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Previewed – Page 10

LAKE PLEASANT MILLERS FALLS MONTAGUE CENTER MONTAGUE CITY TURNERS FALLS

# The Montague Reporter

YEAR 7 - NO. 24

also serving Gill, Erving and Wendell

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THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

MARCH 19, 2009

## Gill Studies Long Division of the G – M School District



Dorothy Storrow, right, presents the findings of the Commission on Education in Gill to the joint selectboards of Gill and Montague on Monday

**BY DAVID DETMOLD** – “Gill has not decided we want to leave the Gill-Montague Regional School District,” Dorothy Storrow told a joint meeting of the Montague and Gill selectboards on Monday afternoon at the Gill town hall. “We just want to say what would happen if we did.”

Toward that end, the town established a commission to study the educational options for Gill students last year. Storrow, a member of that commission, updated town and school officials on the commission’s work, and urged both towns to place articles on this year’s annual town meeting warrants to establish regional school district planning committees, to explore changes to the current school district agreement binding Montague and Gill

together in the GMRSD. With a push from the state to form larger school districts, action on school system consolidation advancing in other Franklin County towns and districts, and persistent complaints about the unaffordability of the present arrangement coming from officials in both Montague and Gill, the latter town has taken the lead in examining exit strategies.

On Monday, Storrow said various interests were at play in Gill. “One group of people is very concerned about the increasing cost of education, one group is concerned about the quality of education, and another group is concerned about whether we fit in with the district. We have studied the regional agreement,” formed in 1981, “to see what would have see **GILL** pg 10

## SKATE PARK LANDS ON 11TH STREET



TURNERS FALLS –

RUTH NERVIG PHOTO OF SKATER  
CLAUDIA WELLS PHOTO OF 11TH STREET & COLLAGE

Popping an Ollie – Jameson Bednarski! captured in mid-flight, Wednesday afternoon.

**BY DAVID DETMOLD** –

By the end of April, if all goes well, the Turners Falls Sk8 Park will take up new temporary quarters in what is now a muddy lot on the corner of 11th Street and Avenue A.

On Monday night, the selectboard approved a three-year lease with property owner James Capen, which will allow skaters to use the land in return for the town forgiving property taxes on the lot for that period of time.

Elated, members of the skate park committee sent out a message to supporters calling for

volunteers to help move the existing ramps – the ones that are in good enough condition – to the new location on Saturday, April 25th, National Community Service Day.

The committee has been working with organizers at the Brick House to secure a permanent home for the popular facility since last fall, when negotiations with Tim de Christopher failed to work out a lease extension at the Sk8 Park’s former location behind Chick’s Garage.

The ambitious plan is for the skate park committee to raise

enough money to pay for a coat of blacktop on 2000 square feet of land at the 11th Street site, or to find donations in kind from a community-service-minded paving company, by that date.

The fence surrounding the existing park also has to be moved to the new location, or a new fence installed there, to limit the town’s liability.

Capen said his wife, Christa, had first read about the Turners teens’ quest to find a new location for their park in a newspaper article last fall. He called up see **SKATE** pg 9

## SOUL STAR RISING

### Naia Kete Brings Her Band to the Great Hall

**BY DAVID DETMOLD**

**GREAT FALLS** – There is a new reggae-soul diva in the Valley, and her name is Naia Kete. One of the great beauties of the land, with a voice to match, she wowed a crowd of sixty at the Great Falls Discovery Center, where she appeared with her crack band – Jules Belmont on guitar, Lee Madeloni on bass, and her brother Imani Devi-Brown on drums – on Friday night, as part of the monthly coffee-shop series.

Many in the crowd, sipping coffee and eating homemade cookies, must have been surprised to have an emanation from Jah materialize in front of them for an hour and forty-five minutes in the form of Naia Kete and her band, and only the fact that MCTV was there to videotape

the event will prevent those who question the authenticity of this musical prodigy from proclaiming false doctrine: she truly is a revelation, as the tapes will prove once they appear on Channel 17.

Meanwhile, concert-goers will have a chance to hear Naia Kete and company live at Café Evolution on April 17th in Florence, or on Earth Day at UMass on April 22nd. Take advantage of the opportunity to catch these young superstars – none of whom appears to have put their teenage years very far behind them – in local venues while you can.

Naia Kete and her band all come by their poised musical professionalism righteously. Belmont, who knows his way around the frets of his Sunburst Fender Stratocaster as if he was

born playing it, displayed a Hendrix-style virtuosity on his all too infrequent solos, as on the ascending power chord progression on the bridge of “Come Back Home”, off Naia Kete’s debut album, *Sweet Music*. He is the son of virtuoso Valley axeman Joe Belmont.

Madeloni’s dad, Earl Slick, was David Bowie’s Golden Years guitarist, and obviously raised this Young American right. Johnny Depp looks a little like Madeloni, just not as cool.

A multi-instrumentalist, Madeloni produced and laid down backing tracks on Naia Kete’s CD, which was recorded in Goshen at Madeloni’s aunt’s Institute for Musical Arts. His aunt? Oh, yeah, that’s June Millington, founder with her sister, Jean, Madeloni’s mom, of the



Naia Kete, with Lee Madeloni at the Discovery Center

first major label all female rock band: Fanny.

In concert Friday night, Madeloni stood to one side with his boots nailed to the floor and provided rock steady bass to anchor Naia Kete’s soaring vocals.

Naia Kete and her younger brother Imani are old pros themselves. They joined their parents’ band, the Black Rebels, when Imani was nine and Naia Kete

was 13, and have since toured the world playing for audiences from Senegal to Thailand. The Black Rebels was formed by their stepfather, Manou Dalomba, and both their mother, Kalpana Devi, and father, Wes Brown, are members of the band.

On Friday night, Imani appeared to be holding back on the drums to let his sister shine for the first set, but he came back see **STAR** pg 12

## PET OF THE WEEK

### Mellow Dude



**Buster**

My name is Buster and I'm a 12-year-old male brown short-hair cat in need of a good home. I am a reserved and thoughtful cat. I'm a mellow dude who loves to hang out with my people. Though I am a big guy I am really a very affectionate purr machine. Wouldn't you love to read a book or watch TV with me dozing beside you? And of course it goes without saying I am ever so handsome with my bob tail and movie idol square jaw. I would easily fit into almost any environment. I wouldn't mind being part of a quiet or chaotic household. For more information on adopting me please contact the Dakin Pioneer Valley Humane Society at 413-548-9898 or via email: leverett@dphvs.org.

### Great Falls Middle School Students of the Week

#### Grade 6

Zachary Wright

#### Grade 7

Jonathan Rawls

#### Grade 8

Jasmine Farr-Marcum  
Kim Rau

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### LEVERETT LIBRARY NEWS

## American Ambulances in WWI

BY LINDA WENTWORTH

**LEVERETT** – The Leverett Library, 75 Montague Road, is offering a free showing of a new documentary from WGBY entitled "Model T's to War: American Ambulances on the Western Front, 1914-1918" on Sunday, March 22nd, at 3:00 p.m. Two of

the film's three filmmakers, Ed and Libby Klekowski, will be present to discuss their work on the documentary. The Klekowskis are residents of Leverett.

The event is open to all. For more info, call 413-548-9220 or consult our website [www.leverettlibrary.org](http://www.leverettlibrary.org).

### MILLERS FALLS LIBRARY NEWS

## Red Sox Raffle Winner

BY LINDA HICKMAN

**MILLERS FALLS** – The drawing for Red Sox tickets was held on Thursday, March 12th, at the Millers Falls Library during the Friends of the Montague Libraries meeting. Andy Cloutier of Montague Center was the winner. The seats are in a box behind home plate for the April 19th game against the Orioles and were donated by Rist Insurance. Raffle proceeds will be used to help fund the very popular Music and Movement program at the libraries. The series was funded by the Family Network for ten years, but their funding was cut.

The parents who attend the program did not want Music and Movement to end and decided to fundraise. Two raffles have been held, a Family Dance Fundraiser at the Rendezvous, and cash was donated. The Friends of the Montague Public Libraries offered to match donations up to \$900. Enough money has been raised to fund the program from mid-February to mid-October. Thank You to the Friends of the Montague Public Libraries, The Rendezvous, Rist Insurance, Greenfield Farmers Cooperative Exchange, Peaceful Palm Studio, DiPaolo's, Hope and Olive,

## The Brick House to Host GCC Informational Evening

BY KAREN STINCHFIELD

**TURNERS FALLS** – The Brick House Community Resource Center, located at 24 Third Street in Turners Falls, and Greenfield Community College (GCC) are joining forces in order to present a GCC informational evening for community members on Tuesday, March 24th at 5:00 p.m. in the Brick House's newly-renovated Community Arts and Performance Space.

Anyone interested in learning about GCC's admission processes, financial aid opportunities, the Community Access Scholarship, dual enrollment, placement testing, and other programs is welcome and encouraged to attend. High school students who are going to graduate soon or who

are interested in attending GCC through dual enrollment, people who have dropped out with or without having taken the General Equivalency Diploma (GED) test, potential students of all ages, and parents of potential students will all come away with valuable information.

Beforehand, Matthew Shippee, GCC music department chair and a member of Swing Caravan, will be stopping in at 3:30 p.m. to visit with participants from the Avenue A Music Project in the Brick House Teen Center. He will be available to discuss the various music program opportunities at GCC, answer questions regarding class requirements, and perhaps even join an impromptu jam session.



Patricia Ford Yurkunas, director of development at the Dakin Animal Shelter, holds one of the shelter guests in the lobby of the Greenfield Savings Bank's Turners Falls branch office on Friday. The Dakin shelter staff are concerned that with the closing of the SPCA shelter (which serves 7000 pets a year) in Springfield next week, their shelters in Greenfield and Leverett will be the only ones left in Western Mass, and could be overwhelmed with homeless pets. To help meet the need, bring pet food or donations to the lobby of the Turners Falls branch of the Greenfield Savings Bank between now and April 25th.

China Gourmet, The Monkey Tree, and Turning Point. Thanks also to all of the loyal fans of the Music and Movement program, and all of the parents who have helped out with the fundraising.

The Music and Movement program is currently held at the Millers Falls Library on Thursday mornings at 10 a.m. For more information, call the Carnegie Library, 863-3214.

Anyone who is interested in the music program at GCC is welcome to come by and speak with Shippee at the Teen Center. Shannon Coskran, coordinator of special programs at GCC, will also be on hand to chat with prospective students.

At 5:00 p.m., Herb Hentz, director of admissions at GCC, will give a general overview of the college, including new programs to be introduced in the fall of 2009 (Entrepreneurship, Hospitality, and Tourism). He'll also talk about admission processes; and anything else that comes up. Coskran will also discuss the Educational Transitions Program, also known as dual enrollment, which enables high school students to attend GCC

while still enrolled in high school.

Linda Desjardins, co-director of financial aid at GCC, will explain the process of filing an online application for federal financial aid and answer any questions participants may have regarding the process of obtaining college financing. Participants are invited to bring along pertinent income data, in case they have questions regarding their specific monetary figures.

GCC will be holding an Open House on Thursday, April 16th at the main campus. Participants in the evening at the Brick House will have the option of taking their placement tests on the day of the Open House, free of charge. Also, Abbie Jenks, Human Services Department coordinator, has generously offered participants the chance to sit in on one of her classes on the 16th. For more information: [kstinchfield@thebrickhouseinc.org](mailto:kstinchfield@thebrickhouseinc.org) or 413-863-9576, or: [www.thebrickhouseinc.org](http://www.thebrickhouseinc.org).

## SENIOR CENTER ACTIVITIES – March 23th to 27th

**GILL/MONTAGUE Senior Center**, 62 Fifth Street, Turners Falls, is open Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. for activities and congregate meals. Council on Aging Director is Bunny Caldwell. For information or to make reservations, call 863-9357. Meal reservations need to be made a day in advance by 11:00 a.m. Messages can be left on our machine when the center is not open. Mealsite Manager is Chris Richer. The Center offers a hot noon meal weekdays to any senior. A reservation is necessary and transportation can be provided.

### Monday, 23rd

10:00 a.m. Senior Aerobics  
12:00 p.m. Pot Luck lunch. Please bring a favorite food to share and your own plate, serving and eating utensils. People that don't want to make a food contribution are welcome to pay \$5.00. Money received over expenses is turned over to the Friends of Mealsite treasurer to help support the Senior Center.  
12:45 p.m. Bingo

### Tuesday, 24th

1:00 p.m. Canasta

### Wednesday, 25th

10:00 a.m. Senior Aerobics

12:45 p.m. Bingo

### Thursday, 26th

1:00 p.m. Pitch

### Friday, 27th

10:00 a.m. Senior Aerobics

11:00 a.m. Easy Aerobics

This Thursday, March 19th from 5:30 to 7 pm, Janee Stone will offer the first in a six-week series of beginning Tai Chi classes at the Center. If you plan to attend, call Janee at 978-544-3594.

**ERVING Senior Center**, 18 Pleasant St., Erving, is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. for activities and congregate meals. For info and reservations call Polly Kiely, Senior Center director at 413-423-3308. Lunch daily at 11:30 a.m. with reservations 24 hours in advance. Transportation can be provided for meals, Thursday shopping, or medical necessity:

### Monday, 23rd

9 a.m. Exercise

12 noon Pitch

### Tuesday, 24th

9 a.m. Aerobics

12:30 p.m. Painting

### Wednesday, 25th

8:45 a.m. Line Dancing

12 noon Bingo

### Thursday, 26th

9:00 a.m. Aerobics

### Friday, 27th

9 a.m. Bowling

11:30 a.m. Lunch: Pizza from Mattie's Place

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

The Wendell Full Moon Coffee House show featuring John Sheldon and Blue Streak on Saturday, April 11th will benefit the Center. Seniors willing to create treats to sell at the show should leave messages with Ginny Schimmel at 544-2924.



### BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

**Lunch Specials from 11:00 a.m.**  
Mon: American Chop Suey • Tues. Chicken Fricassie • Wed: Chicken Souvlaki, Rice • Thurs: Corned Beef & Cabbage • Fri: Fried Scallops  
Sat: Yankee Pot Roast

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## Strong Community Support for Non-Electric Apartment Proposal

BY DAWN MONTAGUE

**WENDELL** – More than 30 people turned up in the Wendell town offices Tuesday night for a planning board public hearing. The hearing was on a request for a special permit for a secondary dwelling, made by Susan and Jonathan von Ranson, who hope to build a non-electric apartment in the barn on their property.

Their proposal features a composting toilet, a hand pump for water, and a wood stove for cooking and heating. In addition to their personal wishes to live simply, the von Ransons view the apartment as a politically necessary step, in keeping with a dedication to reduce their impact on the environment (see "Wendell Couple Seeks Special Permit to Build 'Deep Green' Apartment" MR VII #22).

The meeting was an opportunity for the von Ransons to lay out the details of their proposal before the planning board, for town officials to comment, and for citizens to speak out as well. Support for the von Ransons was strong; about a third of the attendees went on-record in favor of allowing them to proceed with the plans.

Only a few people spoke against the proposal, including an abutter to the property. Martha Senn raised concerns about drinking water quality on nearby land, and potential odors from a non-standard sanitation system. Specific plans for the greywater system haven't been drawn up yet, but Jonathan von Ranson said a local civil engineer is interested in working on its design. On the odor issue, von

Ranson reassured Senn that composting toilets do not smell bad, when working properly.

Peter Diemand said he has "a couple dwellings on [his] farm, and the septic tanks have to be pumped out and trucked away. It's a huge volume." He said, "I don't even know where it goes." He likes "the move toward composting toilets, especially if you can use the matter on the land."

Parker Cleveland summed up the mood of many who spoke, saying "[we should] boldly assert the right to live without being required to pollute."

Sharon Gensler sent a letter of support. "The idea of having to install expensive wiring and plumbing and then not use it is a waste of time, money, and most importantly planetary resources." She added she

"would like to thank Susan and Jonathan for their many years of service to the town," and that she is "proud to live in such a community of caring neighbors and friends."

The von Ransons were commended by several speakers on their commitment to following the permitting process, to try to change the codes and allow other people to legally use inexpensive and basic but proven techniques at their homes.

"It's wrong to legislate on any basis against simple living, Jonathan von Ranson said, "It's got to be constitutionally protected. I can't believe it's not."

In order for the planning board to properly review the proposal, the hearing has been continued to 7:30 p.m. on April 21st in the town offices.

## Green & Clean: Organizing Trash Free Events

BY AMY DONOVAN

**GREENFIELD** – A free workshop on organizing trash-free events, or events with less trash, will take place on Monday, March 23rd, from 6:00 to 7:45 p.m. at the (wheelchair-accessible) Greenfield Public Library meeting room, 402 Main Street, in Greenfield. Light snacks will be served. Organizers of events large and small are invited to a presentation and discussion about how recycling and composting can help reduce trash at events. For more information, contact: Amy Donovan, Franklin County Solid Waste Management District, 413-772-2438 or amy@franklincounty-wastedistrict.org.

## Goose Schnitzel Among Highlights of Tech School Game Supper

BY PAUL COHEN

**TURNERS FALLS** – Diners came loaded for bear to the Franklin County Technical School's Fins, Feathers & Fur Club 7th annual game supper on Friday March 13th, with over 250 people in attendance.

The banquet is a fundraiser for the student club, which is dedicated to hunting and fishing. Club activities include firearms safety workshops, skeet shooting, ice fishing, deep sea fishing, fly tying, and pheasant hunting. All club members have completed a Massachusetts state hunter safety course.

The banquet meal was pre-

pared by club advisors Brian Kuzmeskus, auto body instructor and Benjamin Pike, culinary arts instructor. They were assisted by numerous members of the Fins, Feathers and Fur Club, past and present. The menu included, among other exotic items, bear chili, wild turkey and pheasant dumplings, venison pate, venison Salisbury steaks, bear golumpki, moose roast, pheasant and goose schnitzel, venison stew, and fish cakes with remoulade sauce.

After the banquet, there was a presentation on Massachusetts deer populations by Sonya Christinson, Massachusetts State Deer Biologist.

little more than half that sum has been spent so far, and notes that town meeting may face a warrant article to set aside an additional \$30,000 to maintain the Montague Center School building in spring of this year.

On November 18th of 2008, the town allocated \$20,000 from program income to pay for a Request for Proposals for a feasibility study for the re-use of the building, from which the \$19,600 was taken to pay the Putney firm Greenberg & Associates, the bid winner, on February 23rd.

# The Music Man

**PRESENTED BY**  
**TURNERS FALLS HIGH SCHOOL**  
**and GREAT FALLS MIDDLE SCHOOL**

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**Friday, March 20 & 21, 7:30 PM**  
**Sunday, March 22, 1:30 PM**

**CORRECTION**  
Due to a reporting error, (MR VIII #22 Architect Awarded Bid for Montague Center School) an incorrect figure was given for the amount town meeting has already appropriated to insure, heat, and secure the former Montague Center School, closed in June of 2008. We reported \$80,000 had been set aside for that purpose; in fact, on September 11th, 2008, \$50,000 was appropriated for the school building maintenance. Capital improvements committee member Don Valley writes that a



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The following report dealing with the recent appointment of Michael Baldassare, Mahar's Director of Student Support Services, as Superintendent of Schools for the Mahar Regional School District, was delivered to the Orange Elementary School Committee on March 16th by Deb Habib, who represents Orange on the Mahar school committee:

## Undue Haste in Baldassare Appointment

Regarding the Mahar School Committee Meeting of March 3rd, 2009

**BY DEB HABIB**  
**ORANGE** – The Chairperson read a brief letter from Superintendent [Reza] Namin informing the committee of his resignation effective June 30th. This was the first formal notification to all school committee members about Dr. Namin's resignation. This item was not on the agenda, which was post-marked Friday, February 27th. The committee voted to accept his resignation and thanked Dr. Namin for his service.

District to know such a discussion would occur and thus be present for the discussion. Many committee members spoke highly of Mr. Baldassare in his current position. At the same time, several committee members, myself included, expressed shock and concern about the process itself; that a recommendation, motion and potentially a decision could be made with such haste.

Several committee members, myself included, requested the need for a thoughtful and deliberate process, especially in light of unknowns regarding regionalization and upcoming recommendations from the Franklin County

Immediately following, the superintendent thanked the committee and made a recommendation that Mr. Mike Baldassare, director of special education and

I remain greatly concerned that the involvement and interests of thousands of community members and taxpayers, plus elected officials from four towns were excluded in this process. The residents and representatives of our communities deserve the opportunity to be informed of and participate in decisions such as this that have such great economic and educational ramifications.  
– Deb Habib, Mahar School Committee Member  
Orange

student services be appointed Superintendent. This item was not on the agenda.

Immediately following, a motion was made to appoint Mr. Baldassare as superintendent pending negotiations. This item was not on the agenda. [I requested a copy of the motion last Wednesday so that I could report it accurately as stated but did not receive it in time for this meeting.]

Extensive discussion followed. Because the recommended action regarding the position of superintendent was not on the agenda, there was no opportunity for the community members and taxpayers, or officials from four towns involved in the RC Mahar

Educational Study Group.

It appeared that some committee members were aware that the recommendation and motion was to be brought forth, while others, myself included, were not. It was also noted that two committee members, re-elected the previous day, had not yet been sworn in and would not be able to vote.

Some committee members, myself included, suggested that the conversation regarding the recommendation be continued at the April school committee meeting, again stating concern about the haste and the lack of due process regarding such an important decision.

Mr. Baldassare, who was see MAHAR pg 5



## MIRACLE ON FOURTH STREET

KAREN WILKINSON ILLUSTRATION

KARIN WILKINSON '09

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### A Loss to Montague

Thank you for the great article on Tom Simons. He was such a warm, friendly guy, and we were so pleased to have him as our lawyer. Thankfully, we had a chance for a good meeting and conversation at a December church supper.

His passing is a definite loss to Montague, his family, and the many, many friends he acquired in his very active life. He will be missed.

– Peg Bridges  
Florida

### Cutting Back on Senior Congregate Meals

Starting the week of March 16th, the Franklin County Home Care Corporation, will only be able to provide a meal site manager at the Gill-Montague Senior Center for Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, instead of the five days a week meals they have managed at that site in years past. The Senior Center has come up with volunteers to run Monday's meal, but congregate meals will no longer be served on Fridays unless and until a volunteer meal site manager or managers can be found to run the meal on that day.

This place is full of 'senior energy,' and if you don't know what that term means then shame on you.

In this recession, services will be cut, we all know that, but this week I'm sure the road crews will be sweeping the streets, someone will be getting overtime somewhere, gas will be sucked up by idling vehicles and people just will not give a damn about our seniors. This is just wrong.

Damn it, this is wrong. I have been to the senior center on many occasions, either to videotape a show for MCTV, to write an article for the Montague Reporter, to pick up a friend's brown bag of food or to walk a friend over to the center.

If you have time to volunteer on Friday to help keep a vital lunch program running for our seniors, give Gill-Montague senior center director Bunny Caldwell a call at 863-9357.

– Don Clegg  
Turners Falls

### Great Falls Farmers Market

WANT TO PARTICIPATE AS A VENDER?

The Farmers Market is located on the corner of Second Street and Avenue A in Turners Falls, right next to the Great Falls Discovery Center.

baked goods, meats, fresh eggs, and preserves.

The Market is held each Wednesday afternoon, rain or shine, from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. The season opens on May 6th and continues through October 28th. The market includes the sale of produce and plants but also offers and encourages crafters,

Civic groups are welcome to participate. Entertainment is frequently offered. If you are interested in participating in this mid-week market please contact Don Clegg at sealeggsdc@yahoo.com or greatfallsfarmers-marketturners@gmail.com or write to Don at Great Falls Farmers Market, 63A Fourth Street, Turners Falls, MA 01376.

### Birds, Bees, and other Pollinators

**TURNERS FALLS** - On April 4th, from 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.: the Great Falls Discovery Center will present "Birds, Bees, and Other Pollinators." Find out what is happening in your garden. Who visits the flowers? Discover the role of

insects, birds and others in plant pollination, some facts of life and some hands on activities that you can take home to your own garden to explore who is doing what!

For more information call 413-863-3221.

**We Welcome Your Letters!**

**Montague Reporter**

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FAX (413) 863-3050  
reporter@montaguema.net

**American Dead in Iraq and Afghanistan as of 3/16/09**

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Wounded in Action **31,089**

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# The Transcendence of Spring

BY FRAN HEMOND

**MONTAGUE CENTER** – The very name, March, evokes dissonance and change. After all, it is the month of Mars, that Roman god of war who dominates history. Nevertheless, spring is struggling and will coax our food and green beauty from a warming earth. And spring will win.

The vernal equinox falls on the 20th this year. The sun is over the equator and will move north and heat us up. In the meantime, the first robin, the first bluebird, not counting the modern few who hung around for winter, the best sap flow, the muddiest lawn, the best kite, the earliest snow drop, the bravest people, are all contested house to house.

Henry David Thoreau, the 19th century Concord transcendentalist who kept his feet on the ground, wrote in his journal daily commentary on the world as he saw it. An edited edition chooses interesting entries from each day from different years. We may relate to his observations from a nineteenth century March.

On the seventh of the month in 1859 he offers, "There are few, if any, so coarse and insensible that they are not interested to hear that the bluebird has come." And an early spring thought from March 8th of 1852, "The sound of water falling on rocks and of air falling on trees are very much alike," must have been prompted by a welcome thaw.

In 1850, he writes, "We do not attend to ordinary things, although they are most important.... While it is only moderately cold, wet or dry, nobody attends to it, but when Nature goes to an extreme, we are alert with excitement."

Each year, March brings out the brave. Warm or cold, Holyoke annually celebrates St. Patrick's Day with a parade. This year it will be on Saturday, March 22nd. The charismatic saint, so honored, is legendary. Dramatically, he drove the snakes from Ireland. Amazingly, he converted a country of Celtic peoples to his own conviction. The Druid religious leaders had considerable political power, but

St. Patrick's conquest was complete.

The written details of this fifth century event vary, but legend is prolific. Everyone knows that the shamrock is the national flower of Ireland. Did not the good saint pick it from the field to demonstrate the Trinity: three leaflets to the leaf? And had not Druids known it as a plant of good fortune?

It should be no problem that several plants are considered the shamrock. I have two lovely *oxalis regnali* in a southeast window that produce white flowers for months. It is a fine potted plant, sold with a shamrock label, but would not thrive in the fields of Ireland.

The several Irish clover that make beautiful the meadows do not adapt to the confines of a house. It's the leaf symbol that counts, and the heart-shaped trefoil on the tail of the planes of the Irish National Airline leaves no doubt as to their identity.

So we meet March with a nod to the returning goodness of the earth, and an elegant parade to a legendary hero.

**MAHAR from pg 4**

present throughout the meeting, was asked to speak and he verbally expressed his professional goal of becoming a superintendent. A teacher who is also the Mahar Teachers Association representative spoke highly of Mr. Baldassarre. A visitor, a member of the Wendell finance committee, requested recognition to speak. The chairperson chose not to recognize the visitor.

Chairperson Donelan moved the motion forward and a vote was taken with five in favor, three opposed and three abstaining.

On March 6th, I mailed a letter to Chairperson Donelan noting that the process to be taken regarding negotiations had not been discussed at the

March 3rd meeting and requested that a discussion of the superintendent contract be on the agenda for the April 7th Mahar school committee meeting, and that no such discussion convene until that time.

In closing, I remain greatly concerned that the involvement and interests of thousands of community members and taxpayers (plus elected officials from four towns) were excluded in this process. The residents and representatives of our communities deserve the opportunity to be informed of and participate in decisions such as this that have such great economic and educational ramifications.



**Vigil Observes 6th Anniversary of Iraq War**

**GREENFIELD** – Today, Thursday March 19th, area residents will join events across the country observing the sixth anniversary of the war in Iraq and calling for an end to the war. The local vigil will be held today from 5 to 6 p.m. on the Greenfield town common, at the corner of Main Street and Federal Street. All are invited.

Mary McClintock from Conway, a regular Greenfield Weekly Peace Vigil participant, said, "Our country will be more secure if the billions of dollars being spent on this war are spent on housing, feeding and educating people in the U.S. and other countries. Many Franklin County residents, including veterans, are not receiving services they need because our federal tax dollars are being spent on this

misguided war."

Karl Meyer from Greenfield said, "Six years is too long for a war that should never have been started. It's well past time we bring U.S. troops home."

For more info about the 6th Anniversary Vigil or the Greenfield Weekly Peace Vigil, contact Mary McClintock at 369-0117 or at mmclinto@yahoo.com.

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## Help Wanted!

# Around Town Provides (Almost) Free Town News, (Almost) Every Month

BY DAVID DETMOLD

**ERVING** — Since March of 1984, the non-profit *Around Town Newsletter* has been mailed out free of charge almost every month by a dedicated group of volunteers to every resident in Erving, and to a few outsiders who are interested in the goings-on around Erving.

But with mailing costs and printing costs climbing, the volunteers who put out the newsletter are appealing to the residents of town to finally send in a little spare change to keep the newsletter coming.

Jacque Boyden, who has been volunteering as one of the editors of the newsletter since 2000, filled in a little of the history of the group effort that keeps the news of the senior center, library, recreation department, along with news of local businesses, emergency planning surveys from the police department, memorials to departed citizens, and even the occasional letter to the editor coming to Erving's 800 households year in year out.

"It originally started as a production of the recreation department, as a community newsletter," explained Boyden, who keeps three sets of every issue ever printed, for the last 25 years, in her attic. "I have all of them."

She said, "It's always been a volunteer non-profit newsletter.

In the very beginning, it was a bi-monthly, then in 1985 it went to every month. Traditionally, there was no August issue, but a couple of years ago, Polly Kiely (who co-edits, and offers space in the senior center for lay-out) and I said July was very hectic for us, so we both agreed we'd rather take July off." Boyden said this shift reflected the changing times, because, "August has more school news, now. It used to be there was more school news in September."

Paper, glue sticks, printer ink, gas for driving to the printer and the post office, and the time for all the volunteers is donated. Besides Kiely and Boyden, Betsy Sicard and Pat Nauman work on the monthly newsletter, bundling and stapling the 16 to 20 pages in booklet form, putting labels on the out of towners, and preparing the bundles for Boyden to deliver to the post office. The *Around Town* has been printed at Highland Press in Athol for the entire 25 years it has been in print. "They give us a really good deal."

Boyden said she took over responsibility for producing the newsletter from Sarah Meuse, who was the last of the original production team that included Jeanie Schermesser, Rinky Black, Glennice Berry, and Deborah Roussel. The late Jean

Smith also helped out, for a time, as did Tara Boissonneault, who has since moved away.

"Ten years ago, Sarah and Rinky were looking for someone else to take over, and I thought, 'Why not?' recalled Boyden. "I recruited people, and since then our staff has been pretty steady."

Boyden said, "At some point, relatively early in the *Around Town's* existence, the town agreed to pay for space in the *Around Town Newsletter*, to buy space for their articles. We print the annual town meeting warrant, the list of elected officials up for election, and any news they want us to put in on a monthly basis. I always have some municipal news. When we changed our zoning bylaws in 2005, we put out a special issue for that.

"The town used to provide \$3,000 a year for this purpose," appropriated with a warrant at town meeting, said Boyden. "But mailing costs and printing costs have gone up. So the town very generously decided, it's been 25 years, and they upped it to \$4000."

Still, that is not quite enough. With a note in this month's issue, Boyden let readers know the total yearly costs for producing and mailing out the paper for free 11 months a year has grown to \$4,750, and, "Given the tough

financial times, we decided to appeal to the readers, rather than ask the town to give more. The bulk mailing permit and postage is going up again," Boyden said. "It would be nice to have a little cushion," to cover these expected increases.

"We started advertising local businesses, to bring local people into their stores. The more people who put articles or ads in, the more people will read it." But Boyden said the volunteer committee that produces the paper decided not to set a rate for adver-

the selectboard they could not urge the voters of town to back a local referendum. The ethics commission also told the newsletter committee they could not print such a letter in the future, since the town was supporting the publication through an annual budget appropriation.

Boyden said she reads each submitted article carefully to check for slander, misrepresentation of fact, and the like. "We reserve the right to not print submitted articles," she said. There has never been a repeat warning from the ethics commission, either.

Each month, the production team gets together "on the Wednesday closest to the 15th of the month," to put the newsletter together.

"It really is a labor of love. I can't believe I've been doing this for nine years. We've been encouraging people to email the articles, but occasionally I have to type them up."

She added, "When I mess up on the trash schedule, I hear about it. At least I know people are reading it."

If you would like to make a donation, make checks payable to: the *Around Town Newsletter*, 12 East Main Street, Erving, MA 01344. (You can also send articles to that address, but Boyden would just as soon you emailed them to: [ervingaroundtown@comcast.net](mailto:ervingaroundtown@comcast.net).



TOM SHARP PHOTO

Jacquie Boyden, Betsy Sicard, and Polly Kiely are among the volunteers who produce the free monthly *Around Town Newsletter*. Missing from the photo is Pat Nauman.

tising. "It's by donation only."

The arrangement with the town providing the bulk of the funding for the newsletter got the committee into trouble once, a few years back, when the selectboard submitted a letter urging town residents to vote to change several town positions from elected to appointed posts. Someone sent a copy to the state ethics commission, who advised

### HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE GILL POLICE LOG

## Handgun Found

Thursday, 3/12

11:50 a.m. Alarm at Hoe Shop Road residence, all OK.  
4:45 p.m. Report of erratic operator on French King Highway, unable to locate.

Friday, 3/13

12:38 a.m. Alarm on Mount Hermon Campus.  
6:45 p.m. Assisted Sunderland police on Ben Hale Road with investigation.  
8:00 p.m. Assisted Erving police with a domestic dispute.  
11:40 p.m. Suspicious vehicles on Ben

Hale Road, checked area.

Saturday, 3/14

2:10 a.m. Criminal complaint sought against [REDACTED]. Charged with a juvenile operators license violation and speeding.  
12:32 p.m. Unattended handgun found by a person walking on Riverview Drive. Under investigation.  
5:31 p.m. Animal complaint on Main Road.

Sunday, 3/15

1:21 a.m. 911 hang up call from Main Road location, all checked OK.

4:56 p.m. Report of suspicious vehicle on high tension line road off of Pisgah Mountain Road. Checked area.

Monday, 3/16

12:35 p.m. Possible breaking and entering at French King Highway residence. Under investigation.

Tuesday, 3/17

4:11 a.m. 911 hang up from Main Road business, determined to be phone line problem, all OK.  
3:45 p.m. Single vehicle accident on West Gill Road with injury. Report taken.

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# Sparks Fly Over School Budget

BY DAVID DETMOLD

**GILL** – The Gill selectboard came down heavily on the budget subcommittee chair of the Gill Montague Regional School District on Monday afternoon, on the topic of the affordability of Gill’s school assessment as it is taking shape for the coming fiscal year.

The town of Gill’s minimum required contribution to education has increased 4.85% over last year’s figure, said town administrative assistant Tracy Rogers, which will add approximately \$21,000 to the town’s assessment for the GMRSD, if preliminary budget figures hold. As calculated by the state, the town’s minimum contribution figure went up due to a 50-50 analysis of property wealth and total household income. By comparison, Montague’s minimum contribution calculation increased by 1% this year.

Overall, if state revenue declines and fixed-cost increases expected at the GMRSD are not offset by other revenue or cuts – and the preliminary budget increase of 2.7% holds – the town of Gill may be looking at paying as much as \$215,000 in increased assessment to the GMRSD in Fiscal ‘10, the selectboard said.

The thought of a budget increase that large got selectboard member Lee Stevens fumed up.

“They’ve got blinkers on, as a school committee,” said Stevens,

plainly exasperated. He directed his remark at the GMRSD’s Valeria ‘Timmy’ Smith, in the audience. “I’m sorry, Timmy, but they don’t look at reality.”

“My goal is to have a budget in place by the end of June that all parties can live with,” replied Smith calmly. Until this season, Smith has led the budget making meetings of the GMRSD subcommittee charged with preparing the annual school budget. This year the process has changed, and budget making is being handled by the full committee.

Smith said the school committee is working with a placeholder 2.7% budget increase over last year’s figure, but if fiscal reality forces the GMRSD to fall back to a 0% budget increase, “Where do they think cuts need to be made?” she asked, rhetorically. She said some line items for the schools would inevitably increase, therefore others would have to decline from last year’s levels to reach a 0% percent budget.

Gill selectboard chair Nancy Griswold said, “I think you need to go line by line, and ask what do you absolutely have to have. There has to be somewhere you can take some money from, or else you wouldn’t end up with \$1.2 million in reserves.” Griswold said the town needed to fix highway equipment and roads, and would be unable to afford such repairs with an assessment

increase for the schools.

Smith replied, “I’m one of nine.”

Griswold pursued her point, “Frontier took a cut in their budget. Mohawk has a livable budget. They’re going like blazes. Even Greenfield has their budget posted; it was cut. We’re still rolling on from last year.”

Smith said, “I’m sorry you feel that way, Nancy.” Smith, whose committee is now constrained in fiscal matters by state oversight, said they had been advised to wait until the impact of the federal stimulus spending on local education aid is known before finalizing the GMRSD budget.

“A 2.7% increase for your budget becomes a 15% increase for Gill,” said Stevens. “That’s not workable, Timmy. That’s it.”

“I was one of nine,” Smith repeated. “How quickly that will go up or come down, I can’t say.”

After some further back and forth about the impact of stimulus money on the operating budget, and whether one-time “Pothole” funds were also spent on ongoing costs last year (Smith said less than \$20,000 of Pothole funds had been spent on ongoing costs), Stevens concluded the discussion by saying, “We’re beating a dead horse here.”

Smith responded, *sotto voce*, “I’m the dead horse.”

Outside on the steps of town hall, Smith said, “I was shocked by that personal attack.”

# School Committee Nominating Papers Taken Out

There have been several changes in the emerging races for school committee in Gill and Montague. Since we last reported on the school committee openings, Linda Kuklewicz has decided to run again and returned completed papers for a three-year seat in Montague, and Terry Lapachinski has joined Mary Kociela in deciding to step down in the middle of her term, leaving a one-year and a two-year seat available in Montague, along with the two three-year seats incumbents Kristin Boyle and Kuklewicz are running for.

Over in Gill, Valeria Smith has turned in papers to run again for her three-year seat. Claire Chang, a member of the Gill

finance committee, has taken out papers for that seat, as has Jen Waldron, a member of the Gill commission on education, so a possible three-way race is shaping up there.

In Montague, educational consultant Gary Earles, of Park Street, Patrick Pezzati, of Dry Hill Road, a Sheffield School PTO member, and Emily Monosson, of North Street, a parent of two students at TFHS/GFMS, have all taken out papers, though none have returned them so far.

Completed papers for school committee must be returned to the superintendent’s office by March 27th, Friday, at 4 p.m. For more information, call the superintendent’s office at 863-9324.

# Town Meeting Seats Going Begging Around Montague

Town meeting member seats are still going begging in at least four of the town’s six precincts. No one has taken out papers for the following seats (and not everyone who has taken out papers in other precincts has returned them yet): Precinct One (Montague Center): one 3-year seat; Precinct Two (Lake Pleasant and Millers Falls): one 3-year seat; Precinct Three (east side of the Hill): two 2-year seats; Precinct Six (the Patch and Montague City): two 3-year seats, three 2-year seats, and one

1-year seat. Maybe Precinct Six would prefer to have some other precinct represent them by proxy from now on, and they can all stay home and watch town meeting on TV.

People can take out nominating papers from the town clerk’s office until Thursday, March 26th. The deadline for returning nominating papers with ten valid signatures of registered voters in your precinct to the town clerk is Monday, March 30th. For more info: call 863-3200 ext. 203.

# Unity Park Enhancement Project Planning Committee Meeting

The next meeting for the Unity Park Enhancement Project Committee is planned for Thursday, March 26th at 6:00 p.m., at the Unity Park Field House in Turners Falls. The public is welcome.

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG Trespassings and Dumpings

### Wednesday, 3/11

12:35 a.m. Report of an unwanted person at a J Street address. Investigated.  
5:00 p.m. Report of illegal dumping at an Eleventh Street address. Investigated.  
8:23 p.m. Officer initiated investigation of trespassing at Unity Park. Verbal warning issued.  
11:49 p.m. Officer initiated investigation of a suspicious automobile at Apollo Pools, Unity Street.

### Thursday, 3/12

1:13 a.m. Officer initiated investigation of a suspicious automobile at Hillcrest Elementary School, Griswold Street.  
2:06 a.m. Officer initiated investigation of a suspicious automobile at Sirum Equipment, Federal Street.

### Friday, 3/13

5:04 p.m. Report of hit & run accident near Second Street and Avenue A.  
5:48 p.m. Report of domestic disturbance at a Fourth Street address. Arrested juvenile subject. Charged with two counts of assault and battery, domestic.  
Saturday, 3/14

2:53 a.m. Officer initiated investigation of a suspicious automobile at ExxonMobil, Third Street.

3:27 a.m. Officer initiated investigation of a suspicious automobile at St. John’s lot on Church Street.

8:28 p.m. Officer initiated investigation of disorderly conduct on Avenue A near Equi’s Candy Store. Peace restored.

8:51 p.m. Report of neighbor disturbance at a Fourth Street address. Investigated.

9:19 p.m. Officer initiated investigation of shoplifting at Jay K’s Liquors, Avenue A.

9:43 p.m. Report of domestic disturbance at a Fourth Street address. Investigated.

10:11 p.m. Report of neighbor disturbance at an X Street address. Peace restored.

### Sunday, 3/15

1:34 a.m. Following a traffic stop, arrested [redacted] charged with operating a motor vehicle while under the influence of liquor, second offense, possession of an open container of alcohol in a motor vehicle,

operating to endanger, and failure to wear a seatbelt.

10:14 p.m. Officer initiated arrest of [redacted] on a straight warrant.

11:48 p.m. Report of trespassing at an East Main Street address. Arrested [redacted]

[redacted] Charged with trespassing.

### Monday, 3/16

11:26 a.m. Report of domestic disturbance at a K Street address. Investigated.

12:13 p.m. Report of neighbor disturbance at a Turners Falls Road address. Services rendered.

2:06 p.m. Report of an unwanted person at a K Street address. Investigated.

### Tuesday, 3/17

9:23 a.m. Report of suspicious activity at the bus stop near Farren Care Center on Montague City Road. Investigated.

1:20 p.m. Report of general disturbance at a Turners Falls Road address. Subject advised of options.

1:30 p.m. Report of illegal dumping in private dumpster associated with an Avenue A address. Investigated.

4:37 p.m. Report of possible hit and

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## Immigration Raid Documentary to Screen at Brick House



PETER PEREIRA PHOTO—NEW BEDFORD STANDARD-TIMES

Tomasa Mendez, 2, cries in her mother's arms in the aftermath of the factory raid, during which her father was detained.

BY MIKE JACKSON

**NEW BEDFORD** — What happens when the federal government tries to cram the toothpaste of human migration back into the tube of public policy? In March of 2007, one working-class Massachusetts community found out the hard way, as it became the

site of Immigration and Customs Enforcement's first experiment in large-scale factory raids.

The ICE raid targeted the Michael Bianco Inc. plant, where hundreds of undocumented workers from Central America manufactured leather gear for the US military. The subsequent separation of between 150 and 200 children — including breastfeeding infants — from their parents raised widespread public protest and sparked a political row among a number of state and federal agencies.

*Detained*, a short documentary film by Jenny Alexander about the raid and its aftermath, will be shown at the Brick House on Tuesday, March 24th, at 7 p.m. The film, which follows several families in the aftermath of the detentions, is part of the ongoing Movements for Self-Determination film series organized by the indomitable Undergrowth Farm of Gill. Refreshments will be available, courtesy of Green Fields Market.

## Community Garden Plots Available

BY SHARON GENSLER

**WENDELL** — Spring is almost here, and it's time to think about community gardening. In Wendell, we have a great site, behind the new town office building, with fertile, deep soil, good sun, and a fantastic view. It's a great way to meet neighbors and create community while growing your own food and flowers this year. Eat local and save on your grocery bill; join the community garden.

*Returning gardeners:* Some of last season's plot holders still need to let us know if they would like to use their plots again this year. They may also

change plot locations if they wish to, assuming other plots are available.

The email address for the Wendell Community Garden is [wendellcomgardens@hughes.net](mailto:wendellcomgardens@hughes.net). Katie Nolan (978-544-2306) will have applications for Wendell Community Garden plots available at the general store, the Wendell Free Library, and at the town office building.

*New Gardeners:* There are still plots available for this season. Please read guidelines, and fill out and submit your application. After returning gardeners, plots are assigned on first-come, first-served basis.

## THEATER REVIEW

NICOLE KAPISE

**TURNERS FALLS** — On Saturday, March 14th, AlysonRose and I visited the Shea Theater to see the PaintBox Theatre perform *the Tortoise and the Hare*, a show that proved, yet again, that no one is ever too old to enjoy a good storyteller. Or, better yet, a troupe of storytellers.

The stage was set with an enticing array of color: pale blue, fuchsia, purple, orange, and a swirl of bold black and white checks. Hanging over the backdrop was a video screen which served to prompt the audience to participate verbally and also displayed artwork created by first graders from Sheffield Elementary School and third graders from Gill Elementary School.

Nancy Meagher, the Gill-Montague art teacher, explained, "Tom McCabe (artistic director of Northampton's PaintBox Theatre) sent descriptions of the scenes, but that was all. The children came up with the pictures themselves, creating their artwork with markers and paints. I photographed the art while it was still wet, to make the images really shimmer."

And they do — the pictures are brilliant, vibrant and alive as only young children's art can be.

## It's the Tortoise by a Hair at the Shea Theater

Meagher has been asked to do more for the PaintBox Theatre. We'll keep our fingers crossed and see her and her students do the artwork for the upcoming *Princess and the Pea* as well.

Before the show began, McCabe took to the stage wearing an affable smile and wild collage shoes, decorated with various gifts from many people. He welcomed guests and thanked the students whose artwork enhanced the show, then turned the stage over to the show's Narrator, energetically played by Troy David Mercier.

The Narrator got the audience all revved up, and when Highballin' Hyacinth Hare (played by Kelsey Flynn of 93.9 The River) arrived to warm up for the race, the audience's engines were ready as well. After a brief interview (Hyacinth Hare hails from New Jersey) she took a speedy spin around the theater, remembering to run safely and conserve energy.

Two helpful young viewers appeared onstage to deliver a note to the Narrator, as he and Hyacinth Hare were not too sure who her opponent would be. She's raced everyone. The note apparently wasn't to her liking, and the audience was left in suspense as she bounced off the

stage.

Meanwhile, Hyacinth Hare's biggest fan, Tommy Tortoise (McCabe) arrived to profess his loyalty and cheer his hero on.

Hyacinth Hare returned to the stage to greet her latest opponent, the Really Big Chicken, also known as Monte Belmonte from The River's morning show. The Really Big Chicken gave his statistics as five foot ten, one hundred eighty pounds on a good afternoon, and answered the age-old question "Why did you cross the road?" with one of his own: "Why do you keep asking me this!?"

Puns, and feathers, flew as the race began. The Really Big Chicken maintained a strong lead until an unexpected bag of chicken feed threw him off track. It's Hyacinth Hare by a ... never mind. She won again.

Now, Tommy Tortoise got to meet his idol, and, in asking for her autograph was unwillingly pulled into a challenge against the Hare. Hooray for Tommy and his courage!

Tommy trained diligently during intermission, even getting the

audience to join his program. A steady diet of earthworms, long grass and blueberry pie had Tommy in fine form. He's able to jog seventeen inches in ninety-seven minutes! Oh, this Tortoise can move!

As the race began, Hyacinth Hare was off to a blazing start, so when her cell phone rang she confidently pulled over for a chat... and Tommy took the lead! Hyacinth Hare overtook him



Kelsey Flynn and Tom McCabe starred in the *Tortoise and the Hare*

again, and when safely in the lead stopped for a carrot latte ( e x t r a f o a m ) . Tommy kept going... the wrong way! The audience got him pointed in the right

direction again and the race continued!

Hyacinth Hare had such a huge lead she decided to take a nap to conserve her strength. We won't spoil the surprise ending, but let's just say slow and steady sometimes wins the race.

In the end, the two contestants discussed a business merger, and six months later T & H Athletic

Club opened to the public.

After the show, the three stars met young fans and posed for photos in the Shea lobby. Children came shyly up to congratulate Tommy Tortoise on his success and to tell Hyacinth Hare she did a great job.

Speaking with Tommy's alter-ego, Tom McCabe, I learned the PaintBox Theatre is a troupe of approximately half a dozen who perform as their schedules permit, as well as Tom, Kelsey and Troy. "Kelsey is in every show I can get her in," McCabe said. "Troy is a recent UMass graduate, and does theatre for adults as well as children. I'm always on the lookout for silly folks who are interested and want to learn."

"I'm hoping to be able to come back and do three shows a year here," McCabe said. "We'll be back in April, and hopefully we'll have more people in the audience."

I agree. I urge families to come to the Shea Theater Saturday, April 18th at 2:00 p.m. to see the PaintBox Theatre perform *the Princess and the Pea*. If it's anything like *the Tortoise and the Hare*, it's to be full of laughter and excitement for all ages. Come enjoy the show! AlysonRose and I will see you there.

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**NOTES FROM THE ERVING SELECTBOARD**

**Petitioned Articles Seek Change to Zoning Laws to Allow Gas Station, Drive Through**

BY DAVID DETMOLD

On March 16th, the board reviewed a draft warrant for the May 6th annual town meeting, and, satisfied with the draft, voted to close the warrant for monetary articles, and hold it open for non-monetary articles until the end of March.

Of the 34 articles on the draft warrant, two were petitioned by finance committee chair Eric Semb, who co-owns with his father Ralph the former Jillians on the 2 (once the Countree Living) restaurant on Route 2, across Semb Drive from his French King Entertainment Center.

On March 9th, Eric Semb brought petitions to the selectboard, one with 176 signatures calling for a change in the aquifer protection bylaw to allow for the construction of a gas station in the protected zone, where the Countree Living site

is located. The other petition, with 108 signatures, called for a change to the Central Village zoning bylaw passed by annual town meeting four years ago, to allow for the creation of East and West Village zones. In the West Village zone, where the Countree Living site would be located, the petition calls for the right to establish a drive-through business by special permit of the planning board.

Semb has said he plans to build a convenience store and fast food outlet and gas station within the footprint of the former Countree Living building, since demolished. He said town residents now have to drive to Orange or Gill to get gas, and the part of Route 2 where his business is located does not have the kind of historic façade concerns that would make a drive-through fast food business undesirable in Erving Center.

Moderator Rich Peabody asked the board to consider continuing the annual town meeting from Wednesday, May 6th, to Thursday, May 7th, if discussion on the petitioned articles should require extra time.

The board also met with environmental supervisor Art Pace and water department superintendent Pete Sanders on March 16th, to go over the results of the recent video monitoring performed by Green Mountain Pipeline Services in the town's sewer lines. The tests were conducted in an attempt to reduce inflow and infiltration problems in the lines, caused by rootballs, cracks, and breaks in the pipes. As a result of the video monitoring, Pace and Sanders recommended the town consider placing liner sleeves inside the sewer pipes along four Erving Center streets: Prospect Street, Church Street,

Arch Street, and North Street.

"We're at the point now where we're ready to put together a request for qualifications to get companies to bid on this work; it looks like it may be a \$50,000 job," said administrative assistant Tom Sharp.

Erseco general manager Peter Coleman also came to talk to the board, seeking approval for a plan to allow the paper mill to gain DEP approval to use the byproduct of their treatment process – what some plants would call sludge, but which the Erving Center plant calls Erving Fiber Clay – as a temporary covering for landfills. The board said they would consult an environmental lawyer and get back to him.

The town appears to have arrived at a balanced budget for 2010, after the school department certified a budget cut of \$7,000, to arrive at a \$2,113,627

figure for the elementary school budget, a decrease of \$78,000 from last year. In the secondary education budget, declines in school choice and charter school numbers (which will be reflected in similar losses in state aid figures to the town) created a misleadingly large budget decline of \$193,000 from last year's figures, for a 2010 total of \$829,932.

Nevertheless, the board thanked the school committee for "taking a much harder look at expenditures," Sharp said.

The board signed a 20-year bond at 2.5% for \$4.5 million, on the \$6.2 million upgrade to the Erving wastewater treatment plant. The remainder of the funding for that project, which is already under construction, will come from town funds.

Tighe and Bond engineer see **ERVING** pg 12

from **SKATE** pg 1

town administrator Frank Abbondanzio to offer use of his lot, which formerly served as the depot for his J&L Tree Service trucks and crew.

"It's space we're not using right now. If the kids can put the skate park up, I wish them all the best. It's good all the way around," he said.

Capen said the empty building at the corner of the lot used to house a motorcycle shop, and a Hispanic church. "Whoever rents it now will have to put up with the kids for the next three years," he added.

The town is proceeding with plans to seek the abandonment of Williams Way, abutting Unity Park, which the skate park committee hopes will become the permanent home of a new concrete skate park, three years from now. If that plan materializes, it will depend on the cooperation of the parks and recreation commission, and the success of the town's community development grant application for a redesign and renovation of Unity Park, which could include the skate park in the attached land beneath and to the north of Williams Way.

On Monday, Abbondanzio told the selectboard negotiations between the skate park committee and the parks and recreation commission had led to a "very good discussion" and a memorandum of understanding between the two groups, defining

the skate park committee's responsibility for maintenance of the park and the parks and recreation commission's oversight role.

Abbondanzio said the three-year lease at 11th Street will give the skate park an opportunity "to operate the site as an asset to the community. And I'm sure they will," he added.

The skate park committee is seeking donations in tax

deductible cash or kind to assist with the project. Contact Ruth Nervig at the Brick House, 413-863-9559 or at [rnervig@thebrickhouseinc.org](mailto:rnervig@thebrickhouseinc.org), for more information, or to get involved.



*Matt Spring pictured at the former skate park on 2nd Street. On Saturday April 25th, volunteers will gather there to move the existing ramps to the new location on 11th Street. Come lend a hand!*



DETMOLD PHOTO

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# You Really Ought to Give the Music Man a Try

BY JOSHUA GAMMON

**TURNERS FALLS** – “River City Junction! River City Junction!” cries the conductor, as the train full of fast-talking salesmen rolls onto the stage of the Turners Falls High School, in the first scene of Meredith Wilson’s *The Music Man*. Directed by Douglas Finn, this year’s musical is bound to be a great success.

Written and scored by Wilson in 1957, the show features such memorable songs as “Seventy-Six Trombones,” “Till There Was You,” and “Good Night My Someone.” It features the rakish con man Harold Hill, who comes to town to fleece the gullible natives by convincing them he can teach their children to play in a marching band, and stays just long enough to fall in love.

Nearly forty students rehearsed for almost twelve weeks in preparation for the show, which features song, dance, and rapid fire dialogue; the middle and high school cast took hold of this challenge and

claimed it as their own.

When thinking this past winter about what musical to choose, Finn said he mulled over what would speak to our community, and the ideals we hold dear. “This play is as optimistic as apple-pie and the Fourth of July, the way we always wanted it to be,” commented the enthusiastic Finn. “It represents hope, and it just felt right to choose it this year.”

Heading up the cast of the *Music Man* are three freshmen: Zach Boisvert, playing Harold Hill, the traveling salesman and con-artist, Jolina Blier, as Marian the Librarian, the woman who stamps an overdue notice on Hill’s heart, and Jesse Langknecht, starring as the irrepressible Marcellus Washburn, Harold Hill’s witty and comical sidekick.

They may be young, but that doesn’t mean they’re wet behind the ears. Finn credits this trio as being, “some of the strongest cast members,” he’s ever worked with, “supportive of themselves and their fellow

cast members.”

With the cadences of a marching band and the nostalgic feel of a homecoming parade, anyone who loves the sounds of a marching or military band will surely be delighted by this play. The upbeat tempo throughout will have the audience stamping to the beat the whole night through.

Henry Gaida, a Turners Falls High school alumnus, will once again conduct the orchestra, tasked with delivering this robust and animated music, with choreography provided by another Turners Falls High School graduate, Alana Martineau.

The production of the play has been an event encompassing the entire school, with cast members from the middle school, almost equal to those of their high school counterparts. The sets, built by parent Mark Mailloux and his two sons, add to the overall authentic 1910s feel of the entire play. The sets were painted by high school art

teacher Heidi Schmidt and her class, allowing the art students to show off their talent to the entire

community. The costumes, graciously coordinated by Pam Grimard, faculty member of Sheffield Elementary School, add to the illusion of the turn of the 20th century atmosphere.

Though it may only be his first year directing at the high school, Finn is confident in his team and his approach. “I have a different style than last year’s director,” commented Finn. “I asked the kids to do different things, and told them they are going to have to ‘Stand and Deliver.’”

“These kids have worked very, very hard on this show. From the singing, to the complex dancing, the community will be able to see all the hard work they put into this.”

But don’t just take his word for it. Finn is encouraging everyone to, “come and decide for themselves.” He’s positive



there will be no regrets.

“So what the heck, you’re welcome, glad to have you with us, even though we may not ever mention it again...” You really ought to give *the Music Man* a try.

*The Music Man* will be performed in the Turners Falls High School theater on Friday and Saturday, March 20th and 21st, at 7:30 p.m. There will also be one matinee on Sunday, March 22nd, at 1:30 p.m.

Tickets are \$8 for adults, and \$7 for seniors and students. Those who wish to attend may either buy them at the door, or purchase them in advance at World Eye Bookshop in Greenfield, the Bookmill in Montague Center, or at Turners Falls High School.

For more information, please contact the High School at 413-863-7200.

from GILL pg 1

happen for Gill-Montague to be reorganized. We’ve looked at state statutes; we’ve looked at other districts; we’ve looked at the state’s regionalization push.”

Storrow said the commission on education in Gill will hold a public hearing to go over their findings with townspeople on Monday, April 27th, at 7 p.m. in the town hall. Associate commissioner Jeff Wulfson, from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, will be attending that meeting, (Wulfson has been overseeing the GMRSD’s finances since the state assumed control of the district’s budget in December), and Dayle Doiron, the superintendent of the Pioneer Regional School District has been invited to attend, as well.

Storrow said the Gill education commission has been in conversation with Wulfson, and with

representatives from the Pioneer district to talk about possible options for Gill. She said the commission also plans to talk with the Greenfield school district about whether it would be possible or desirable for Gill to explore joining with that district.

She said some of the questions that have arisen so far include, “What would happen to our teachers,” at Gill Elementary, “or our debt equity if we left the GMRSD entirely.” The regional agreement stipulates that Gill would have to pay off the debt the town incurred in the high school/middle school renovation project, even if Gill students were to withdraw and attend another school district. But concerns about retiree pensions, and questions about how the town’s equity in the high school/middle school would be accounted for are not addressed in the agreement, and Storrow said these and

other concerns would have to be negotiated though a process of the GMRSD school committee amending the district agreement, should the towns agree to move forward with reconsideration of the district relationship.

She said Wulfson, at first, had told her clearly, “Gill-Montague has to change. It’s too small.” But she said Wulfson would not tell the towns or district how to change the district: that would be left up to local decision makers, at least for now.

In her conversations with Wulfson, Storrow said it seemed likely that state approval for Gill to leave the district would only come if Montague made parallel moves to regionalize with a neighboring district. “Gill-Montague is not going to get smaller,” she quoted Wulfson.

She also said the state would not look favorably on Gill withdrawing their elementary school

from the regional school district (as is the town’s right according to the district agreement), and ‘tuitioning in’ upper school students to a neighboring high school/middle school.

“Really this becomes a very important joint process for both towns to decide what their options are. In what ways can we change to become a better school district? Or how do we provide better education opportunities for our children if we decide now to go our separate ways? We need to move this forward in a way that is local and not state forced.”

Ted Castro-Santos, who also serves on the Gill education commission, said, “Given that ‘no change’ is not an option, each town should be thinking about what is best for them, but not at the exclusion of the other town.”

Montague selectboard member Pat Allen said, “I get the impression we could move along

and come up with what we think is best and the state could still say, ‘No.’”

Storrow replied, “I thought there was something called Home Rule, but I guess I’m getting old. The ground is changing under our feet.”

She said her follow-up conversations with Wulfson led her to suspect the state is getting pressured to back off on strong-arm tactics with local districts, especially at a time when resources to provide incentives for merging school districts may be lacking.

“The more we study, the more we can fight things that don’t fit Franklin County,” Storrow added. “I think it’s critical the two towns be working together to manage these different options. Getting bigger for the sake of getting bigger, I’ve never seen work. But we can identify a need and

see GILL pg 11

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# Exciting News in the Air for Wendell Meetinghouse



Vintage postcard of the Wendell Meetinghouse, with steeple attached

BY MOLLY KAYNOR

**WENDELL** – Students in the graduating class at the North Bennett Street Preservation School in Boston have designed a steeple for the Wendell Meetinghouse. They developed the design by studying the existing bell tower supports and a photograph of the Wendell Meetinghouse when it had a steeple.

Wendell postmaster Charlie O'Dowd supplied the 1890s

photograph of the Wendell Meetinghouse steeple that was used for their design, (taken from a postcard from the late Don Ellis).

The North Bennett Street School seniors who designed a steeple for the Wendell Meetinghouse would also like to replicate the original steeple in their Boston workshop as their final project this spring. There will be no labor cost.

However, the Friends of the Wendell Meetinghouse will need

to finance all necessary material costs, including lightning protection. Local sawyers and lightning protection contractors are in the process of submitting bids. This project requires good wood, unusually long lengths of rafters and some creative transportation arrangements.

We estimate that material and transportation costs could total several thousand dollars. Friends of the Wendell Meetinghouse will also need to raise funds to hoist and install the completed

steeple once the bell tower has been restored.

All donations to Friends of the Wendell Meetinghouse, Inc. are tax-deductible and are needed now more than ever to get this exciting project going. Contributions for the project should be sent to F.W.M., P.O. Box 171, Wendell, MA 01379.

More news on this story will be submitted to the *Montague Reporter* once the Meetinghouse Steeple project 'gets off the ground'.

## NOTES FROM THE GILL SELECTBOARD

### Costs of Third Police Officer May Be Available

IF TOWN AGREES TO PAY FOR FOURTH YEAR

BY DAVID DETMOLD

**GILL** – Contrary to what she had told the board two weeks ago, (reported in *MR VII #22, Mass DOR Issues Report on Gill Financial Practices*), town administrative assistant Tracy Rogers corrected herself at the Monday, March 16th meeting on the matter of a competitive federal grant that may allow the town to hire a new police officer.

"It's not the Cops MORE program," which only pays up to \$75,000 over three years for a new officer's salary, leaving the town to pay the rest, plus benefits, Rogers said. "It's that Cops Hiring Recovery Program that's available now," as a result of the stimulus package, "and they pay 100% in salary and benefits, if we promise we'll keep the officer for the fourth year." The grant application is due in one month, Rogers said.

The board differed on whether and how to apply.

"This would give us a third officer back," said chair Nancy

Griswold. "And there is a need."

"With what's going on in the world, we're going to turn around and kick ourselves," if we don't apply for the grant, said board member Lee Stevens.

"I'm still not convinced that four years from now we'll be able to afford a \$40,000 salary, anyway," said Ann Banash.

Banash recommended Rogers speak with Northfield about the towns applying jointly and sharing a third officer, a position both towns lack, if the grant regulations would allow for such an approach. The board concurred, and Rogers will investigate.

The board has determined that a water leak at Oak Street resident Sheue Ying Hwu's house, which occurred over the winter while she was not in residence, did result in the water draining into the sewer. The board recommended that Hwu seek an abatement for some portion of her \$1,314.07 sewer bill.

Preliminary budgets are in

hand for most town departments, except for the Recreation Commission. "If we don't get a budget, they don't get any money," said Stevens.

The board voted to dedicate this year's annual report to recently deceased building committee and conservation commission member Ed

from GILL pg 10

work to meet it.

Allen supported the idea of both Montague and Gill placing articles on their town meeting warrants this spring to form regional school district planning committees, which by statute must be three-member boards, including one member from the school committee, working as volunteers. Storrow said she has also inquired of Doiron whether Pioneer Regional could form a planning committee to work in tandem with the towns', and Doiron is researching whether a school district can do that, according to the statute.

Storrow said if Gill is to stay in the GMRSD, at minimum, amendments are required to the district agreement to reflect the changed nature of Gill Elementary School's enrollment, about 50% of which is

now made up of students from Montague or other towns. Gill is presently required to pay all capital costs for the elementary school.



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**ERVING** from pg 9

Tighe and Bond engineer Mike McManus updated the board on the Ervingside treatment plant project on the 9th, and gave a presentation on the \$400,000 Farley treatment plant upgrade, which was advertised this week, with bids expected to be opened April 16th. Next, Tighe and Bond will present a cost analysis for the repainting of the town's water tank across from the former Starlight Diner.

The board granted a business license to Tim Christenson, of Tim's RV, which will be established in the former Eastern States Trucking facility across the street from town hall on Route 2. "The owner addressed the boards concerns, and assured us he had the proper bonding and demonstrated he had the required repair facility needed to sell used vehicles," said Sharp. The board limited the number of vehicles in the lot to the side lot adjacent to Freighthouse Antiques to no more than 30 trailers. No more than 10 trailers or vehicles will be allowed in the rear lot. Operating hours will be limited to 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Saturday, and Sunday by appointment.

Christenson, who used to operate the business on Route 5

and 10 near the Bernardston town line in Greenfield, promised to keep the appearance of the business neat and tidy.

Cynthia Marchand resigned from the recreation commission, in time to have the seat available for the upcoming town election on Monday, May 4th.

James Hackett, 37, of 65 High Street, a part-time police officer and long-time resident of town, is the only candidate to turn in papers for the three-year selectboard seat being vacated by Linda Downs Bembury.

The board voted to make a formal request to Mass Highway to place a sign in memory of Dennis Rindone along the stretch of Route 2 that has recently been rerouted near the Erving Paper Mill. Rindone chaired the Route 2 Task Force for many years, and is credited for bringing agreement between towns and the state to pave the way for \$40 million worth of improvements from Templeton to Erving.

Sharp said more than 300 people attended a memorial service for Rindone, the former Erving selectman, who died unexpectedly in his sleep on March 1st, in Princeton last Sunday, where Rindone served as town administrator. Sharp said there was not a dry eye in the house.

**STAR** from pg 1

after the break determined to show the audience what a drummer can do. And he did.

Imani keeps a beat as long as he likes, then tosses it aside with a syncopated flourish or staccato attack as effortless as it is unheard of, recalling Mohammed Ali's ringside warning: "Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee." By the last song, "We Wish", Imani pulled out all the stops and blew the roof off the Hall, leaving the coffee drinkers dazed and awestruck, the seniors fumbling for their earplugs in the rubble.

Naia Kete, who looks like the second coming of Josephine Baker and sounds like a more authentic version of Corrine Bailey Rae, featured a number of her original compositions on

Friday, along with a few well-placed covers, as she worked with her band on acoustic guitar. The plaintive appeal of "Come Back Home" alternated with Tracy Champmanesque agitation on "Are You Ready to Change the World".

Naia Kete puts her heart and soul into her vocals. Her voice is untrained and unrestrained, it's a raw and powerful instrument she plainly intends to employ for the uplift and liberation of the people - whether they be the audience in front of her or the struggling millions of the planet.

"For me, writing music comes from life experience," said Naia Kete after the show, "and my main influences are my band members and family and friends." On Friday, she slipped

Bob Marley's "Zimbabwe" effortlessly into the mix with "Jah is Mighty", an anthem she penned when she was 11 years old. Both stand up equally well from the listener's vantage point.

Life experience comes quickly when you travel to the parts of the world this rising star has visited. On "Let Me Hear You Say," Naia Kete sings, "Fueled by your wealth which keeps other people low; You're cleansing yourself in the tears which others cry, and we won't be heard 'cause we're not worth your time."

But, in Naia Kete's case, that won't be true for long, if indeed it ever was. Check out the video from her concert on MCTV in the coming weeks, and go see her the next time she plays at a club near you.



**MCTV Channel 17 Afternoon/Evening Schedule 3/20 - 3/26**

visit [www.montaguema.net](http://www.montaguema.net) for complete schedule

**Friday, March 20**

- 2:30 p.m. Exploring New Worlds in New England
  - 3:00 p.m. Falls Table: Michaelangelo Salmon with Moroccan Tomato Sauce
  - 4:00 p.m. Franklin County Matters Community Action
  - 5:30 p.m. Health Hill: Transfat
  - 6:00 p.m. Independent Voices
  - 6:30 p.m. Inside The Artists Studio: Ted Graveline
  - 7:00 p.m. GMRSD Budget Meeting 3/17/09
- Saturday, March 21**
- 2:30 p.m. Physician Focus
  - 3:30 p.m. Power Canal Draw Down
  - 4:00 p.m. Preaching the Blues
  - 5:00 p.m. On The Ridge: Youth Turkey Hunt Day 2009

- 5:30 p.m. Over The Falls: The Coming of The Train
  - 6:30 p.m. Reconciliation Ceremony
  - 7:00 p.m. The Looming Crisis in Oil Depletion
  - 9:00 p.m. Recovery in The United States
  - 10:00 p.m. Seneca Falls
  - 10:30 p.m. Surviving the Vernon Reactor
- Sunday, March 22**
- 3:00 p.m. Tapping Maple Ridge
  - 4:00 p.m. the epics at the vous
  - 5:00 p.m. TWB The Aging Eye
  - 6:00 p.m. Basketball TFHS vs New Leadership
  - 8:30 p.m. 2009 Worlds Largest Concert
  - 9:30 p.m. 2009 Department of Revenue Filing Season
  - 10:00 p.m. Common People Celtic Harp

**Monday, March 23**

- 3:00 p.m. Montague Update: Jamie Berger
  - 4:00 p.m. Mik TV with Joe Landry pt1
  - 4:30 p.m. Naturalist Laurie Sanders
  - 5:30 p.m. Physician focus: Eyes
  - 6:30 p.m. Inside The Artists Studio: Ted Graveline
  - 7:00 p.m. Select Board (Live)
  - 9:00 p.m. Into the Way of Peace
  - 10:00 p.m. Living Along The River
- Tuesday, March 24**
- 3:00 p.m. Women Girls & HIV: Teen Girls
  - 3:30 p.m. Town Forum-Unity Park Hearing
  - 5:00 p.m. Underground Railway Concert 07
  - 6:30 p.m. The Western Mass Democrat Lt. Gov Tim Murray
  - 7:00 p.m. GMRSD (Live)

**Wednesday, March 25**

- 2:30 p.m. Falls Table: Michaelangelo Salmon with Moroccan Tomato Sauce
  - 3:30 p.m. Fate of the Stallion
  - 4:00 p.m. On The Ridge: Youth Turkey Hunt Day 2009
  - 4:30 p.m. Over The Falls The Eddie in Eddies Wheels
  - 5:30 p.m. Poetry Music Jam for Montague Reporter from the Vou
  - 6:30 p.m. Basketball TFHS vs New Leadership
  - 9:00 p.m. Valley Idol Finals 2008
  - 12:00 a.m. Encore Body Art #10
  - 12:30 a.m. Encore Body Art #11
  - 12:58 a.m. Encore Body Art #9
- Thursday, March 26**
- 2:00 p.m. TWD Sexual Abuse Healing
  - 3:00 p.m. Friends present Fall Town String Band
  - 5:00 p.m. 2009 Department of Revenue Filing Season
  - 5:30 p.m. 9-1-1 People, Facts & Stories
  - 6:00 p.m. Bech Interview

**BFMC Offers Free Reiki Sessions**

GREENFIELD - The Radiology/Imaging Department at Baystate Franklin Medical Center is offering free Reiki sessions to the first 10 women who schedule their first mammograms at BFMC before March 31. Women living in Franklin Co., who have never had a mammogram, can sign up for your mammogram and be eligible for a free, one-hour Reiki session. The Reiki sessions are being funded by a grant from Rays of Hope - A Walk Toward the Cure of Breast Cancer, in partnership with Baystate Regional Cancer Program's Comprehensive Breast Center. Rays of Hope raises funds for breast cancer research, programs, services, treatment, and outreach and education throughout western Massachusetts.

The ACS recommends that women should have a baseline mammogram at age 40, and follow up with yearly exams. Jarvis adds, "If you have a strong family history of breast cancer - your mother or your sister, for instance - you should discuss with your health care provider.

Reiki is a healing energy therapy which can help provide relaxation and energy; decrease pain or anxiety; and promote physical, mental and emotional health. Reiki is received through a series of light hand placements on the client's fully clothed body. To be eligible for your Reiki session, you should first schedule your mammogram by calling BFMC's Access Services at 413-773-2233; be sure to mention the promotion when you make your appointment.

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~ J.R.R. Tolkein

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JESSICA HARMON ILLUSTRATION

**THE HEALTHY GEEZER:**

**There's a Kind of Hush, All Over the World**

**BY FRED CICETTI**

**LEONIA, NJ - Q.** I'm worried about my hearing because I played in a rock band when I was a kid. How dangerous is the sound level on the bandstand?

Sound volume is measured in decibels (dB). You risk hearing loss when you are exposed to sounds at 85 decibels or more. The louder the sound and the longer the exposure, the greater the risk.

Here's the bad news: rock

music is on many lists as an example of a dangerous sound. Here's one of those lists:

- 30 dB = library
- 50 dB = rain
- 60 dB = conversation (apolitical)
- 70 dB = vacuum cleaner
- 80 dB = busy street
- 90 dB = shop tools
- 100 dB = chain saw
- 110 dB = rock music among audience
- 120 dB = rock music on band stand
- 130 dB = jackhammer
- 140 dB = air raid siren
- 150 dB = rock music crescendo

If I played electric guitar in the Sixties next to one of those

gigundo amplifiers, I'd get to a doctor for an ear exam.

You don't have to be a rocker to suffer from noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL); anyone at any age can be a victim. About ten percent of Americans between ages 20 and 69 already may have suffered permanent damage to their hearing from excessive noise.

You can sustain NIHL at work, play or sitting around the house. Music players turned up too high can damage your ears. Woodworking can be an unsafe hobby. Leaf-blowers reach hazardous sound levels.

Most people's hearing diminishes with age. About one in three Americans over 60 suffers

from some loss of hearing, which can range from the inability to hear certain voices to deafness. Those who are healthy and not exposed to loud noise can maintain their hearing for many years.

The first symptom of NIHL is the inability to pick up high-pitched sounds, or not understanding conversation in a crowd. As hearing declines, you lose the lower-pitched sounds.

Prevention is the key to NIHL. Here is some advice to avoid damage to your ears:

- Avoid exposure to noise when possible.
- When you can't avoid noise, wear earplugs that are available in drugstores.

Earplugs can stop 25 dB of sound. Cotton in your ears doesn't work.

You can cut down noise in the home with rubber mats under appliances and carpets on floors. Drapes on windows help keep outside noise from coming into your home.

Turn down the volume on TVs, radios, music sound systems and portable MP3 players. Be especially careful to keep the volume down if you wear ear buds.

Don't sit near speakers at concerts, dances or weddings.

Look for noise ratings when buying any product that creates sound, such as a hair dryer. Choose quieter models.

*If you have a question, you may ask it quietly, by writing to fred@healthygeezers.com*

**Math Problems Remain in District Budget Process**

**BY ELLEN BLANCHETTE**

**GILL - MONTAGUE** - Chair Mary Kociela told the Gill-Montague school committee on Tuesday night to expect a completed budget for FY '10 by May 6th.

First, the committee will take another vote on a budget percentage increase at the next school committee meeting, on March 24th. Then, the committee plans to ask their administrative team to prepare a budget presentation for March 31st, at which time the committee will vote on the budget again. That would be the official budget that would go to Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education Mitchell Chester for approval. The DESE retains formal control of the Gill-Montague budget process until the Fiscal '10 budget is approved by the towns and the district.

In April, the committee intends to fine-tune the budget, receiving presentations from administrative teams, and on April 13th from special education, student services and district nurses. On April 21st, the central office will present their FY '10 budget recommendations. Following that, the committee will hold four discussion meetings between April 27th and May 6th, during which they will set priorities and develop the final FY '10 budget.

On Tuesday, assistant DESE commissioner Jeffrey Wulfson discussed the state's role in the GMRSD budget process, including the expected stimulus funds for education. Wulfson said as the process moves forward, the

DESE would watch to see if there was a reasonable expectation for the towns and the district to reach a budget agreement this year. He said the state would act to set an interim budget by July 1st, but the final budget would be set December 1st, absent such an agreement. Since it is never a good thing to be setting a budget that late in the fiscal year, which begins July 1st, Wulfson said if there is no budget approved by the towns and the district by the end of June, the DESE would do an analysis and make decisions that "would represent the Commissioner's best judgment of what the budget should be for the year."

Given state and local fiscal conditions and the unknowns regarding the federal stimulus money, Wulfson said there might be a need for more flexibility this year, and that May 6th could even be too soon for the district to set a final budget.

Jeff Singleton of the Montague finance committee said, based on initial figures, it appeared the towns would be looking at a budget gap of more than half a million dollars in meeting the school committee's proposed 2.7% budget increase.

G-M superintendent Ken Rocke said those numbers were very preliminary, and projections based on them were "a little premature." He counseled patience as the towns and the district go through the budget process.

Wulfson told the committee that Governor Deval Patrick will be announcing distribution of education stabilization funds on Wednesday, March 18th. He said

most of the stimulus money coming from the state would go to districts that are below foundation level, so that Gill-Montague would probably not be getting any of this initial money. But, he added, funding for special education and Title I would be coming to the district, primarily in FY '10 and FY '11, and perhaps continuing into FY '12. These allotments will be announced this Friday, March 20th. Funding for technology will be announced in late March, or early April.

These allotments of stimulus funding will be followed up by competitive grant programs in the summer or fall. Thought is being given to making the stimulus money count in terms of strategic investment, and improving education in the long term.

Wulfson said, "This investment, more than any other investment Congress could think of, will help strengthen the economy in the years to come, but only if we use the money wisely."

**Student Presentations**

Presentations by elementary students solving math problems were not meant to embarrass the school and town officials who were contemplating months of budget deliberations, but to show their joy and engagement in learning. The children demonstrated thoughtfulness, confidence and an ability to use not only "Math Essentials," but also verbal skills to explain their thought process.

Second graders read out loud from a biography of Jacques

Cousteau, appearing confident in front of the TV cameras and microphones. They read with ease and fluency. Gill fifth graders with their teacher, Mark Silverman, talked about their approach to writing, and how they examine their own thought process in preparing for written assignments.

Principal Elizabeth Musgrave of Sheffield Elementary and Principal Rita Detweiler of Gill Elementary took the microphone next. Musgrave said her focus is on building the learning community at Sheffield, which she described as three schools coming together to make one new school. She compared the community to a nest, not a talent show, where students need to feel safe enough to be willing to show both their strengths and weaknesses.

Detweiler told the committee, "You have wonderful schools," and spoke of the strong sense of community in the district. She said Gill has introduced a morning assembly, opening the

school at 8:30 a.m., allowing Gill to offer a breakfast program. Detweiler noted her appreciation of the time the district spends on staff development, and the consistency of curriculum across the district.

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# JEP'S PLACE: Part CXV

## Elusive Mount Hermon



**BY JOSEPH A. PARZYCH GILL** – Fortunately, the old mean teacher didn't teach eighth grade. Miss Rule, who taught at Riverside School, was tough but fair. My grades went back up, and Mount Hermon accepted me. My father's words that I wasn't smart enough or rich enough came back to me that fall, when I didn't have enough money for books, fees, and clothes. To ask him for money was out of the question.

Mount Hermon had eluded me, after all, and I enrolled in Turners Falls High School instead.

One of the reasons I hadn't earned enough money was that I made the mistake of accepting a summer job at Mount Hermon, working on the farm, without first asking what the pay scale was. When I received my first month's pay, the check was made out for \$16.

"There must be some mistake; I worked a whole month."

The payroll clerk looked up the time sheets.

"No, it's correct – \$16."

"Correct? How the heck much are you paying me an hour, anyway?"

"Your pay is 10 cents an hour."

"Ten cents? How much do the men get?"

She hesitated for a moment. "The men get 35 cents."

"I've been doing a man's work. The farm manager had me working as a teamster and shoveling coal like a man, how come

I don't get a man's pay?"

"Because you're a boy and you don't have a family to support – you get 10 cents an hour."

"Not anymore, I don't. I quit!"

Depressed at having wasted a whole month working for a lousy 10 cents an hour, I went home.

Tony Kendrow, a farmer in Gill, heard I'd quit and came to the farm to ask me to work for him. He said he knew I was a good worker and would pay me 45 cents an hour. I was thrilled.

Before the end of the week, he raised me to 50 cents per hour. Kendrow later told me Hugo had applied for the job, but he'd turned him down. How sweet that was.

Kendrow also held the job of town road boss. When haying was over, he put me to work for the town grading gravel on town roads, even though I was only 13. The pay scale was 50 cents an hour.

"If the state man shows up and asks how old you are, tell

him you're 18."

The town had only one small dump truck delivering gravel. Spreading gravel beat haying. In fact, the hardest part of the job was looking busy. When any of my friends drove by with their parents, I swelled with pride to be seen working with men, earning a man's pay. I swaggered a bit, feeling like a big shot.

Still, the month I'd wasted working for 10 cents an hour left me short of the money I needed to attend Mount Hermon.

Discouraged, I abandoned the idea of ever going there. They were a bunch of cheap skates anyway, paying me 10 cents an hour, I said to myself, though I'd really had my heart set on it.

That fall, I began Turner Falls High School as a freshman. I'd become fast friends with Raymond, now a student at Mount Hermon. He told me not to get discouraged and urged me to reapply.

– Continued Next Week

## OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

# REEL MAGIC

**BY FLORE**

**SEDONA, AZ** – Everyone thinks of Red Rocks when the name of Sedona is pronounced!

If you were lucky enough, like I, to have known this small Arizona town back in the late Sixties, you would only have had to halt at two stop signs. There was upper Sedona, where the Oak Creek Grocery Market dealt with the local growers. Next to it, a saloon where you could hear the latest hot gossip, while a white stuffed bear saluted you with one for the road as you entered. Also a smoothie place where you could get a real root

beer float or a tasty sarsaparilla on the rocks!

Then there was lower Sedona. On Saturday morn the place was full, up to its neck at the awesome breakfast at the Country Kitchen. A couple of hours north of Phoenix, buses would stop in Sedona on their way to the Grand Canyon to drop off tourists for a quick midday meal.

Now, added to this duo there is an impressive West Sedona, where Route 89A extends its arms to this ever-growing town. Imagine, for a whole week it had a chance to observe the giddy rhythm of an Independent

International film festival, of equal caliber with the ones in Telluride, Sundance and Maui!

Back in 1994, when it started, it took place in a small room, as Marion Hermann recalls. The Sedona International Independent Film Festival is her baby so to speak. Now, the festival has the hands-down approval of the town.

The state of the world being what it is, we chose 50/50 light and dark films," said the dynamic executive director of the festival, Patrick Schweiss. "We received proposals from over 1000 talented independent film makers. We chose – and believe me, it was a tough choice – 140 films to show."

This year, the festival topped all expectations, would you believe, attracting 7500 film aficionados, sixty percent from out of town and forty percent locals.

The films were distinctly eye and conscience openers, covering major issues we face today, like the privatization of water. That was the topic on tap in this year's Audience Favorite Award for best documentary, *Flow*.

Jean Catsoulis reviewed *Flow*

in the *New York Times* last year, saying, "Irena Salina's astonishingly wide-ranging film is less depressing than galvanizing, an informed and heartfelt examination of the tug of war between public health and private interests. From the dubious quality of our tap water (possibly laced with rocket fuel) to the terrifyingly unpoliced contents of bottled brands (one company pumped from the vicinity of a Superfund site), the movie ruthlessly dismantles our assumptions about water safety and government oversight."

Catch that one if you can. And know, next year this time, say February 24th to March 1st, is ideal for cabin-bound New Englanders to travel west to catch a super film festival, in a breathtakingly beautiful part of the country: Sedona. Whether you are a film maker, a scenarist, a reporter, a volunteer (they recruit, by the way, some large number of them: register early) put these crucial dates on your calendar. See you there next year, for their sixteenth round!

Contact: [www.sedonafilmfestival.com](http://www.sedonafilmfestival.com)

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## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ERVING POLICE LOG Out of Control

**Tuesday, 3/10**  
7:10 a.m. Assisted Northfield police with upset male party on Birnam Road.

**Wednesday, 3/11**  
6:50 p.m. Report of child out of control on Lillian's Way. Spoke with parent and child, juvenile agreed to speak with a crisis counselor.

**Thursday, 3/12**  
1:00 p.m. Arrested [redacted] for failure to stop for a police officer, speeding and driving to endanger.

**Friday, 3/13**  
8:05 p.m. Report of out of control male at an Old State Road residence. Verbal altercation only, male party left to cool down.

**Saturday, 3/14**  
1:15 a.m. Assisted Bernardston police on Brattleboro Road with car vs. pole accident.

12:50 p.m. Found dog at Erving-Millers Falls town line. Returned to owner.

6:30 p.m. Report of two children walking on railroad tracks in Erving center. Patrolled area, unable to locate.

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# ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



JACK COUGHLIN ILLUSTRATION

## THURSDAY, MARCH 19th

Montague Business Association March *Thirsty Thursday*, 5 to 7 p.m. at the Rendezvous, Turners Falls. Meet and greet with no obligations.

Jazz at DiPaolo's, Turners Falls: *Doug Hewitt & Mitch Pine*; guitar & piano, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m.

## FRIDAY, MARCH 20th

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Josh Levangie*, 9 to 11 p.m. Country Folk Guitar Featuring Johnny Cash favorites.

## FRIDAY TO SUNDAY, MARCH 20th to 22nd

Turners Falls High School presents *The Music Man*. With "Seventy Six Trombones" leading the way, students from Great Falls Middle School and Turners Falls High School march to the stage, presenting the 1957 classic. More than 40 students rehearsed for nearly 12 weeks in preparation. Features song, dance, and very funny moments. At Turners Falls High School, Fri. & Sat. at 7:30 p.m. and Sun. matinee at 1:30 p.m. Tickets: \$8/\$7 for seniors & students.

## SATURDAY, MARCH 21st

At the Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Space Invaders! Nature Walk and Fun for Families!* Learn about invasives through a story, nature walk, and getting your hands dirty. Plant a seed and celebrate spring. 12 to 1 p.m. And at 1:30 p.m. A Geologic Walking Tour, New Brochure Celebration with Steve Winters. Indoor presentation & brief walking tour.

*Feeding Soil, Self and Soul*: Western Mass Master Gardener Assoc. Symposium. 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at Frontier Regional High School, South Deerfield. Featuring Julie Moir Messervy; *Home Outside: Creating the*

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Whitney Suter of Tiamat  
*Bellydance Raks! Raks Sharki at the Northampton Center for the Arts Northampton on March 26, 7:30 p.m.*

*Landscape You Love* at 10:30 a.m. \$25 for the day/\$15 for keynote.

Coop Concerts presents *All Cooped Up*, a CD release concert, 7 p.m. In the community room at All Souls Unitarian Church, Greenfield. Tickets sliding \$5-\$15. Info: Michael Nix (413) 772-0328.

An Evening of Classical Music: Enjoy the work of Carl Von Weber, Mauro Giuliani, G.F. Handel, and Antonio Vivaldi when Royalston residents Carl Kamp, guitar, and Deb Nunes, piano, perform at the Millers River Environmental Center, 100 Main St., Athol, in a benefit for the Center. A \$10 donation is requested. 7 p.m. More information about the Center and about ABNC: [www.millersriver.net](http://www.millersriver.net).

The Bobby Darling Show, a unique blend of high energy music and entertainment. At the French King Bowling Center, 8 p.m. A benefit for Erving Fire & Police departments' emergency training programs. \$20/person. Info: (413) 423-3047.

At the Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Rocket & Queer!* 9:30 p.m. \$5 cover.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Mass Production* 9:30 p.m.

**DEADLINE MARCH 21st**  
Montague Art Movement (M.A.M.) Call for artists for an exhibition on May 3rd during Montague Center May Day Celebration. Open to town of Montague residents only (Lake Pleasant, Millers Falls, Montague Center, Montague City, Turners Falls). Original fine art only. (drawing, mixed media, painting, photography, printmaking, sculpture) Contact Claudine: (413) 367-2687/[claudine\\_trudi@yahoo.com](mailto:claudine_trudi@yahoo.com).

**SUNDAY, MARCH 22nd**  
The First Meeting of Montague Gardeners, 3 p.m. At the Montague Center Grange Hall. Are you interested in gardening? Want to see what others are doing? Everyone welcome.

**TUESDAY, MARCH 24th**  
At the Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Craft Night*, 7 p.m. on. Careful mixing of knitting & drinking, bring a project to work on. *Eugene Mirman* Powerpoint Show at 8 p.m. No cover.

GCC Info Session, 5:30 to 7 p.m. GCC music director Mathew Shippee will be jamming with folks during regular drop-in hours, and joined by an admissions counselor to share info about the opportunities for everyone at GCC.

Community Awards Dinner at St. Kaziemerz Hall. Free Lasagna Dinner, Music, 6 to 8 p.m. Celebration of our community and hear about what programs you want for children. Call Kara McLaughlin at (413) 863-7310 for Free Tickets. Brought to you by the Gill-Montague Community School Partnership!

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25th**  
Deja Brew, Wendell: *Knitting & Crafts Night*, 7 to 10 p.m. Any craft/skill level welcome.



Carl Kamp, guitar, and Deb Nunes, piano, perform at the Millers River Environmental Center, 100 Main St., Athol, in a benefit for the Center. \$10 donation is requested. 7 p.m. on Saturday, March 21st.

At the Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Montague Phantom Brain Exchange*, \$5 cover, 9 p.m.

**THURSDAY, MARCH 26th**  
At the Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Noticing Nature*, 10:30 a.m. *Mobile Homes* (Turtles, snails, etc.) Imagine if you always had your home with you! Stories & silly songs as we explore such clever creatures that keep their homes on their backs! (413) 863-3221 or [www.greatfallsma.org](http://www.greatfallsma.org).

Jazz at DiPaolo's, Turners Falls: *Michele Feldheim Duo*; Michele Feldheim, piano; Mark Dunlap, bass. 6:30 to 9:30 p.m.

At the Montague Bookmill, Montague

Center: David Fromm reads and signs *Expatriate Games: My Season of Misadventures in Czech Semi-Pro Basketball*. Lawyer and pro-basketball wannabe Fromm offers an entertaining and often hilarious account of his year in Prague playing point guard in a semipro league and attending political science courses at Central European University. Free, 6:30 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Larry Kopp*, Country and City Blues Guitar with vocals, 8 to 10 p.m.

**Bellydance Raks! Raks Sharki** at the Northampton Center for the Arts, Northampton. An evening of spectacular Bellydance with open stage time available to local performance artists as well. 7:30 p.m.

**FRIDAY, MARCH 27th**  
At the Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Oweihaps - Bourgeois Heroes - World's Greatest Dad*, \$3 cover.

**FRIDAY & SATURDAY, MARCH 27th & 28th**  
Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Moon over Buffalo*, performed by The Country Players. Break out of the winter blahs and laugh until it hurts as the Country Players present Ken Ludwig's uproarious comedy. Share George's mid-life crisis, his wife's delusions of grandeur, kidnapping, mistaken identity, and attempted murder in scenic Buffalo, NY of the 1950's. The cast includes Nick DeRuiter as George, Chris Voytko as his wife Charlotte, Martha King-Devine as their daughter Rosalind, Dave Clooney as Paul the romantic, Dave Peck as Richard the love-sick lawyer, Cristen Rosinski as the starlet Eileen, Mark Hildreth as Howard the weatherman, and Su Hoyle as grandma Ethyl. 8 p.m. Continues 4/3 to 4/5. (413) 863-2281 [www.theshea.org](http://www.theshea.org)

**SUNDAY, MARCH 29th**  
Montague Grange, Montague Center: Family-style contra dancing with caller Tim Van Egmond and live music from traditional contra dance band *Shingle the Roof*, 4 to 6 p.m. Simple contras, circle dances, and singing games with easy instruction. \$4 or \$10-15/family. Info (413) 367-9608 or [www.montague.net/montague\\_grange](http://www.montague.net/montague_grange)

Pancake Breakfast sponsored by the Friends of Gill, 8 to 10:30 a.m. Held at the Gill Congregational Church, Gill Town Common. \$6/ \$5 for seniors, \$3 for children under ten.

**ONGOING**  
*The Last Furrow*, photograph by Frances and Mary Allen taken between 1901-1903. Part of the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association collection on display in **Harvesting Yesterday, Cultivating Tomorrow** at the Great Falls Discovery Center.

Hallmark Museum of Contemporary Photography: New Orleans photographer Josephine Sacabo, featured in Gallery 56, displays work from three distinct projects on exhibit: "A Geometry of Echoes," "The Nocturnes," and "El Mundo Inalcanzable De Susana San Juan." Also on display, work by Susan Bozic: *The Dating Portfolio* in Gallery 56. On display through March 29th. Museum hours: Thurs-Sun, 1 to 5 p.m.

**HOT SPOT TEEN CENTER**  
MONDAYS - Drop-in, 3 to 6 p.m.  
TUES & WEDS - Ongoing Music Project, 3 to 6 p.m.  
THURS - Drop-in, 3 to 6 p.m. & Movie Night, 6 to 8 p.m.  
Free (except some trips), open to local teens. Some require permission slips.  
Info: Jared at 863-9559.  
Hot Spot Teen Center is in **The Brick House**  
24 Third Street, Turners Falls, 01376

**GREENFIELD GARDEN CINEMAS**  
Main St. Greenfield, MA 413-774-4881  
[www.gardencinemas.net](http://www.gardencinemas.net)  
Showtimes for Friday, March 20th - Thurs., March 26th

1. CLOSED FOR RENOVATIONS
2. **DUPLICITY** PG13 in DTS sound DAILY 7:00 9:30 FRI, SAT, SUN 12:30 3:30
3. **KNOWING** PG13 DAILY 6:30 9:00 FRI, SAT, SUN 12:00 3:00
4. **I LOVE YOU, MAN** PG13 DAILY 6:30 9:00 FRI, SAT, SUN 12:30 3:30
5. **RACE TO WITCH MOUNTAIN** PG in DTS sound DAILY 6:45 9:15 FRI, SAT, SUN 12:15 3:15
6. **READER** R DAILY 9:15 FRI, SAT, SUN 3:15
6. **WATCHMEN** R DAILY 7:00 in DTS sound FRI, SAT, SUN 12:00 3:30
7. **SLUMDOG MILLIONAIRE** R DAILY 6:45 FRI, SAT, SUN 12:15

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Draft Beer Fine Wine Great Food  
Friday, 3/20, 9 to 11 p.m. *Josh Levangie*  
Saturday, 3/21, 9:30 p.m. *Reggae Night with Mass Production*  
Sunday, 3/22, 8 to 10 p.m. *Acoustic Duo featuring Kellianna & Heidi Jo: Moonstruck*  
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LATE NIGHT FOOD!

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*Katie Clarke and Charlie Conant*

FRI: 3/20 | All Night | FREE  
*Chatty Friday!* (entertainment-free zone!)

SUN: 3/21 | 9:30 | \$3  
*Rocket & Queer!*

TUE: 3/24 | 8pm | FREE  
**EUGENE MIRMAN**  
Powerpoint | Reading | Book Signing

**FOOD SPECIALS THIS WEEK:**  
Duck w. Chipotle Blueberry Glaze  
Asian Salad Nicoise

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MARY AZARIAN WOODBLOCK

BY LESLIE BROWN

**MONTAGUE CITY** – Out in the yard, there are still fields, ridges and piles of snow. There are bare spots, too. The snow holds on despite the hot sun, protected by an ice pack of a couple of inches. Where the snow has softened on top of the ice, the granules slip underfoot like sand. The walking is tricky. The snow slides. The apparent crust sags without warning, leaving you up to your knee in cold dampness. Where the ground is bare it is soft and muddy, eroded by the runnels of voles.

Nevertheless, in the protected area by the hedge where the sun shines for hours, the daffodils

are bragging with two inches of bright green stalk. I pull the trash away, rake out the leaves and do battle with the sprouts of bittersweet, which left uninterrupted would choke out the flowering beauties to come.

In the garden, the edges of the raised beds have appeared and the sprouts of the garlic tops are visible. These plants, which looked so robust at the end of the fall, show signs of the tough winter. Their tops are pressed to the earth and they look bruised and defeated. I resist raking the last inches of snow from them for fear of tearing the tops further. With luck, in a few weeks, they will have new growth and look sturdy again, ready to feed their bulbs for the July harvest.

In the sunroom it is downright hot. The fan is on and the door to the yard is open to the fresh, cool air. I am going to set up to plant tomato and pepper

seed.

Yesterday I picked up a bag of seed starter at the local farm store. I have reclaimed the British mini-green houses from the confused mess of the cellar shelves. Admittedly these kits are very clever. I thought they were a bit over the top when we ordered them, but they are neat and compact and provide a tray for water, a dibble for pressing the dampened soil into the seed holders, which when reversed serves as a platform, a wicking cloth which slowly draws just enough moisture up to keep the dirt moist but which does not over-dampen them, and a clear greenhouse lid to assist with heat retention.

Each one provides 40 planting cells, which I will fill with two seeds each. I am starting eight varieties of tomato and five of peppers.

Generally, I am a convert to the heritage varieties. They are not hybridized and thus can be more susceptible to disease and cracking, but they are often prized for their flavor and can

with care be planted again and again from seed harvested and carefully stored from the previous year's crop.

Still, I have also succumbed to some hybridized types developed for meatiness and large size. In all, I'll be starting one cherry type, two beefsteak, and five heirloom tomatoes; four sweet peppers, and one hot.

The seeds are small to promise a large plant, which will be heavy with late-summer fruit, and truthfully, they all look much the same. It is humbling to imagine the clever twists of coded cells which determine the vast variety of size, color and flavor to come.

I have stirred enough water into the starter mix to create a lightly damping medium into which to press these precious seeds. I cover them just lightly and set the reassembled greenhouses on a warming mat. The first leaves should emerge in 10 to 14 days or so, and my garden will have been started again.

These cold sensitive plants will live in the sunroom for the

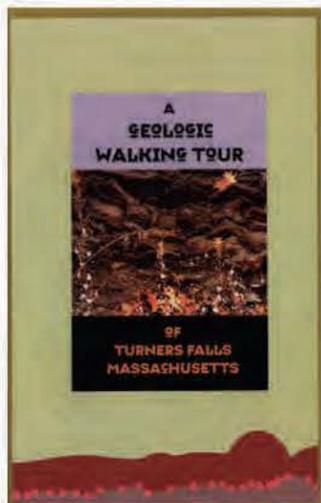
next six to eight weeks before they are set out on warm days to begin to harden up. They will be transplanted twice before they are planted in the garden around the end of May, when the soil is fully warmed and the danger of frost is past. If all survive, there will be 60 tomato plants and 20 peppers. I'll plant two of each variety in my garden space, and have plenty more to share with friends and family.

While we'll likely have more snow before the month ends, it won't last long. Winter's back is broken. The redwings sing at the edge of the thawing marsh. Before long, the shrill cry of the peeper frogs will fill the late day hours with their ephemeral song. Here at the confluence of two rivers, the flocks of geese have traveled all winter, vacationing between many pieces of open water, confounding the seasons. Today, though, I've seen and heard the real thing: high in the sky, the tiny V of returning geese, their raucous call muffled by the distance, but nonetheless, the true harbinger of spring.

## THE GARDENER'S COMPANION

# Early Spring & the Runnels of Voles

## Geowalk Celebration this Saturday World Famous Mudballs a Star Attraction



**GREAT FALLS** – The popular Great Falls Geowalk, led by Turners Falls geologist Steve Winters, is now available in a colorful and engaging booklet written by Winters and designed by Turners artist Nina Rossi. A celebration to mark the release of *A Geologic Walking Tour of Turners Falls* will be held at the Great Hall of the Great Falls Discovery Center, on March 21st, from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m., 2 Avenue A, Turners Falls.

For the past three years, Steve

Winters has been leading the Great Falls Geowalk up and down the streets of Turners, which has some of the most interesting geology in the Valley, most of it visible from sidewalks, footpaths, and bike paths. Winters said, "Unless we stop to look, and maybe talk about what we see, we'll never notice the wonder beneath our feet." The Geowalk gives a glimpse of the geologic history captured, like snapshots, in the rocks and stones of the village.

Lisa Davol, coordinator of the Turners Falls RiverCulture Project, said, "The geology of the village is one of its distinguishing characteristics, and adds to a unique sense of place. We want to be able to share this knowledge with all who live here and come to visit."

The geologic story of Turners Falls begins about 250 million years ago when all the continents on Earth had joined to form one large supercontinent called Pangea. Around 245 million years ago Pangea began to break

apart, forming the continents we know today. The village of Turners Falls lies roughly in the middle of an extensive rift valley in the heart of Pangea.

*A Geologic Walking Tour of Turners Falls* provides short but complete descriptions of ten of Winters' favorite geologic stops in the village, including the River Rock Overlook at the fish ladder, the glacially polished sandstones at Our Lady of Czestochowa church on K Street, and the world famous mudballs at Unity Park.

The celebration of the new self-guided geowalk booklet will include refreshments, music (rock music?), a special display of the Discovery Center's fossilized dinosaur footprints, and a short presentation by Winters, who will then lead an actual tour of the sites from the booklet. Copies of the 18-page Geowalk booklet will be available at the event, as well as at the Great Falls Discovery Center, Carnegie Library, town hall and other downtown venues – free for the taking, though donations would

be gratefully accepted!

For more info on the Turners Falls RiverCulture Project, please call 413-230-9910 or visit [www.turnersfallsriverculture.org](http://www.turnersfallsriverculture.org).

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### Country Breakfast Buffett

Montague Congregational Church

Saturday, March 28th

8 a.m. - 11 a.m.

Ham, Eggs, Pancakes, Hash Brown Potatoes, Assorted Breads, Fruit, and Beverages

Adults \$8.00 Children \$4.00

All proceeds benefit the Relay for Life

### Gardeners Wanted

BY MICHAEL MULLER

**MONTAGUE CENTER** – The first meeting of Montague Backyard Gardeners will be held on Sunday, March 22nd at 3:00 p.m. at the Montague Center Grange Hall.

Are you interested in gardening? Do you want to see what other gardeners are up to? This will be your opportunity to learn how to grow vegetables and plants anywhere, to share seeds with new friends in order to save money, and to help new gardeners just starting to grow food this year because of the poor economy. You will meet fellow gardeners, share ideas and learn how easy it is to save seeds from heirloom varieties.

At the first meeting we are going to share and swap seeds, for free, or for just a small cost. It will be fun!

Come to our first meeting. Travel aid is available if you need it.

For more information visit [www.MontagueMA.net](http://www.MontagueMA.net) and follow the post: "Garden Interest – Seed Sharing – Organic Gardening".

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