbondanzio said the \$10,000 to fund the feasibility study would come from "program income money," available for such projects at the discretion of the board. The results of the study would allow the board to bring a preferred plan for accessing the public cemetery to town meeting for approval.

LaRoche said the town should consider the side effect of upgrading the historical layout of Dry Hill Road, taking into consideration the possibility that new house lots could be created in an area where much of the land is protected or conserved by the Turners Falls Water District and other entities. He said a walking trail could tie into the nearby Monadnock-Metacomet walking trail.

In past meetings before the board, Montague cemetery commissioner Sue SanSoucie has spoken in favor of regular vehicular access to the cemetery, so that relatives of those interred at the public cemetery can have meaningful access to their gravesites. Recent visits to the cemetery have shown the graves of veterans and civilians alike to be in deplorable condition: cracked, broken, upended, and covered with overgrowth.

In other news, the selectboard approved police chief Ray Zukowski's recommendation to call for a new civil service list for reserve officers, following the departure of a number of recently trained reservists to departments in area communities able to pay higher salaries than Montague. They reinstated officer John Perrault on the reserve list; he is currently working for the town of Erving. The board also appointed Marsha Odle as the new fulltime supervisor of the Montague police dispatch center, at \$15.21 per hour, 40 hours a week, and hired dispatcher David Fortier at the rate of \$13.35 per hour.

Chief Zukowski said only two Montague residents, to his knowledge, had signed up so far to take the police officer's civil service exam in May. "That's discouraging, to be honest with you," he said.

Montague wastewater treatment plant supervisor Bob Trombley told the board his department is working with the Australis Aquaculture plant in the industrial park to ameliorate a persistent odor that has been bothering neighbors in the Norman Circle area, and elsewhere along the sewer route from the plant. Trombley confirmed the source of the "rotten egg" smell was a high sulfide

count in a three gallon a minute wastestream from the plant's 200,000 gallon manure tank. He said the plant is adjusting the mix in the tank to alleviate the odor, first adjusting the pH and now, on the recommendation of the Department of Environmental Protection, adding hydrogen peroxide. "Very small levels of sulfide can cause a detectable odor. They are working on it," Trombley said.

Trombley also received approval for change orders on the Avenue A combined sewer upgrades, including an additional \$3,327.55 needed to pay for extra excavation and fill required to lay down a stable

base beneath pipe in an area where the contractor ran into peat deposits.

"Do you run into a lot of peat?" queried board member Al Ross.

"Near bodies of water," replied Trombley.

"Is this in the area of the old barge canal?" asked Abbondanzio.

"Exactly," Trombley replied.

Perhaps the town could send the bill to the Proprietors of the Upper Locks and Canals.

In another historical note, a research jaunt to the Greenfield public library microfilm room turned up this item from the

summer of 1935, from the *Greenfield Recorder - Gazette*:

**Dry Hill Road Repairs Sanctioned.** "Further repairs to the foundation of Dry Hill Road to be conducted as part of the FERA program [Federal Relief Administration] were approved by Montague's selectmen at the meeting last night... The road has been a source of complaint for some time, requiring periodic repairs, especially in the spring when new gravelling and drainage becomes imperative."

So take heart, Mr. LaRoche. The problem has preceded you, and will likely plague the town for some years to come.

## NEW SMOKING DECK



*Morny & Schmidt employees Seth Hagar and Mark Peterson work on breaking up sidewalk for pier footings for a new smoking deck for St. Kazimierz Hall on Avenue A in Turners Falls. Hagar and Peterson happen to be smokers, and seem satisfied with the assignment.*

## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

### Repeat Offender: Heroin and Cocaine on 13th Street

**Friday 3-9**

7:03 p.m. Report of a motor vehicle theft from an X Street address. Vehicle found to have been towed.

**Saturday 3-10**

9:17 p.m. After execution of a drug task force warrant at 8 13th Street, [redacted] was arrested and charged with possession of a class B drug (subsequent offense), possession with intent to distribute within 1000 feet of a school zone, possession of cocaine with intent to distribute, and knowingly being present where heroin is kept. [redacted]

[redacted] was arrested and charged with possession of a class B drug (subsequent offense), possession to distribute class B

drug (not cocaine), possession with intent to distribute within 1000 feet of a school zone, permit injury to an elder or disabled, possession of a class A drug, and unlawful possession of ammunition. [redacted] was arrested and charged with possession of a class B drug. [redacted] was arrested and charged with knowingly being present where heroin was kept, possession of a class B drug. [redacted] was arrested and charged with knowingly being present where heroin was kept and possession of a class B drug.

[Chief Ray Zukowski said [redacted] had been arrested at the same location on substantially the same charges "about

three years ago. We'll be keeping a close eye on that situation," he said.]

11:24 p.m. Report of a breaking and entering into Montague Center School. Burglar alarm was sounding. False alarm.

**Monday 3-12**

5:53 p.m. Report of a larceny from a 5th Street address. A license plate was stolen. Report taken.

**Tuesday 3-13**

2:09 a.m. [redacted] Greenfield, was arrested on a default warrant.

3:59 p.m. Report of a fight at a Turnpike Road address. Found to be two kids. Parties spoken to. Peace restored.

# Fashion Finds a Creative Outlet in the Hands of Ami Podlenski

BY NINA ROSSI

**MONTAGUE CITY** - It was a frumpy, flouncey green dress in a sheer, flowered organza that had seen better days. Thanks to the magic hands and creative mind of Montague City resident Ami Podlenski, this outmoded garment was transformed into a "Vintage Vixen's Show Stopping Dress," as it was heralded when it appeared in the November issue of *Altered Couture*.

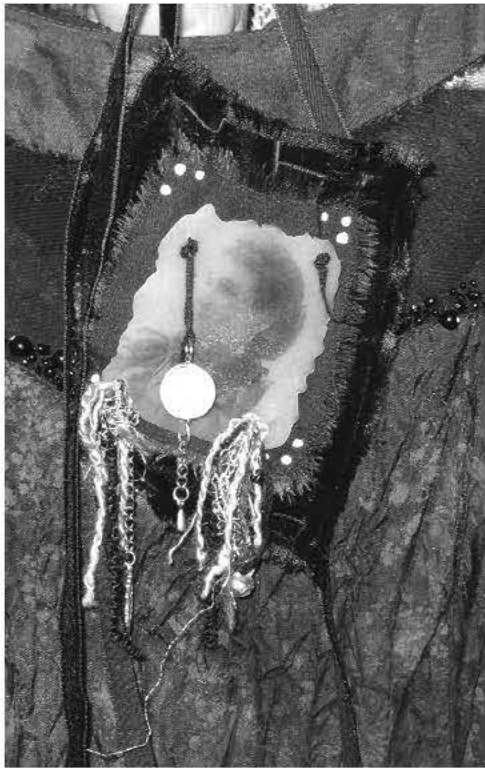
*Altered Couture*, a special, bi-annual publication of the magazine *Somerset Studio: the Art of Paper and Mixed Media* features unique, one-of-a-kind clothing and accessories created by artists for fun, for pleasure, and for profit. Featured clothing appears with a detailed description of its creation written by the individual artists, some well known in the field of altered clothing, and some, like Podlenski, who are just starting out. "It was so exciting to have my work judged alongside with world renowned artists, whose books I'd read and admired, and to have it published alongside theirs!" she enthused.

With little or no formal training in art, Podlenski, 26, credits her voracious reading habits for many of her techniques and ideas. She started altering vintage clothing "just for myself - with no real direction" until she was challenged by a call for artists in the *Somerset Studio* magazine. The frumpy dress had lain dormant in her posses-

sion for "well over a decade" until its current transformation.

First, Podlenski trimmed off the over blouse where it attached to the waistband and shoulders to expose the underbodice, with its delicate netting across the bust. Then she gave it a dye bath in an old stock pot on her kitchen stove, only partially saturating the fabric with black dye. The effect is that of a deep, crushed looking crimson, and the flowers on the organza become almost submerged, yet lend a mysterious, mottled variation to the hue of the overskirt. She added black beads along the edge of the bodice, across the front, and fashioned a unique, ribbon tied sash for the waistline.

The focal point in this sash is a portrait of Podlenski's great-great-grandmother, trans-



ferred onto translucent polymer clay. Using a photocopy of an original portrait, the artist poured the liquid polymer onto



PHOTOS NINA ROSSI

Artist/Dressmaker Ami Podlenski of Montague City displays one of her velvet trimmed re-creations.

The dress features a portrait (inset, left) of her great-great-grandmother.

it and baked it in the oven. After the polymer hardened, she rubbed the paper off to reveal the image, which then looks encased in the clear clay. This she mounted onto a square of velvet that she had stamped designs into and embellished with, well, just the right bits of this and that visual spice is how I'd describe it. Ribbons sewn at the sides attach the piece around the dress.

What vintage vixen would be complete without a velvet wristband to match? Podlenski

delights in ripping velvet - she loves the fluff it makes, and saves it for other art projects - and so this accessory consists of thin strips of raw edged, ripped velvet sewn on a wide ribbon that snaps around the wrist. The intriguing textures and colors belie the simplicity of its construction. Overall, the ensemble has wonderful presence of mind combined with free-spirited risk-taking and innate flair for design, qualities that obviously impressed the editors and publishers of

*Somerset Studio* magazine when they selected it as a feature.

Podlenski's hometown is Greenfield, but she loves living in Montague. She is excited to be a tenant in one of the 26 apartments owned by the Pioneer Cooperative Housing of Franklin County, and also serves on the board of directors of that agency. She also is a great fan of the Montague Public Libraries, and is actively involved in the Tuesday evening art groups that meet there twice a month. Dubbed "Ladies Night Out," the group has explored a variety of crafts, including scrapbooking, candle making, altered books, basket making, and concocting lotions and creams for body and face. Members decide what they want to do for each workshop, but individuals are always welcome to bring their own work to do in the company of others. It is open to the public to join, and Podlenski said there

are usually at least eight attendees on any given night.

What's she working on now? Another dress to enter for possible inclusion in *Altered Couture*, this one incorporating turn of the century portraits printed on silk, tiny silver frames, and a beaded underbust. Sounds like an exciting combination of history, serendipity, and luxurious materials with a contemporaneous pleasure in process and novel techniques.

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# March Madness

## Seventy Degrees, with Snow in the Forecast

STORY AND PHOTOS  
BY KEVIN FOLEY

**TURNERS FALLS** - A break in the clouds came on Wednesday, March 14th as Turners Falls basked in 70-degree weather, short pants and shirtsleeves made their appearance, and daffodils broke through the crusted snow. Children were outside playing, ducks were migrating north along the migratory flyway above the canal, and some Turners residents were just trying to enjoy the warm weather while it lasted.

"Winter weather? What winter weather?" said Dottie Center, Turners Falls resident, delighting in the warm day. Center and Alan Laffin, another Turners denizen, were enjoying the weather *en route* to a shopping trip to the Food City plaza. The

two hope the park across the street from the plaza opens soon, so they can stroll the newly laid out walks.

People of all ages were able to get outside as a result of the



*Alan Laffin and Dottie Center look forward to the park opening*

warm day, including Steve Fishman, another Turners resident, who was walking on the Avenue with his two 21-month-

old sons. "I love it! These guys can finally get out of the house." Fishman plans to take his twins on a lot more walks around town when the warm weather is here to stay. He hopes the park will open early this year, due to the warm weather. "I love what they've done with it," he added.

John Brunner Jr. and his son William were enjoying the warm winter day by taking a walk around town. "It's nice to get out and walk around," he said.

"I've been working on my dirt bike lately because it's been so warm," his

son Will added. He hopes to be out on his dirt bike earlier than usual this year.

Steven Brown, a resident of Avenue A, offered his own hopes for an early spring. "I'm looking forward to not having heating bills... seeing some people around town who have been hiding out all winter... (and) to a nice spring with not a lot of rain."

The warm winter hasn't been



*The bike path is still too rough for roller skating*



*A cyclist enjoys the obstacle course at one end of the Power Street bridge*

good all around though, according to Center and Laffin, who think some animals were confused by the weather. Laffin said some of the birds didn't migrate this year.

some snow showers this Saturday and Sunday, followed by rain and more snow showers on Monday. The high temperature for those days is expected to be 34 degrees, 38 degrees and 39 degrees, respectively, according to the weather forecast. So don't put your snowshoes away just yet.



*The Fishman twins out for a sunny afternoon stroll*



*William and John Brunner, Jr. take a walk around town*

**SCHOOLS** from page 1 Hillcrest and expand Montague Center and Sheffield. It quickly became evident that the committee had rescinded only one of the two votes they had taken pertinent to reconfiguration, therefore leaving the schools in an "untenable situation," in Ted Castro-Santos' words. G-M school attorney Fred Dupre told the committee that if they wanted to return to the status quo, the configuration operative at GMRSD schools today, they needed to also rescind the vote of January 23rd.

While most committee members affirmed their desire to move the Sheffield 6th grade to the middle school, as expressed in the January 23rd vote, they agreed it was necessary to wipe the slate clean and start again on the issue of reconfiguring the elementary schools. "We need to go back to the beginning to get to a better place," said Deb Bourbeau. The committee voted

6 to 1 to rescind the January 23rd vote, with Colton voting no, and Castro-Santos abstaining.

With time limited and intra-district choice still ahead on the agenda, chair Mary Kociela asked the committee to hold further discussion of K-5 grade spans at the elementary schools until a future meeting.

Next, committee vice-chair Valeria Smith suggested that the question of Montague 6th graders moving to the middle school should be resolved that night, with a new vote, so that parents and children would know what to expect. Kristin Boyle stated that the 5th graders at Sheffield had been informed about their imminent move to the middle school, and were excited about the prospect. She said that she did not want to disappoint them. Bourbeau and Sue Henry supported Boyle's rationale. The motion passed 7:2, but not before Montague Center parent Nancy

Paglia said her third grade son was waiting in the hall. He and all his classmates had been told they were going to have a fourth grade at Montague Center, she said. "What about disappointing them? They were ecstatic. My son was ecstatic." She left the room in tears.

Castro-Santos voted no. He explained he originally abstained from the January vote to move the Montague 6th graders because he felt the issue had not been studied or discussed adequately. But he said the committee took that action in the belief that Sheffield would not have enough space to accommodate the 6th grade, due to the planned move to Sheffield of the younger students from Hillcrest. "If we're pulling back, pull back all the way and start over," he said. Colton agreed and also voted no.

A motion by Colton asking the committee to state that a non-binding referendum on the

Montague ballot for the May 21st election, calling for the closing of the Montague Center School, is a "violation of the process" that establishes the school committee, by district agreement, as the sole authority over school closings, failed by a vote of 4 to 3, with Sue Henry abstaining.

Subsequently, the committee agreed to move amendments forward to town meetings in Gill and Montague to establish intra-district choice in the Gill and Montague elementary schools.

Regardless of whether these amendments pass, federal regulation under No Child Left Behind will require Gill Elementary to accept students who would otherwise attend Sheffield School starting next year, if their parents request the move, as long as openings exist for them at Gill, and as long as Sheffield remains a "school in need of improvement" on MCAS test scores. Since Montague Center, by vote

of the committee, has now returned to a K-3 school, and there are 24 students at the Montague Center 2nd grade, there will be no openings there for Sheffield students. Superintendent Sue Gee said the district will have to put aside 15% of its expected allotment of \$340,000 in Title I funding next year to provide transportation for students from Sheffield who may wish to choose into Gill Elementary, about \$51,000. This money would otherwise be used for reading specialists in the schools, Gee said.

In other news, the school committee announced it would close applications by the end of the month for an interim superintendent, to take the position being vacated at the end of June by Gee, who is moving to the Quabbin Regional School District. The committee plans to hire someone for that post by May.

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## THEATER from 1

inside the Shady Glen, before Jane discovered it could be subdued by a quick trip to the Arctic?

Well, with global warming well advanced, theater-goers at the Turners Falls High School were ready for whatever mayhem might ensue last weekend as the curtain rose on the TFHS/GFMS production of *Little Shop of Horrors*, a Roger Corman camp send-up of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* with some great singing and dancing. Under Melissa Urey's expert direction, the enthusiastic cast did not disappoint. Ghetto life, drug abuse, violence against women and vegetarianism, it was all there in glorious 3-D as venality and a Venus-flytrap on steroids won the day. It was a triumphantly buoyant *tour-de-farce*, starring Ben Garber as the hapless mensch Seymour Krelboyne, who befriends a blood-thirsty triffid named Audrey II, finds fame and fortune and wins the girl. And then kills her. Before committing suicide. Time to re-pot those houseplants!

This is great stuff, and Urey's ensemble played it with just the right touch of insouciance, leaving the proud parents in the audience unsure whether to gasp or cheer. And since no one else is credited in the program for choreography, we can only thank the director herself for staging the energetic song and dance numbers that delighted throughout: they were beautifully

executed and brought the entire theater to life in a whirl of sound and movement.

It all started innocently enough in a humble little flower shop on Skid Row. The owner, Mr. Mushnick, (Christian Drew, with an accent thick enough to boil matzoh), is going over his account books. The hour of reckoning is nigh: they haven't brought in a penny all day. "It's 6:00 p.m. and we haven't sold as much as one fern!" The reason why is right outside the shop window: drunkards and bums stumbling around, singing and leaping off the stage. It reminds you of the bad old days on the Avenue, when undesirables congregated and decent people didn't dare go shopping.

But Mushnick has a helper, an orphan named Seymour whom he took in and sheltered as a boy. Seymour has developed a budding interest in exotic plant species, including one odd looking specimen he picked up somewhere, maybe down by the Chinese market on 2nd Street during last week's lunar eclipse. He's named it Audrey II, and it's kind of a cross between a peony and a man-eating tiger. When he puts it in the window, customers start flocking in. Soon national



On Skid Row, Garber and Isles center stage, with the Doo-Wop girls flanking them left and right

press attention and lucrative merchandizing deals follow.

Next thing you know, Mushnick (whose early screen tests at MCTV have paid off: Drew is a natural comedian who has honed his art to the edge in recent years) is ringing the till like nobody's business, and the stumblebums on the street corner have been swept aside by a cleaning crew bent on renovating the district. It's kind of like when the planters on the Avenue start blooming: pretty soon the artists discover the place and before you know it the downtown business owners have to fight their way through the crowds of customers to unlock the front door.

Meanwhile, the florist's down-on-her luck shop girl (Audrey I, played swimmingly by Chelsea Isles) dreams of a suburban ranch-style house on the Hill, with a pool out back and a disposal in the sink. She sings about "Somewhere That's Green," and puts on heavy make-up to disguise the black eyes her boyfriend gives her. Sadly, you can run into women like her any

day of the week on the Avenue, still.

Audrey's boyfriend is a sadist. He has a weakness for nitrous oxide. Yeah... he's a dentist. Orin Scrivello, played by Ethan Kociela in a fine star turn, actually makes bad look good. Girls, there's a lesson here, and you don't need to wind up at NELCWIT to learn it. Just 'cause he wears a leather jacket and rides a motorcycle doesn't mean he's worth the pain.

Audrey has problems with self-image, and she's slow to reach for something better than her drug-addicted batterer. Maybe it's the handcuffs and the broken arm, who knows? But slowly, as Seymour's fame and fortune grows, she begins to look upon him as a possible love interest. So, he's a murderer. With the men in this town, there's not much to choose from.

Audrey's aspirations are not the only thing growing up on stage. Her namesake, that little green monster, Audrey II, is growing too, on a special diet. Fresh blood. After each

propitiatory offering, the anemic shrinking violet of the first scene gets bigger, and badder, and better. Kudos to Randy Ames and family for designing and constructing those successively larger, extremely realistic man-eating plant specimens. With the voice-over talents of Kris York in the background ("Feed Me!"), it is a tribute to the star power of Garber, Isles and company that this vampire veggie didn't eat up every scene and steal the show.

Speaking of star power, those Doo-Wop girls are the outer limit! A half-dozen of the most talented singers and dancers in the entire constellation of high school luminaries, Lara Ames, Katie Bailey, Abbey Daniel-Green, Julie Seard, Lynn Seard, and Aimee Shattuck lit up the stage and delighted the audience every time they stepped foot on it. It is tempting to single out one or two of them for special praise, but impossible: they were all, without exception, stellar.

Let's get back to Isles and Garber for a moment. So, they are flawed characters doomed to wind up in a vegetable's digestive tract. But their talent is such that they make their portrayals not only believable, but endearing as well. Garber had his boyish nudnik persona entirely internalized: he never strayed from character, never dropped a line, never missed a beat. By the end of the show, you quite forgave him his minor peccadilloes. He might have been more indecisive than the Prince of Denmark; he might have become, like him, an adoptive parricide, but in the end you wound up rooting for him as he tried in vain to root out the evil that grows in the hearts of men: ambition, envy, and a desire to take first prize at the Agricultural Fair.

Isles is another rare find. She is not only beautiful and poised on stage, with a pitch perfect voice and a dexterous ability to shimmy in and out of multiple costume changes in the blink of an eye, but she is able to transform a sick cookie of a starlet into a warm, vulnerable human being. No small feat. Like Nancy in *Oliver*, we loved her to the end, and hoped she would somehow find the strength to ditch the abusive men in her life before they did her in.

No such luck. This is a comedy without a moral center, where vice triumphs over virtue and the meek become plant food. But look around the Avenue. That's life, ain't it?

## WORKSHOP

continued from pg 1

tance to communities seeking downtown revitalization. MDI works with communities across the state to address economic and cultural development issues. Rather than try to impose Boston-initiated ideas onto a community, MDI seeks to work with what already exists in a town to further its vitality. The Massachusetts Cultural Council, the major funder of RiverCulture, is committed to fostering the arts in the everyday lives of communities across the Commonwealth. Artist Link is a new collaborative effort to create a dynamic environment for Massachusetts artists by taking a leadership role on artist space by providing individual artists, developers and municipalities with targeted information and

technical assistance, and by advocating for relevant policy changes at the state level.

The Creative Economy Workshop will bring a variety of economists and artists together from all over the state to strategize about how to build a flourishing arts culture in Western Massachusetts. "When you have a community that is fostering the arts, you also have a community that is fostering business," noted Lisa Davol, coordinator of Turners Falls RiverCulture. "Arts and culture do put a positive spin on the town, making it an attractive environment for business." More than 100 participants from the entire region are expected to attend the one-day workshop.

The workshop will open with a tour of downtown Turners Falls. Following the tour, workshop sessions will

focus on a variety of topics. Meri Jenkins, manager of the John and Abigail Adams Arts Program at the Mass Cultural Council will lead a session on "Culture as Strategy in Downtown Revitalization Efforts." Jason Shupbach, director of Artist Link, will focus on "Adaptive Reuse and the Role of the Cultural Community."

"Evaluating the Role of Cultural Economic Development" will be the subject of a session led by Clyde Barrows, Professor of Policy Studies at UMass Dartmouth. Joseph C. Thompson, director of MASS MOCA, will deliver the keynote address during the noontime luncheon.

Anyone interested in attending the workshop may register free, but since space is limited, the organizers urge the public to sign up quickly. For a complete schedule of

events and speakers, as well as registration forms go to: [www.mass.gov/dhcd/Temp/07/MDIworkshop.doc](http://www.mass.gov/dhcd/Temp/07/MDIworkshop.doc).

For further information about the event or registration, contact Emily Hahn at 617-573-1364, or via: [elizabeth.hahn@state.ma.us](mailto:elizabeth.hahn@state.ma.us).



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# Mysteries of Curbside Recycling Revealed

**BY EMILY MONOSSON**  
**MONTAGUE CENTER** - I shouldn't admit this, but I get an odd thrill on trash collection day. Maybe it's because our two trashcans are packed so full that it's a relief to have the stuff carted away. Or maybe it's because waking up to empty barrels means I've actually remembered to pick up some stickers from the Mini-Mart and put them on the barrels. I don't mind paying the \$2.50 a barrel; in fact, I think it's more than fair. After all, thanks to the incredible recycling program in town, it's only once or twice a month we even drag the barrels to the curb.

For years I've ignored that nagging question, does recycling really reduce the amount of waste we toss from our homes? Am I justified in bragging to friends and family that we generate only two barrels or so of trash a month? Years ago (in another town) there were rumors that our carefully sorted bottles and paper ended up with the rest of the trash - in the landfill. Some part of me wanted to be content in my ignorance, in my faith that unethical recyclers were a thing of the past or something that only happened in big cities.

But, one afternoon while listening to a National Public Radio story on recycling those new compact fluorescent bulbs, the spiral energy saving bulbs you have to wrestle from all that energy intensive plastic packaging, the commentator noted how few consumers are even aware the new bulbs contain mercury, although each package clearly states that: LAMP CONTAINS MERCURY; Manage in Accord with Disposal Laws; See [www.lamprecycle.org](http://www.lamprecycle.org).

Listening to the story and aware that I limit her tuna fish consumption to a can a week because of my concern about mercury, my daughter Sophie asked, "What do they do with the mercury, and how do they get it out?"

Good question. In fact, what happens to all the stuff we leave curbside? The yogurt containers, juice cartons, milk jugs, tin cans, and cereal boxes. And why can't we recycle eggs cartons, pizza boxes and plant pots?

According to Jan Ameen, director of the Franklin County Solid Waste Management District, there truly is an afterlife for our milk jugs, soda bottles and computer paper, though dis-

posal is the end of the road for the lowly egg carton.

"Egg cartons use the shortest paper fiber," Ameen explained. "Basically, they are the end of the paper recycling line. The fiber cannot be used again, so when they go to the paper mill for recycling, they dissolve and end up in the wastewater."

"Pizza boxes can be recycled if they're not greasy. Most recycling paper mills don't use chemicals, just warm water to dissolve the paper. There isn't a good way to get rid of the grease from this process."

In contrast, all the used and reused printing and computer paper, all the old bills, envelopes, and technical reports on obscure topics I finally cleared from my filing cabinet fared better than the egg cartons and pizza boxes.

"All of the paper from western Massachusetts," said Ameen, "ends up at a paper recycling mill in Fitchburg, North Shore Fibers. They make Monopoly boards and book covers, mostly, and other paper products."

It was good news to find my old paper might be hosting games of Monopoly, or protecting someone's storybook, but I wasn't really worried about paper recycling. It's been around for decades, and it seems these days all sorts of paper products boasts recycled content, including my Seventh Generation toilet paper, which proudly proclaims the "post-consumer" content (post-consumer meaning made from the stuff we leave curbside) as 80%. Not bad. Neither did I worry about recycling cans. Tin and steel are valuable, so it makes sense we've been recycling them for years.

But what about plastics and their array of letters and symbols: PETE, HDPE, LDPE, PP, PS? Why do we no longer sort them?

The American Chemistry Council reports that in 2005, 922 million pounds of HDPE bottles (those thick plastic bottles like milk jugs and laundry detergent bottles) were recycled, as were over 2 billion pounds of PET and PP bottles (PET are



DAVOL PHOTO

things like coke and juice bottles, and PP are polypropylene - those "next generation" bottles that don't add a plastic taste to your drinking water.) This represents only about 25 - 30% of all recyclable bottles out there. Sadly, many still end up in the trash. Still, that's a lot of recycled plastic.

And those plastic pots? Ameen said, "Plant pots are not recyclable because of the dirt, and because they are often made from black plastic" (no black plastic is recyclable). Though a web search led me to a couple of programs specifically for plant pot recycling, one in New Jersey and one in Missouri, it seems that gardeners nationwide are stymied by the inability to recycle these items locally.

For Montague, the first stop for all of our bottles, boxes and papers is the Springfield Materials Recycling Facility, where plastic recyclables are sorted according to type and then sent off for further processing, depending on the item. For plastics, that means recycling them into anything from fiberfill to polyester-like fibers, to those blue recycling bins, to plastic lumber furniture. Ever have a cinder land on your new fleece jacket and watch it melt its way through the fabric? That's because fleece is plastic! And while some companies still rely on "virgin" polyester to produce fleece, there is now EcoSpun, ECO-Fleece, and EcoPile products made primarily or entirely from our recycled bottles. Even large corporations like Malden Mills, which produces Polartec, are touting their recycled fleece products.

But, I wondered what hap-

pens then, when the fleece eventually becomes too ratty to donate to the Salvation Army? Patagonia, the mega-outdoor retail store now recycles old fleece into new products, though they note that their process is currently limited to Polartec, and their own capilene and cotton products from Patagonia. On their website, they say they hope other companies begin taking advantage of old fleece as well.

Ah, but what about those mercury containing fluorescent bulbs? The good news is, according to the EPA, the new bulbs help decrease mercury emissions by reducing the demand for electricity. Primary sources of electricity are coal-fired plants, which still routinely emit mercury into the atmosphere.

The bad news is there is no curbside service for the bulbs, and many distributors don't have a program in place to recycle them. Fortunately, this shouldn't be too much of a problem, since the new bulbs are supposed to last for five years, or 8,000 hours. That's right - five years, and if they don't last that long, all you have to do is send in your receipt and UPC (hah!) and get a refund. But when the time does come, and it certainly came sooner than five years for a few of our bulbs (unfortunately, those UPC's were recycled long ago), you can take them to the

Montague Transfer Station. From there, they are sent off to Veolia Environmental Services in Stoughton, MA for recycling. At the moment it will cost you 50 cents to recycle a fluorescent bulb in Montague, but in future years, when we all start recycling our bulbs *en masse*, there will hopefully be more options.

Veolia specializes in recycling lighting and electronic wastes. On their website they note that an "estimated 600 million fluorescent lamps are disposed of in U.S. landfills, amounting to 30,000 pounds of mercury waste." That's a lot of mercury.

Veolia uses an enclosed process to crush the bulbs and extract mercury and other components. In the end, the company's website declares that all parts, including glass, metal end-caps, powder, and mercury, can be reused.

So next time you flip on your compact fluorescent, and pull on your favorite fleece for a game of Monopoly, who knows, you might be enjoying the fruits of your recycling efforts!

For more information on recycling in Franklin County and beyond check out:

Franklin County Solid Waste Management District: Here you can get information on recycling in Franklin County and on what your community recycles: [www.franklincountywastedistrict.org](http://www.franklincountywastedistrict.org).

Earth 911: A site that provides you with disposal and recycling information for any zip code in the country. [www.earth911.org](http://www.earth911.org).

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# EARTH TALK

## The Cost of Solar Power

From the Editors of *E: the Environmental Magazine*

Dear EarthTalk: I'm "pro-solar" all the way for the sake of the environment, but solar power has not historically been very cost-effective. What innovations are coming down the pike that will bring costs down to make solar competitive with other energy sources?

— Will Proctor  
Richmond, VA

The prospect of generating pollution-free power from the sun's rays is appealing, but to date the low price of oil combined with the high costs of developing new technology have prevented the widespread adoption of solar power in the U.S. and beyond. At a current cost of 25 to 50 cents per kilowatt-hour, solar power costs as much as five times more than conventional fossil fuel based electricity. And dwindling supplies of polysilicon, the element found in traditional photovoltaic cells, are not helping the problem.

According to Gary Gerber of the Berkeley, California-based Sun Light & Power, not long



Engineers are working hard to get solar power's costs down, and expect it to be price-competitive with fossil fuels within 20 years.

after Ronald Reagan moved into the White House in 1980 and removed the solar collectors from the roof that Jimmy Carter had installed, tax credits for solar development disappeared and the industry plunged "over a cliff."

Federal spending on solar energy picked up under the Clinton administration, but trailed off again once George

W. Bush took office. But growing climate change worries and high oil prices have forced the Bush administration to reconsider its stance on alternatives like solar, and the White House has proposed \$148 million for solar energy development in 2007, up almost 80 percent from what it invested in 2006.

In the realm of research and development, enterprising engi-

neers are working hard to get solar power's costs down, and expect it to be price-competitive with fossil fuels within 20 years. One technological innovator is California-based Nanosolar, which replaces the silicon used to absorb sunlight and convert it into electricity with a thin film of copper, indium, gallium and selenium (CIGS). Says Nanosolar's Martin Roscheisen, CIGS-based cells are flexible and more durable, making them easier to install in a wide range of applications. Roscheisen expects he will be able to build a 400-megawatt electricity plant for about a tenth of the price of a comparable silicon-based plant. Other companies making waves with CIGS-based solar cells include New York's DayStar Technologies and California's Miasolé.

Another recent innovation in solar power is the co-called "spray-on" cell, such as those made by Massachusetts' Konarka. Like paint, the composite can be sprayed on to other materials, where it can harness the sun's infrared rays to power cell phones and other

portable or wireless devices. Some analysts think spray-on cells could become five times more efficient than the current photovoltaic standard.

Environmentalists and mechanical engineers aren't the only ones bullish on solar these days. According to the Cleantech Venture Network, a forum of investors interested in clean renewable energy, venture capitalists poured some \$100 million into solar start-ups of all sizes in 2006 alone, and expect to commit even more money in 2007. Given the venture capital community's interest in relatively short-term returns, it's a good bet that some of today's promising solar start-ups will be tomorrow's energy behemoths.

Contacts: Sun Light & Power, [www.sunlightandpower.com](http://www.sunlightandpower.com); Nanosolar, [www.nanosolar.com](http://www.nanosolar.com); DayStar Technologies, [www.daystartech.com](http://www.daystartech.com); Miasolé, [www.miasole.com](http://www.miasole.com); PowerFilm, [www.powerfilmsolar.com](http://www.powerfilmsolar.com); Konarka, [www.konarka.com](http://www.konarka.com).

Got an Environmental Question? Email: [earthtalk@emagazine.com](mailto:earthtalk@emagazine.com).

## The Old Rugged Cross

BY JOSEPH A. PARZYCH

**TURNERS FALLS** - The cross atop Ste. Anne's church steeple, proudly viewed by the French congregation when the church was built in 1886, is now history, stored away at Our Lady of Peace on Seventh Street until called to serve a slightly less lofty purpose. Ste. Anne's, Sacred Heart and St. Mary's combined in January of last year to form one new church, Our Lady of Peace.

"We are storing the cross for now," said Father Stanley Aksamit, pastor of Our Lady of Peace. "Later, when handicapped access is completed, we plan to have the cross displayed in a garden along with the [Ste. Anne's] church bells removed earlier. A statue of Mary that had been displayed on a shelf at Ste. Anne's, produced and donated by Noah Rigali, who owned the monument works in Turners, has also been removed and will also be displayed in the garden area," Aksamit said.

The cross is constructed of wooden four by fours, clad in copper, and is about five feet tall. A copper lightning rod ran from just above the cross to the ground. The Amish shun lightning rods, figuring lightning will strike if God so wills. Catholics are apparently more pragmatic - no sense in tempting the



PARZYCH PHOTO

Lord.

Davenport Crane Service used their Grove 120 ton hydraulic crane with 122 feet of boom to hoist Allen LaPointe and Frank Holzhauer up to the top of the steeple in a basket in order to saw the cross off of the steeple with a battery operated supersaw. Barry Videlo was at the controls of the crane. Foreman Donald Rowell, in charge of the job, guided Videlo with hand signals as Videlo operated the crane, hoisting the men up to the top of the steeple and back down again.

Skies were clear throughout the operation. No lightning bolts fell.

Left: The cross atop Ste. Anne's church steeple came down on Tuesday, after 121 years atop the spire. Here, Davenport Construction's Allen LaPointe and Frank Holzhauer are carried up via crane, to remove the cross for storage and eventual reuse at Our Lady of Peace on 7th Street.

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TO THE PUBLIC'S HEALTH

# Food Borne Illnesses

First in a Two-part Series  
BY JOAN PAJAK



**MONTAGUE** - Although the food supply in the United States is considered safe, on occasion it can become contaminated with a variety of germs or toxins. Illness that results from consuming contaminated food is referred to as a food-borne illness. The term food poisoning is considered a type of food-borne illness, but the term refers specifically to when a food item comes in contact with a toxic substance like mercury, insecticide, pesticide, or some naturally occurring toxin, as in

eating 'the wrong kind' of mushroom. After consuming contaminated beverages or food, you can develop anything from a short, mild illness to a life-threatening disease. The CDC estimates that 76 million Americans get sick, more than 300,000 are hospitalized, and 5,000 people die from food-borne illnesses each year. In fact, more people die of food-borne illness than die in fires, according to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH).

The Center for Disease Control lists more than 250 different kinds of food-borne diseases. Most of these are infections caused by different bacteria, viruses, and parasites found in some food product we have eaten. The MDPH, via your local board of health, conducts surveillance on 48 of the most common food-borne diseases. After the 'germs' are ingested, there is generally a delay, called the incubation period, before the symptoms of illness appear.

This delay may range from hours to days, depending on the organism, and on the quantity of the pathogen ingested. During the incubation period, the germs pass through the stomach into the intestine, attach to the cells lining the intestinal walls, and begin to multiply there. Some germs stay in the intestine, some produce a toxin that is absorbed into the bloodstream, and some can directly invade deeper body tissues. The symptoms produced depend greatly on the type of germ involved. Bacteria, for example, generally have a short incubation period, compared to parasites or viruses, because they are capable of multiplying in food before we even eat it. So you are likely to notice symptoms of bacterial infection much sooner. Many organisms cause similar symptoms with diarrhea, abdominal cramps, and nausea being the most common. There is so much overlap it is hard to identify which germ is causing

a given illness unless laboratory tests are undertaken to identify it, or unless the illness is part of a recognized outbreak.

The concern with illnesses typified by diarrhea or vomiting is that they can lead to dehydration if you lose more body fluids and salts (electrolytes) than you take in. Replacing lost fluids and electrolytes and keeping up with fluid intake are essential. If diarrhea is severe, oral rehydration solutions such as Pedialyte, Oralyte, or Ceralyte are available at your local drug store. These are preferable to drink than sports drinks such as Gatorade; the latter do not replace the losses adequately for diarrheal illness. Preparations of bismuth subsalicylate (e.g., Pepto-Bismol) can reduce the duration and severity of diarrhea, but these medications should be avoided if there is fever or blood in the stools, because they may make the illness worse. The MDPH recommends contacting your primary health care provider for a diar-

rheal illness if it is accompanied by:

- Fever greater than 101.5 F, measured orally
- Blood in the stools
- Prolonged vomiting that prevents keeping liquids down
- Decrease in urination, a dry mouth and throat, and feeling dizzy when standing up
- Diarrheal illness lasting more than three days.

The Montague Board of Health has fact sheets available to the public on the most common food-borne illnesses, as well as information on 45 different disease causing agents that lead to food-borne illnesses, their typical symptoms, modes of contamination and tips for their prevention. Call 413-863-3200 ext 107 to request a copy.

Next month, part two will focus on transmission and prevention of food-borne illnesses.

*Joan Pajak is the public health nurse for the town of Montague.*

THE HEALTHY GEEZER

# Whitening Your Teeth

BY FRED CICETTI

**LEONIA, NJ** - Q. *I'm 68 and my teeth are yellow. I'm thinking of getting them whitened. Is it worth it?*

Whitening processes are effective. Based on clinical studies, 96 percent of patients with common stains experience some lightening effect.

But, be forewarned that whitening has to be repeated periodically if you want to maintain a sparkling smile. Whiteness can start to fade in a month.

The least expensive option is a bleaching system you buy over the counter and use at home yourself. These systems cost from \$10 to about \$150. A home-bleaching system that your dentist supervises runs from \$300 to \$600. Getting you teeth done in a dentist's office usually costs between \$600 and \$1,200.

In addition to these options, you can get your teeth whitened with bonded resins and porcelain veneers. Bonding a composite resin onto the teeth can change its

color. This procedure usually can be done in one office visit for \$300 - \$700 per tooth. Porcelain veneers can be bonded onto stained teeth to whiten them. Veneers require at least two office visits and cost \$700 to \$1,200 per tooth.

There are also "whitening" toothpastes. These toothpastes don't change the shade of your teeth, but help prevent stains from sticking to your teeth. Whitening toothpastes can be used to help preserve the results of a whitening procedure.

The most common reasons for yellow teeth are:

- Aging. As we age, we accumulate surface stains. Also, the insides of our teeth yellow and can be seen through the outer enamel as it gradually becomes thinner over time.
- Tobacco that is smoked or chewed.
- Beverages such as coffee, tea, red wine and dark-colored soda.
- Foods such as blueberries, tomato sauce, curry and soy sauce.



ILLUSTRATION: JESSICA HARMON

You can also have stains within a tooth. These can be caused by too much fluoride or certain antibiotics during tooth development. These stains are harder to treat than surface stains.

How should you proceed? I recommend seeing your dentist first. Don't go to the drug-store and start putting chemicals on your teeth without professional advice. Then choose the technique that is appropriate for you. Here are more details about your choices:

**At Home**

There are several types of products available for use at home, which can either be dispensed by your dentist or purchased over-the-counter.

OTC products include clear, peroxide-based gels you apply with a small brush. And there are almost invisible strips coated with a peroxide-based whitening gel that you place on your teeth.

The most popular option is doing the whitening at home under your dentist's supervision. You get trays molded to your teeth. These hold a peroxide whitening agent. The trays are usually made in one office visit. Then you wear the trays at home. Some products are used about twice a day for two weeks, and others are intended for overnight use for one to two weeks.

Products used at home usually are not as strong as those used in a dentist's office.

**In The Dentist's Office**

In-office whitening can take between 30 and 90 minutes and can require up to

three appointments. Or, whitening may involve two to six visits of about 45 minutes each.

With in-office bleaching, the whitening product is applied directly to the teeth. These products can be used in combination with heat, a special light, or a laser to accelerate the whitening.

Any cavities must be treated first, because the whitener can penetrate decay and cause sensitivity. Whitening will not work on exposed tooth roots, because roots do not have an enamel layer. Receding gums - an age-related problem - can cause roots to become exposed. Whitening also does not work on crowns or veneers.

Regular whitening may not improve the appearance of a tooth that has had root-canal treatment. A dentist can employ a special treatment to whiten the tooth from the inside.

*If you have a question, please write to fredcicetti@gmail.com.*

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# JEP'S PLACE: Faith, Hope and Other Disasters Part XXIV

## Water in the Well

**BY JOSEPH A. PARZYCH GILL** - The next time we stripped feathers, we asked Ma to tell us what happened after her husband died, and how she met Pa.

"After my husband died, I ask myself, what I'm going to do? No social security, no welfare, no family here to help. Money goes fast. I know I have to do something, so I get a job in Monument Mills sewing bedspreads. Neighbors are very

good to me; they take care of my children when I at work. But one man likes little girls. Mary is afraid of him. I am afraid, too. Worry, worry, all the time - makes my hands shake. And I'm getting bigger with baby. I can't keep up at my job. Other ladies walk slowly by my machine and, quick; shove finished bedspreads in my basket so I do not get fired."

As Ma got closer to her due date, some friends helped with a plan. She quit her job, and went to Hartford, Connecticut to stay with friends to have the baby. Other friends in Housatonic took care of Mary and John.

"After Bessie is born, I come back to Hart Street in Housatonic, where the neighbor is a bad man."

Ma showed Mary, six, how to tie a bit of bread and some sugar in a piece of cloth and dip it in milk to give to baby Bessie as a pacifier. Mary would prepare the pacifier for Bessie to suck on while she rocked the cradle until the baby stopped crying and went to sleep.

A coal stove heated the apartment. The fire died down, one day, and the apartment got cold, so Mary poured kerosene on the hot coals. The stove exploded. Stove lids flew everywhere, flames shot up to the ceiling and singed Mary's eyebrows and hair. After that, Ma worried even more, if that was possible. And the man in the downstairs apartment was still after Mary. It was a desperate situation.

"Just before Christmas, I heard about a job at a hotel - the Manaco Inn. The McDonald family owned the hotel, and they were looking for a cook. I ask

them for the job and tell them, true, that I have three small children. They hire me and give me a room on the third floor. I sell my furniture to pay the bills, and I move in the hotel."

Mary took care of Johnny - not yet two - and baby Bessie, in the hotel room, heating the bottle on an electric hot plate.

"I bring food from the kitchen, and run upstairs every chance I get, to make sure everything is O.K. The McDonald family is good to me; they don't complain."

The inn was a gathering place, located at a cross roads of sorts, and not far from the train station. Travelers as well as local people frequented the inn. The son of the hotel owner got married, but his wife soon ran away with another man. The heartbroken husband told Ma that the small hotel room was too small for a family. "Take my furniture and get yourself an apartment."

"He gave me a thick rug, green like grass, and mahogany furniture, a beautiful lamp with a colored glass shade, and lace curtains, too. He is such a good man. I get an upstairs apartment next to hotel. It is not far from Monument Mills, so I go back to work there, again. The pay is better and I need more money to pay rent. At noon, I quick go home to feed Mary, Johnny, and Bessie. But, still, I worry. The landlady says she will watch the children, but I find out later that she drinks."

A week or two later, the landlady let some kids give Bessie a ride in the baby carriage. They left the carriage to play, it trundled down the slope toward the river, tipped over, and Bessie fell out, rolling to the brink of the riverbank.

"I'm getting more and more nervous. My hands shake so I can barely work. I think to myself - danger is everywhere. The road and then the railroad tracks are on one side of house, and the river is on the other. I wonder what's going to happen next.

"I find out. I'm working sewing a bedspread. Something

tells me something terrible thing is going to happen at home. I don't ask boss, can I leave? I just jump up from my sewing machine, and I run home - fast as I can. When I get close to home, I see Johnnie is sitting on the railroad track playing with stones between the railroad ties. I hear train whistle--Too-o-to-o-ot! The train is coming. I run, but my knees go weak. Almost there, I fall down. The train is coming fast -whistle blowing, and blowing. I crawl as quick as I can and pull Johnny away, just in time. Train goes by - Whoosh! The ground shakes and I am shaking, too. I lay on the ground holding him.

A few days later, I come home and Mary has a rag around her hand - blood all over her. Her finger is gone and the stump is bleeding. The landlady, who takes care of my children, is drinking, again. Mary says the landlady's son told her to hold a stick of wood. He's going to split it. He misses, and chops off her finger. His mother throws Mary's finger in the river and ties a rag around the stump to try to stop the blood. She tells Mary, that maybe I not notice the finger is gone. I take Mary to the doctor. He sews up the stump.

I am scared. Right after that, I meet your father. He had relatives who knew both him and me. They say to me, 'Man with three children - his wife die, he needs a wife; you have three children and need a husband. We have him come here to meet you.'" Pa proposed marriage on the first date. Ma accepted before he finished asking.

She turned to look at the clock, and jumped up. "No more stories. Put away the feathers. To bed; time to go to sleep."

Before going to bed, Ma lit the lantern and went with each of us to wait patiently as we took turns going to the outhouse on the end of the long dark woodshed. Like most rural homes, in our area, we did not have a flush toilet or running water. We felt fortunate to have water in the well.

- Continued next week

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**Sudoku** By Willy White  
*The answer to this puzzle will appear in next week's issue.*

1	8		5	2	3		
4		7		6			
		3	1		9		
3	2				5		1
4	6		2		1	7	9
1		9				4	2
	3			7	5		
		4			8		5
	9	6		2		4	8

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# ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



JACK COUGHLIN ILLUSTRATION

## FRIDAY, MARCH 16TH

Cabin Fever Party and everyone is invited. Have some fun & food and meet some great people. At the Brick House, 24 Third St., Turners Falls. 4 to 7 p.m.

Deja Brew-Josh Levangie-Country, 8 - 10 p.m. No cover.

## FRIDAY & SATURDAY, MARCH 16TH & 17TH

The Academy Players Present: The Merchant of Venice at the Shea Theater, Turners Falls 7 p.m.. Call (413)-863-2281 for ticket information. Adults \$10/ Students \$5.

## SATURDAY, MARCH 17TH

3 Montague Poets: Reading & Book Release Party at The Montague Bookmill, 7 p.m. Elizabeth Hughey, Kristin Bock, and Christopher Janke. Elizabeth Hughey's collection, "Sunday Houses the Sunday House," was awarded the 2007 Iowa Poetry Prize and was recently published by the University of Iowa Press. Kristin Bock's collection, "Cloisters," won the 2007 Tupelo Press Poetry Contest and is forthcoming from Tupelo Press. Christopher Janke's poetry collection, "Structure of the Embryonic Rat Brain 8," won the 2007 Fence Modern Poets Series and was recently published by Fence Books. 367-9206 for more information.

Deja Brew: *Ronald Meck*-Celtic music. 9 to 11p.m. No cover

Spring Gardening Symposium at Frontier Reg'l High School. www.wmassmastergardeners.org

Jamie Anderson, singer-songwriter will be performing at the Echo Lake Coffeehouse, Leverett, 7:30 pm. "For me, folk music tells a story about folks, simple truth-telling and magical mythology that invites the listener to lean in to the larger circle of life. Jamie Anderson is in that circle and she is singing some wonderful songs." -- Holly Near

Rt. 63 Road House: *Love Bomb!* 9:30 p.m. Come to dance! St. Pats Party-Adam Duncan Memorial Pool Tournament.

St. Patrick's Day Dinner, Warwick Town Hall. Benefit for Trinitarian Congregational Church, Warwick. Corned beef & cabbage, carrots, Irish soda bread, beverages & homemade pies. Sittings 5 & 6 p.m. Takeout too! (978) 575-0310.

Millers River Environmental Center, Athol: Woodcock Walk. Join Bruce Scherer at Cass Meadow, Athol to



PHOTO: LEIGH PETERSON

Jamie Anderson, singer-songwriter will be performing at the Echo Lake Coffeehouse, Leverett, 7:30 pm.

witness the unique courtship display of the American Woodcock. Males perform a beautiful "sky dance" at dusk and dawn. Flights include a spiral up to 100 meters, flittering wings while chirping, and then circling back to the same spot on the ground. 978-544-3282 6:30 p.m.

The monthly gathering of the Five Rivers Council 2 to 5 p.m. at the Second Congregational Church, Greenfield. The Five Rivers Council was created to bring together individuals and groups in our region that are striving to build a healthy, equitable, and sustainable community. www.fiveriverscouncil.org or 367-9673.

## THROUGH MARCH 18TH

Hallmark Museum of Contemporary Photography, Turners Falls. *Face to Face: Portraits from Fifty Years*, photographs by Douglas Kirkland.

## SUNDAY, MARCH 18TH

The Montague Bookmill Presents: The Dead of Winter Free Films for the Frozen Double Feature!: *In Heaven There's No Beer*. 7 p.m. & *The Pathfinder*, 8 p.m. Food & drink available at The Lady Killigrew.

Classical Piano by Adam Bergeron at Deja Brew, Wendell. 7 to 9 p.m.

## MONDAY, MARCH 19TH

Live Jazz at Ristorante DiPaolo, Avenue A, 6 to 9 p.m. Information 863-4441.

## WEDNESDAY, MARCH 21ST

Fiddle Tune swap at Deja Brew, Wendell, all welcome. 7 to 9 p.m.

Reel World Documentary Film Series: "Reel Bad Arabs" shown at Arms Library, Shelburne Falls, 7 p.m. This film takes us through 80 years of Hollywood's negative stereotyping of Arabs. Dr. Jack Shaheen, author and Hollywood film consultant, shows the similarities to anti-Semitic and racist propaganda from the past and its connection with periods of

U.S. history. Produced by the Media Education Foundation. Guest: Film Director Michel Moushabek editor and publisher of the book *Reel Bad Arabs* and board member of Media Education Foundation.

## MONDAY, MARCH 19TH

Rt. 63 Road House: Singer/songwriter series hosted by Rob Skelton.

## BEGINNING THURSDAY, MARCH 22ND

Exhibit: John Willis' and Tom Young's "Recycled Realities and Other Stories" at Hallmark Museum of Contemporary Photography, Turners Falls. Haunting and surreal, series of black and white images invite viewers into a vast paper landscape at Erving Paper Mill. Also images from photographic projects: "View from the Rez" and "Timeline" Reception with live music and hors d'oeuvres will be held on **Saturday, March 31** from 1 -5 pm. Slide presentation from 7:15-8:45 p.m. at Hallmark Institute of Photography Educational Center.

## FRIDAY, MARCH 23RD

Deja Brew: *Euphemisms*-Folk Rock. 9 to 11p.m. No cover

Rt. 63 Road House: *Stonewall*-rock, original & covers, come to dance! 9:30 p.m.

## FRIDAY & SATURDAY, MARCH 23RD & 24TH

Pothole Pictures presents *The Seven Samurai*, Memorial Hall

Theater, Shelburne Falls. 7:30 p.m.

## SATURDAY, MARCH 24TH

Deja Brew: *Josh Levangie*-Johnny Cash Favorites. 9 to 11p.m. No cover

Rt. 63 Road House: *Catamount*-classic & southern rock, come to dance! 9:30 p.m.

Cheesemaking with Cliff Hatch at Uppingil Farm Learn how to take raw milk and create a hard British cheddar cheese. This hands-on workshop will demonstrate the process from raw milk to the final pressing. You are invited to bring 2 gallons of your own animals milk to make additional cheeses. Held at Uppingil Farm, Gill. 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (781) 894-4358.

## THROUGH MARCH 25TH

Local artists on display at Green Trees Gallery in Northfield, 5 - 7 p.m. *Apex to Zenith*, a panoramic collection of over 35 regional artists. Artists: include Dan Brown, Beverly Phelps, Nayana Glazier, Barbara Milot & Daniel Putnam. www.greentreesgallery.com

## SUNDAY, MARCH 25TH

The Montague Bookmill Presents: The Dead of Winter Free Films for the Frozen: *I Walked With A Zombie*, 7 p.m.

Family Contra Dance with Cindy Green Simple dances with easy instruction geared for little feet. Lots of fun, humor and some singing games too. Great for 3-11 yr olds, and their parents. Meet other parents and network too. Set up playdates! Chase the Winter Blues away with Laughing Folk Music and a Fun Caller. Montague Grange, 34 Main Street, Montague Center. 4:00 to 5:30 p.m. 413-367-9380

## MONDAY, MARCH 26TH

Deja Brew, Wendell-*A Night of Spoken Word*: Open Mic 7 to 8 p.m., Guest readers 8 to 10 p.m., no cover.

## SUNDAY, APRIL 22ND

The 1st Annual Montague Community Variety Show at 6:30 p.m. at the Grange Hall, Montague Center. In celebration of the creative strength and energy of the entire town, performers of all ages are invited to share their music, magic tricks, dance acts, spoken word, family skits, baton twirling, comedy, etc. Performers are encouraged to sign

## Upcoming at the Discovery Center

Open Friday & Saturday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Groups by Special Arrangement, Tuesday - Thursday

### SATURDAY, MARCH 17TH

Green is the Color of the Day! Exploring the shades of green in the natural landscape. An art and nature activity for all that will focus our attention on some details of nature's green. 11 a.m - 12 p.m.

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## IRISH SKETCHBOOK

# A Day in the Burren (Part I)

BY DAVID BRULE

**ERVINGSIDE** - This is the time of all the year when the American Irish and those who wish they were Irish get misty-eyed, or pie-eyed in the pubs, in celebration of the feast of St. Patrick. Beer runs green, you must wear something green (never orange!), or at least stick a green shamrock somewhere. B'gosh and B'gorrah! (whatever that means), even the act of saying "corned beef and cabbage" has an authentic Irish ring to it, although our Irish forebears ate the stuff out of extreme necessity, definitely not for its delicate and subtle blend of flavor. Indeed, it's not a coincidence that the word for "to cook" in Gaelic is the same as "to boil". That explains a lot about Irish cuisine.

At this time of year, some of us even hear echoes of somebody like Bing Crosby crooning:

*"If ever you go across the sea to Ireland*

*Then maybe at the closing of your day.*

*You will sit and watch the moon rise over Claddagh,*

*And watch the sun go down on Galway Bay."*

The genteel longing and resignation in these lyrics have faded, to be replaced by more fierce head-banging anthems by the likes of the Pogues, Flogging Molly or Dropkick Murphys. True, a few thatched roofed cottages still dot the countryside here and there in Ireland, although most of them can now be found in theme parks. The IRA has finally laid down its arms, the Brits are currently the good guys, and we even may see the time in a few weeks when the Protestants and Catholics will govern the lost Six Counties of Northern Ireland together. No indeed, with the Celtic Tiger all the rage, this is not your grandmother's Ireland any more.

However, there are places where the Ireland you imagined can still be found. For example, what wasn't mentioned in the Galway Bay lyrics was the landscape just across from Galway that defines this entire corner of Eirinn. This region is

the Burren. Somehow, it would be hard to work such a blunt word as "burren" into a nostalgic song. Sounds too much like "barren," although there is no connection between the two words.

The Burren in Gaelic is most likely "bhoiream", meaning "a stoney place". The Burren is in fact a 300-square-mile landscape most often compared to the surface of the moon. It's a limestone region, with parallel foot-deep crevices stretching off to the horizon. There are a few narrow roads that traverse this moonscape, but it's easy to get lost, and for some of us, that's just what we want.

A good ramble in the Burren starts with a good Irish breakfast to fortify you, which usually involves enough tea to float a battleship, along with a hefty dose of cholesterol and sodium nitrites. Enough to keep you going until your lunch of Guinness and smoked salmon. To do this right, you have to spend the night in a lovely sounding village like Lisdoonvarna, Kilfenora, Corofin or Doolin. I always choose Corofin, an attractive village, made more intriguing by the fact that my ancestors, the *O hEifearnáin* (Heffernans in English translation, literally "demons from Hell" in Old Irish) were driven from this town in the early Middle Ages. Why, we haven't figured out yet, but we're having fun imagining. There is some sense of satisfaction that my DNA has made it back to town, although incognito, and none of the locals recognize me as a descendent of the banished demons.

With breakfast settling, a good way to start the day is with a quiet drive on a narrow road



(*bótharín*, in Irish) meaning a passage big enough for cows (*bó*). This particular one wends its way around Lake Inchiquin, just outside of Corofin. Easy enough to stop in the shade, because it's now really hot in Ireland, (so much for the Irish Mist concept). No one else is on this wee road, so I leave the car where it is. Just below, beyond a grassy field going down to the lake shore, horses and cows mingle and wade knee-deep in the shallow lake, munching on water grasses, graceful swans glide by in their arched neck manner, accustomed as they are to spending time with the horses and sharing grazing rights. Wrens and wood warblers sing and move around me in the hedgerow. It would be very easy to spend the rest of the morning here, but there are a few other things to see on this ramble on the way to lunch.

Crossing from a green and shady border zone to get closer to the stoney heart of the Burren, then turning left at the ruined church of Kilnaboy, it's a good custom to stop and look for the *Sheila-na-gig* carved in the church wall. Our Sheila is a pagan representation of Woman and Fertility, strangely enough, exposing the (ahem!) source of her fertility with both hands and a fierce smile. (A sort of pre-Christian Vagina Monologue?) How Sheila of the Pagans got to be carved a thousand years ago into the wall of this ancient Christian Church is something of a mystery, but not rare. There are many Sheilas represented on

ancient stones all over the west of Ireland. Apparently, there was nothing wrong with mixing a little paganism in with your Catholicism. Irish contradiction is part of the charm of the country.

Further down the *botharín* you go. Then, taking an unmarked road to the right, and without warning, you are in the middle of the lunarscape. Huge bare rounded hills called *mullough* rise up like the backs of whales rolling across the countryside, trees have vanished, temporary lakes called *turlough* appear or disappear monthly, seeping through the porous limestone that can't hold water for long. Beneath the surface however, water has formed fantastic subterranean rivers and grottos, to the delight of cave explorers and spelunkers.

Right here in the middle of the Burren, if you look closely, you can see remnants of stone and mortar columns, and curious open spaces. Not some ancient ruins these, but rather a testimony to common sense and environmental protection triumphing over bureaucratic efforts to transform this area into another theme park. The locals organized protests and fundraisers and lawsuits, and finally the government, with its European Community subsidies, gave up,

tore up the blacktop, never built the invasive hotel and visitors' center, and moved the whole concept to the nearby village of Kilfenora. The heart of the Burren was preserved, and it's still a place where, according to those who live here, you can hear the sound of stone and ancient music on the wind.

On the other hand, the stomach has a music of its own and it's saying something that sounds like "lunch!" Monk's Restaurant in Ballyvaughn is just the place, where the moonscape abruptly meets the seascape on the Clare shore of Galway Bay. Guinness, seafood chowder, smoked salmon, lamb stew, all manner of fish and pub grub await. After lunch, it'll be a good idea to get walking again, but there's no rush. With the daylight lasting until close to midnight this far west, there's plenty of time ahead for a hike along the Famine Road, some birdwatching at the Cliffs of Moher, and an evening of music in Doolin. But for now, time to lay into a meal at Monk's, to sit and look out over Galway Bay, and feel pretty smug about being lost in this place, lost for the time being, in the West of Ireland.



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