



4-LEGGED ACTIVIST
Paws for peace in Montague Center
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BIRD WATCHING
An all-inclusive pastime
/ Page 16

LAKE PLEASANT MILLERS FALLS MONTAGUE CENTER MONTAGUE CITY TURNERS FALLS GILL ERVING WENDELL

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THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

MARCH 24, 2005

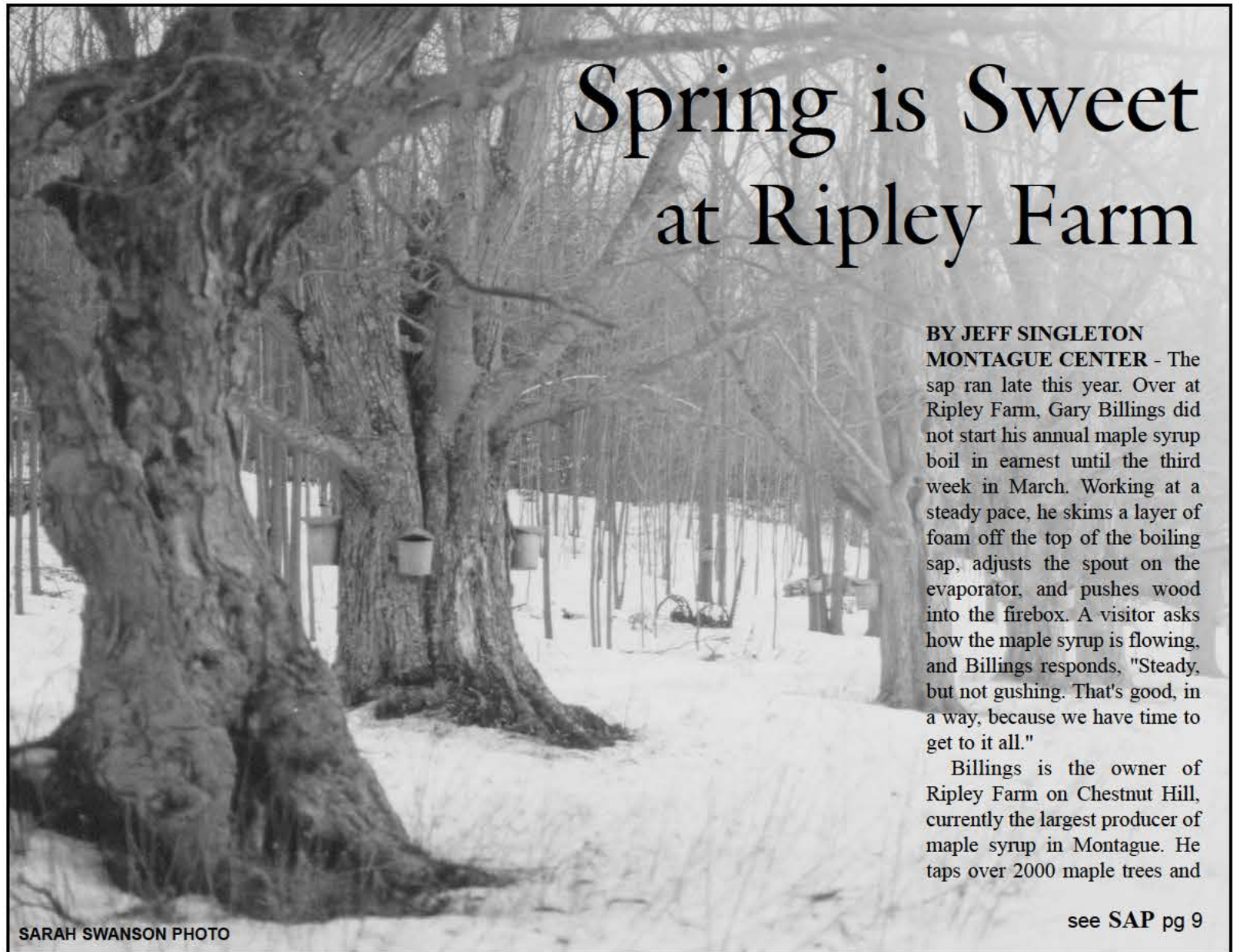
Office Rehab Planned for Gill Town Hall

BY DAVID DETMOLD GILL - Roger Augustine, of Augustine Builders in Gill, came before the selectboard on Monday, March 21st in response to a letter the town sent to three local contractors soliciting bids for constructing individual offices for the town clerk, the tax collector, and the town administrative assistant. Privacy and security issues, and protection of computer data, prompted the board to look into partitioning off the Main Road side of the clear-spanned first floor meeting room at the town hall, where the staff have their desks and files.

Selectboard member Phil Maddern recommended the offices be constructed with glass fronted walls, minimally attached to the dropped ceiling, to maintain a feeling of openness and accessibility. He also suggested building with a mind toward future alterations. "I've been here too long, I guess. No matter what you do, two years later you've got to do it over."

Augustine said he would draw up plans to meet those criteria, and submit a bid. He thought lightweight birch luan doors might be suitable for the offices, so the lightly attached glass walls would be able to withstand an irate citizen slamming one of them.

Augustine also offered to draw up plans and submit a bid for reconstructing the front steps to the town hall, which have been subject to frost heave and cracking. The steps have separated
see GILL pg 5



SARAH SWANSON PHOTO

Spring is Sweet at Ripley Farm

BY JEFF SINGLETON MONTAGUE CENTER - The sap ran late this year. Over at Ripley Farm, Gary Billings did not start his annual maple syrup boil in earnest until the third week in March. Working at a steady pace, he skims a layer of foam off the top of the boiling sap, adjusts the spout on the evaporator, and pushes wood into the firebox. A visitor asks how the maple syrup is flowing, and Billings responds, "Steady, but not gushing. That's good, in a way, because we have time to get to it all."

Billings is the owner of Ripley Farm on Chestnut Hill, currently the largest producer of maple syrup in Montague. He taps over 2000 maple trees and

see SAP pg 9

LEARNING TO FLY FISH

Part I



PHOTO COURTESY OF ARIEL JONES

Ariel Jones of Turners Falls practices her casting technique.

BY ARIEL JONES GREAT FALLS - A few years ago, while still living in New York City, I began to daydream about learning to fly fish. I cannot remember anything in particular which led to this desire, so antithetical

to my busy and productive city life. Along the way I received an inexpensive fly rod and creel for my birthday one summer, and a fishing vest some time later, but I



still had done nothing about actually beginning to fish.

By May of 2000, I had decided to leave New York and move to Turners Falls to open a photo studio in western

see FISHING pg 10

Starlite Diner Closes

BY LAENA SANTOS ERVING - The Starlite Diner will close Monday, March 28th, following six years of serving home-style American cuisine to local customers and tourists alike. While summer was always the roadside restaurant's busiest season, owner Pam Tierney said she was usually able to survive the winters. But such is no longer the case.

"Unfortunately it's the way of the world these days," Tierney said. "It's the same with many small restaurants and small businesses. It's the economy. It's hard to survive. If people want to shop they go to Hadley and they eat there, too. Unfortunately, they don't stay in town."

The Starlite Diner has been on the market for about a year with Tierney's current realtor

and she said "there's been some interest" by potential buyers. During the last two weeks she auctioned off about half of the items inside the restaurant's dining room and said she is ready to begin the next chapter of her life.

Tierney has lived in Erving for 16 years, since marrying her husband Tim Tierney, owner of the Rose Ledge Companies. Before opening her own restaurant, she worked at Countree Living in Millers Falls and then raised four children.

"It was a lifelong dream and I'm glad I did it, and I'm done," said Tierney, who plans to take the summer off and catch up on her home life. "Come fall I'll have to do something. My son doesn't think I'll last that long," she laughed.

PET OF THE WEEK**All in Free****Ollie**

Ollie is a four-year-old male brown tiger shorthair cat in need of a good home. He is a handsome lion of a cat with a couple extra toes to help support his big bulk. He used to be a stray but uses the litter box quite nicely. He is an easy-going and laid-back fellow, one of our beloved big-headed boys, very sweet and friendly. He is OK with kids and other cats and maybe even dogs.

To learn more about adopting Ollie, please contact the Dakin Animal Shelter in Leverett at 548-9898 or via email at info@dakinshelter.org.

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Carnegie Library News**New Story Hour Topics**

My story hour topics for the month of April have changed. Also we will be celebrating National Poetry Month each week by including poems in each weekly program.

April 6th *Takes From China*

April 13th *Little*

Bunny Foo-Foo

April 20th *Fabulous Frogs* - Beth Bazler, environmental educator from Northfield Mountain, will present the program.

April 27th *Terrific Trees* to celebrate Arbor Day.

Friends of the Montague Reporter Meeting GENERATES IDEAS AND INSPIRATION

BY PHILIPPE DEGUISE

TURNERS FALLS - On Tuesday evening, March 22nd, 15 enthusiastic people gathered for the first meeting of the *Friends of the Montague Reporter*. They came from Montague, Gill, Petersham, Provenance, and even Greenfield to show their support for the paper, which is two and half years old and growing. If the turnout and energy of the group is any indication of the community's support for the paper, the *Reporter's* future is indeed a bright one.

As those gathered introduced themselves and shared their reasons for attending, it became clear the paper's base of support is as diverse as the communities it serves. Participants included regular contributors, a farmer, a retired citizen, a business owner and a teenager. They listened as editor David Detmold spoke of the paper's history, goals and possible projects. These include grant writing, internships with local schools, an increase in the number of subscriptions, help with layout, better coverage of religious activities and sports, movie and restaurant reviews and a regular crossword puzzle.

While the paper continues to expand its geographic coverage, due to a need for in-depth coverage of surrounding towns, Detmold warned against spreading the paper's capacity too thin, and reminded the group the paper's strength lies in developing the understanding of what it is to live in a specific place. Currently, the paper serves the five villages of Montague, Gill, Erving, and Wendell, with occasional news of nearby towns.

While a table covered with homemade brownies, chips and hummus enticed the gathering, the conversation remained focused on the needs of the paper and on the group's willingness to address specific projects to enhance its longterm stability. It was agreed the paper needed to invite more writers, in particular those with interests or viewpoints that had not found a regular place in its pages so far. Dan Botkin called for "provocative writing of enduring high quality," saying that a well-written paper would sell itself. Others such as Arthur Evans thought it would be a good idea to raise funds for the paper through a merchandising strategy including t-shirts and coffee

mugs. Detmold thought the idea of coffee and newspapers was a natural fit.

Others agreed to reach out to local religious institutions to provide more news of their activities and events, some agreed to work on specific grant-writing projects for the non-profit community-owned paper, and others gave thought to improving the visibility of the paper at news outlets and stores where the paper is sold. A few friends simply offered to help when and how they could, depending on need. Participants stressed the importance of the *Montague Reporter* as a community resource, and said they intended to work as a group for its continued success. Filled with ideas and enthusiasm, the group response affirmed that the paper has become an integral part of the area's vibrant life, and an important source of information for our readers.

"A newspaper for the people, by the people," declared Flore, a regular contributor to the paper and an experienced French journalist, sojourning in Montague Center.

For those interested in attending the second meeting of

the *Friends of the Montague Reporter*, mark your calendars for Tuesday, April 19th at 7 p.m., downstairs at the Brick House on Third Street in Turners Falls.

Call 863-8666 for further information.

Nursing Home Ombudsmen Training

Become a certified volunteer ombudsman, a trained advocate for residents of nursing and rest homes. Visit residents weekly to monitor conditions and care and provide a voice for those unable to speak for themselves. The national ombudsman program is mandated by the state and federal government. Topics covered include "Laws and Regulations", "Residents' Rights", "The Role of the Ombudsman", and "Complaint Resolution". If you are interested in volunteering, contact Barbara Levy, Ombudsman Program Director at Franklin County Home Care Corp., (413) 773-5555 for info and an application.

FACES & PLACES

Fun in the park

SENIOR CENTER ACTIVITIES March 28th - April 1st

MONTAGUE Senior Center, 62 Fifth St., Turners Falls, is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. for activities and congregate meals. Advanced registration at many of our activities is necessary. We need to know how many people will be joining so we can be prepared. A suggested donation of \$1 per exercise class is appreciated. Meal reservations need to be made a day in advance by 11 a.m. Messages can be left on the machine when the center is closed. Mealsite Manager is Chris Richer. The center offers a hot noon meal weekdays to any senior. Transportation to the center can be provided. Trip coordinator is Jean Chase. Make trip reservations by calling 772-6356. Payment and menu choice is due three weeks prior to trip. All Hawthorne trips leave from

the parking lot on First Street across from the Police Station.

Monday, 28th
9:45 a.m. Senior Aerobics
11 a.m. PACE Aerobics
1 p.m. Crafts
Tuesday, 29th
9:30 a.m. Tai Chi
Wednesday, 30th
10:15 a.m. Aerobics
12:45 p.m. Bingo
Thursday, 31st
1 p.m. Pitch
5 p.m. TRIAD Meeting and dinner at Turners Falls High School
Friday, 1st
9:45 a.m. Aerobics
11 a.m. PACE Aerobics

ERVING Senior Center, 18 Pleasant St., Ervingside (Old Center School, 1st Floor), is open Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. for activities and congregate meals. For information

and reservations call Polly Kiely, Senior Center director at (413) 423-3308. Lunch daily at 11:30 a.m. with reservations a day in advance by 11 a.m. Transportation can be provided for meals, Thursday shopping, or medical necessity by calling Dana Moore at (978) 544-3898.

Monday, 28th
9:30 a.m. Exercise
9:45 a.m. Library
12:30 p.m. Pitch
Tuesday, 29th
9 a.m. Aerobics
12:30 p.m. Pitch
Wednesday, 30th
10 a.m. Line Dancing
12:00 p.m. Bingo
Thursday, 31st
9:00 a.m. Aerobics

WENDELL Senior Center, located in the town offices on Wendell Depot Rd. Call Kathy

Swaim at (978) 544-2020 for info, schedule of events or to coordinate transportation.

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District Towns Improve the Environment by Recycling

BY JAN AMEEN

GREENFIELD - Ever wonder whether the paper, glass, plastic, and cans you recycle add up to anything? The Franklin County Solid Waste Management District can answer that. In 2004, the 21 towns in the district recycled 5,248 tons of material. Across the district as a whole, residents recycled 34.5 percent of their discarded material, rather than sending it to a landfill or incinerator.

The Solid Waste District recently entered the towns' 2004 recycling data into a calculator created by the Northeast Recycling Council to determine the unseen benefits of recycling. With their 5,248 tons of recycling, district towns reduced greenhouse gases equivalent to taking 1,920 cars off the road, saved enough energy to power 390 households for a year, and

recycled enough paper products to save 33,948 trees!

It's impressive to see how the efforts of many individuals add up to make a significant difference to the environment. It's also important to note that recycling saves towns money compared to the cost of disposal.

Fifteen towns had a recycling rate over thirty percent, and five topped forty percent. The towns with the highest recycling rates were Whately, 44.8%; Orange, 44.2%; Colrain, 43.7%; Montague, 42.6%; and Buckland, 41.6%.

For more information about recycling or the Franklin County Solid Waste Management District, call 413-772-2438 or visit the website at www.franklincountywastedistrict.org.

Who are Our Workforce Development Leaders in 2005?

Last year, the Franklin Hampshire Regional Employment Board recognized three area employers as Workforce Development Leaders in our region. The companies were the Community Health Center of Franklin County, Easthampton Savings Bank, and Hillside Plastics. We are looking for three more firms to recognize this year.

The REB looks for some of the following characteristics when selecting companies:

- A company that is generally known as "a good place to work"
- A company with a reputation for "investing" in workers
- A company that is private sector but public-spirited: visible and active in community affairs which impact their employees' lives.

Companies are nominated by someone from the community, including but not limited to

employees, other companies, or those associated with economic, business or workforce development in the region. What company comes to your mind? Please send your nomination by Monday, April 4th, 2005 to the FHREB, One Arch Place, Greenfield MA 01301 or email it to fhreb@crocker.com. Just write a few lines about the company and why you think they deserve recognition as a Workforce Development Leader. Please include your phone number so the REB can call you for more information.

An Invitation to Artisans

Submissions sought for Great Falls Art Fest on the grounds of the Discovery Center in Turners Falls from 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. on Saturday, April 30th. Artist submission deadline is April 4th. Glass, fiber art, wood, ceramics, photography, sculpture and other media are all welcome. Contact the Brick House for an application at (413) 863-9576 or info@thebrickhouseinc.org.

SUGAR ON SNOW SUPPER

Montague Congregational Church
Saturday April 2nd
Two sittings: 5 and 6 p.m.
Family Style menu. \$9 adults;
\$4 children under 12.
Reservations: 367-2736.

Habitat for Humanity Seeks Families

BY DORIS MCLEOD

TURNERS FALLS - Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity will begin work this spring on the construction of two single-family homes in Turners Falls. The site for the buildings is on the corner of 2nd and "L" Streets.

A planning group will meet on Wednesday, March 30th, at 7:00 p.m. at St. James Episcopal Church on Federal Street in Greenfield.

Anyone interested in volunteering in any way is invited. Pioneer Valley Habitat for

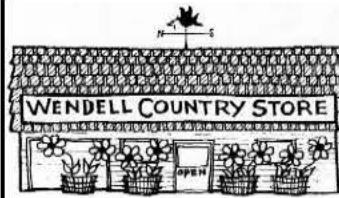
Humanity is now accepting applications for the 2nd and L Street homes.

A meeting for all those interesting in applying will be held on April 7th at 7:00 p.m. at First Congregational Church of Turners Falls, 148 L Street.

Habitat for Humanity selects partner families on the following criteria: Need, which means that present housing is not adequate and the family is unable to obtain adequate housing through conventional means. Ability to pay, which means a family will be making afford-


able payments on a no-interest mortgage to purchase their home. Applicants must meet the guidelines of having income between 30% and 50% of the median income for the area. Willingness to partner with Habitat, which means putting in many hours of "sweat equity" in helping to build the house and working with the organization in other ways.

Those unable to attend the meeting are encouraged to call the Habitat office at 413/586-5430 for further information.



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Concerned about Montague?

Montague town clerk John Zywna informs us the following precincts still have open seats for town meeting members in the upcoming May elections. Three-year terms are going begging in Precinct 2, Millers Falls and Lake Pleasant (3); Precinct 3, eastern Hill section (2); Precinct 4, western Hill section (2); Precinct 5, downtown Turners Falls (2); and Precinct 6, Montague City and the Patch (2). Also up for grabs, a two-year seat in Precinct 2 and a one-year seat in Precinct 5. To qualify for the ballot, candidates must gather the signatures of 10 registered voters in their precinct on their nominating papers, available at the town clerk's office. Papers must be turned in no later than 5 p.m. on Monday, March 28th. Town meeting members get together two or three times a year to pass town and school budgets and vote on major issues from agricultural preservation to zoning changes. Town politics is not a spectator sport. Now's your chance to get involved.

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24 3rd Street, Turners Falls, Mass. 01376

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"The Voice of the Villages"

Founded by
Arthur Evans Harry Brandt David Detmold
August, 2002

Spring At Last

A friend came by the office Tuesday night and brought a sweet gift of new maple syrup, in a small pint jar. Yesterday, before the snow flew again, a teaspoon of his homely gift flavored morning beverages with a taste as old as the hills, as new as spring sap, connecting us again to the land, the people who have tended it and worked it and harvested its gifts for generations beyond count. There is no gift like the product of one's hands, working with the natural resources of the Earth in season.

At the ragged end of winter, we all yearn for the glad colors of crocuses and daffodils, already pushing to bloom against the rust red bricks by the south facing downtown walls. Deprived of warmth and color since November, each setback Old Man Winter deals out only makes us more impatient. The crusted snow in corner lots, the

salt rimed sand blowing down the littered streets pain the eye like a recurring hangover on a months-long bender. Enough already, give us shirtsleeves, people on their stoops again, and flowers.

If we make a fuss about maple syrup, we've got every right. Pour it on pancakes with a melting pat of butter and dream of fiddleheads to come, then sweet peas germinating, and soon, before you know it, the hectic fever of spinach, baby lettuce, radishes and pansies. When the Farmers Market opens in May, sure as clockwork, the locksmith parks his van and asks if they have peaches yet. We don't blame him. We can hardly wait to taste them.

The trees have long memories, and remember springtime in their blood. Spring is sweet. Don't make us wait another day.

Poetry Page

invitation for submissions

The *Montague Reporter* will begin featuring a monthly poetry page in April, to coincide with National Poetry Month. The poetry page editors - Chris Janke and Chris Sawyer-Laucanno - warmly welcome our readers to submit poems, (with the name of the poet and title of the poem at the top of each page) for consideration to:

reporter-poems@montaguema.net,

or to

poems, *Montague Reporter*,

24 Third Street,

Turners Falls, MA 01376.

The editors reserve the right of final selection for publication.

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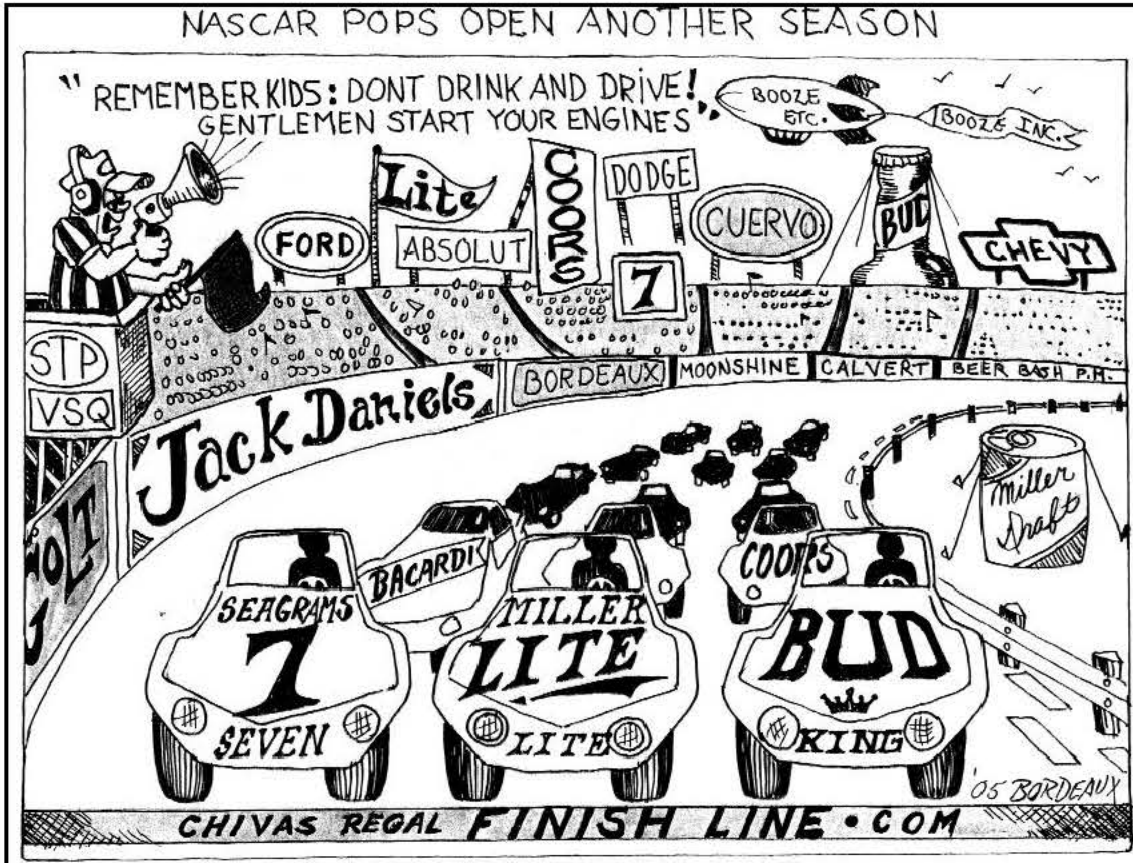
The Montague Reporter

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Town _____ State _____ Zip _____



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Wildlife Continues to Plague Gill Residents

Now that the deer have gnawed the shrubbery down to bare branches, the raccoon is gone from the garage, and rabid foxes having met their maker, you would think everything had quieted down on the Gill wildlife front. Wrong. Just this past week on a trip to Boston, my car seemed sluggish and

gave poor gas mileage. Then the "Check Engine" light came on. I bought a new air cleaner element, figuring the air cleaner needed changing. It did. Big time. Turns out the air cleaner had a bit of an obstruction---a mouse, chipmunk, or squirrel had built a nest inside the air cleaner. The rodent is gone but

he, or she, left plenty of fur up against the air cleaner element. So, if you see a naked chipmunk running around, it's mine. Chances are, it's probably in downtown Boston, looking for another air cleaner to inhabit.

- Joseph A. Parzych
Gill

Wendell Peace Vigil Receives Sound Advice

About 30 Wendell residents met at the town common on Sunday evening, March 20th at 6:00 p.m. for a candlelight vigil marking the second anniversary of America's invasion of Iraq. People shielded

their candles from the wind with paper cups and plastic soda bottles and shifted from foot to foot, and sang, and tried to keep warm. The police chief drove by, then parked and walked back to ask what

the gathering was about. After being told, he responded, "Don't get hit by a car."

The gathering broke up well after dark.

-Josh Heinemann
Wendell

EASTER EGG HUNT

Hosted by the Wendell Women's Club

**SATURDAY, MARCH 26 • 10 A.M. TO NOON
AT THE WENDELL TOWN OFFICE BUILDING**

Also featuring egg coloring, and a bake sale
FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL 978- 544-2928.

1st Annual Easter Egg Hunt



Saturday, March 26 - 10:00am

Peskeomskut Park, Avenue A, Turners Falls

Children ages 4 to 12 are invited to take part in what will be a great community tradition for years to come. Kids will have the challenge of finding well over 2,000 candy and toy-filled eggs that will be placed throughout the park.

Event Co-Sponsors
The Montague Elks & Greenfield Savings Bank

American Dead in Iraq as of 3/23/05



GUEST EDITORIALS

War Should Be a Time of Sacrifice for Everyone

BY CHUCK COLLINS

JAMAICA PLAIN - In one America, we hold bake sales to buy Kevlar bulletproof vests for family members deployed to Iraq. In another America, lobbyists press to abolish the estate tax, America's only tax on accumulated wealth. This will ensure that the children of multimillionaires, who are not losing sleep over insufficient body armor, will harvest unlimited inheritances into the millions and billions. As we mark the second anniversary of the Iraq mission, there is a stunning inequality of sacrifice on the home front. The Bush administration and congressional leaders have shown little interest in the symbolism, let alone practice, of shared sacrifice. There are no tire drives, no calls for rationing, nor any moral duty to share in the costs of the war.

The war managers are deter-

mined to isolate the domestic sacrifice and losses for this war to as few families as possible, largely to those waiting for loved ones to return from duty in Iraq. But the war has a steep financial price tag. The Iraq operation has cost us more than \$155 billion to date, with more to come. Instead of taxing our citizenry to pay for this war, Congress is deferring the bill to the next generation in the form of whopper deficits. And instead of taxing the wealthy we are now about to pass permanent tax cuts for multimillionaires.

Never in the history of U.S. wartime has Congress pushed tax cuts, let alone permanent tax cuts. Historically, the opposite has been true: wealth has been "conscripted," in the form of progressive income and estate taxes, to at least symbolize that everyone is contributing in some way.

The estate tax has been a wartime tax. The first federal tax on wealth was levied in 1797, as our country was faced with the escalating costs of responding to French attacks on American shipping. During the Civil War and the Spanish-American War, inheritance taxes were instituted, to be repealed only after war debts were retired.

The 1916 law establishing our current estate tax was given a tremendous push by our entry into World War I and the need for revenue. During World War II, President Franklin D. Roosevelt understood that national domestic unity against Hitler depended on a sense of shared sacrifice, not just by G.I. Joe and Rosie the Riveter, but also by the Rockefellers.

The estate tax was increased so that fortunes exceeding \$50 million would be taxed at a 70

percent rate.

Our present inequality of sacrifice is not lost on some veterans' groups. "During the Civil War, rich people could buy their way out of the draft," said Charlie Richardson, co-founder of Military Families Speak Out. "Now the wealthy don't have to pay anything to avoid the draft, and they get tax cuts on top."

Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., recently observed that times of war in U.S. history have been times of domestic sacrifice. "In the past year we have approved legislation containing billions and billions of dollars in pork-barrel projects, huge tax breaks for the wealthy, and a corporate tax bill estimated to cost \$180 billion. This is a far cry from sacrifice."

The sustained push to abolish the estate tax has been financed by some of the wealthiest families in America, including the

Walton, Mars and Gallo clans. These families, underrepresented in mess tents outside Fallujah, are not interested in a compromise estate tax reform that keeps our nation strong and secure while protecting veterans' services and America's family farms and small businesses.

Young Americans are putting their lives on the line to serve their country in Iraq, while those who are whining about the estate tax are fighting to keep every last cent. A time of war is no time to eliminate the estate tax.

Chuck Collins is senior fellow at United for a Fair Economy (www.faireconomy.org) and co-author with Bill Gates Sr. of Wealth and Our Commonwealth: Why America Should Tax Accumulated Fortunes.

Off The Beaten Track

Brunie the Four-Pawed Activist

BY FLORE

MONTAGUE CITY - You are right to think it was I picketing between 4 p.m. and 6 p.m., at the Common of Montague Center, last Sunday. Sadly enough, I was the only living soul of my species, pacing to and fro, stating my obvious political views, along with six other eloquent souls. Where were you, all you rebels and wolf species? Sadly domesti-

cated and thoroughly brainwashed! I just can visualize you, feeding on Little Champions and curling around the warmth of a welcoming cushion? How can one give up so easily? Meanwhile, in between the moving, honking cars, imagine me running the risk of ending up under one! But peace gives even those with paws a cause to stand for. "Attention, Brunie, prends



garde!" the participants were shouting, (the French-speaking

ones). Truth is I was *en garde*, growling, ready to leap with all my heart. For those of you with short memory, I was there also, same place, with the same hope (Remember? It was exactly two years ago.) as silent candlelight vigil was held the world over. We must have been traid idealists, don't you think, to even imagine we had the power to reverse the clock of the whole well-

oiled armada of the strategic commanders, forgetting the cost of human lives... So you know, since I have legitimate reasons to be upset, when I get uptight and upset I do bark in French... Ready for the barricades, anytime, but with those fighting for freedom among all beings. Wake up! It ain't the time for your tears, send Blessings instead of Bombs! So say I, Brunhilde the loving activist.

GILL

continued from pg 1

from the building's foundation, and might cause an unwary visitor to lose their footing. Maddern thought the forward pitch of the steps might help to evacuate the building in a hurry, in the event of an emergency.

The board hopes to involve the highway department in constructing both these town hall renovation projects.

Four Winds Lease

Steve Hussey, director of the Four Winds School, which has been leasing space in the Riverside Municipal Building on Route 2, told the board he would like to renew his three-year lease with the town, and the board seemed agreeable. Hussey has 11 full-time students enrolled in his private middle school, and hopes to increase that number to 15 in upcoming years. The board noted the rising cost of utilities, and Hussey said he anticipated paying a higher monthly rent under the

new lease, which will be negotiated.

Hussey said he may be interested in leasing a basement room as well, and made a tentative inquiry about the possibility of purchasing the building. Banash said the ad hoc committee which had recently looked into renovation costs for the Riverside building had been set against the idea of selling it.

Hussey noted the heating system had not broken down once this winter, a marked improvement over last year's performance, when school had to be cancelled three times for lack of heat.

Hussey said the Four Winds School would soon be raffling off a car in the front lot of the Riverside building, for a fundraiser. Tickets will be available at the school, the World Eye Bookstore, the Red House Pizzeria in Bernardston, and Lorenz Honda in Greenfield.

Banash asked if the car would be parked on the grass for a long period of time, and Hussey assured her he would move it periodically, so as not to

ruin the lawn.

Tech Committee Report

Steve Loomer, chair of the volunteer tech committee, reported to the board on his committee's work. The committee has been working with all the town departments' computers, upgrading them. Loomer said the fact the volunteers had needed to access the data in the police, assessors, and town clerk's computers, for example, had raised issues around confidentiality, security, and liability for the volunteers on the committee.

Roussel said the volunteers had been appointed by the board, and would therefore be covered by the town's liability insurance.

Loomer asked, "Do you have a password scenario?" He gave the example of one employee being on vacation, and another employee needing to access data in their files. Maddern expanded on the topic. "Everyone here is expendable. They may drop dead any day,

and they have a password nobody knows. How do we get to their files?" Banash pointed out the staff occasionally meets upstairs, and at times the work stations in the main floor meeting room are unattended. Some sort of password is necessary, Banash said.

Loomer said thought needs to be given to a better system for backing up all the files of town computers, and protecting the backups from theft or fire.

In Other Business

The board appointed Linda Hodsdon Mayo to fill an unexpired term on the historic commission. The board reappointed Jason Edson as the town's emergency response coordinator. They appointed James Hawkins as a volunteer firefighter. Hawkins has completed his background check, clearing the way for his appointment.

The board briefly touched on the matter of whether temporary garages or carpools do, in fact, require building permits. Regional building inspector Jim

Cerrone had drawn the interest of the board to this subject after mailing letters to half a dozen residents with temporary garages, notifying them they needed to apply for permits.

"I don't think they have grounds to do that," said administrative assistant Deb Roussel, who began researching the matter after residents complained. "If it is bigger than 120 square feet, it appears it needs a building permit," said board member Ann Banash, "but most of the garages are not that big." Banash, who owns a temporary garage, said she had not received one of Cerrone's warning letters.

The town's free cash account has been estimated at \$234,711, and the estimate has been sent to the state Department of Revenue for certification. The books for fiscal '04 have been closed. This marks the end of accountant Dale Kowacki's long service to the town of Gill.



NOTES FROM THE GILL-MONTAGUE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Sheffield Stage Temporarily Closed

BY SARAH PEBWORTH

The stage at the Sheffield School is off limits until the fire curtain can be re-rigged, Gill-Montague Regional School District (GMRSD) Superintendent Sue Gee reported at Tuesday night's school committee meeting. "This is something we absolutely have to address," she said, as it is a safety issue.

Use of the auditorium is limited until repairs are made, which Gee hopes will be completed by early April. An inspector from the Turners Falls fire department was brought in to check the rigging when the school was replacing the existing curtain with one from the high school.

There are four GMRSD com-

mittee seats open for the upcoming elections: for Montague, two 3-year terms and one 1-year term, and for Gill one 3-year term. Elections will be held May 16th. Terms for Tony Guglielmi, Mike Langknecht, and Ted Castro-Santos are up, and one seat has been vacant since Sue LaPan resigned. According to the superintendent's office, Guglielmi and Langknecht are the only people who have taken out papers thus far.

Nomination papers are available at the superintendent's office and are due March 28th.

In other business, director of special education and student services Laurie Farkas presented the committee with a draft coordinated program review

corrective action plan, which they approved. The Department of Education Program Quality Assurance audited the district last year and cited 38 areas that need improvement.

The areas cited were "minor in scope," Farkas said, and mostly included procedural issues. The district has already taken some of the steps outlined in the report, such as planning trainings to help staff work more effectively with special education students.

The district was commended for its community - school partnership, which has been responsible for boys' and girls' nights out, among other activities.

Concerned about educational funding, Gee noted the US

House of Representatives and Senate passed budget resolutions recently that could cut the federal education budget by more than 3%. She pointed out the slim margins, 218-214 in the House, and 51-49 in the Senate, and said, "We have an opportunity to argue against" the cuts. The resolutions go to the federal appropriations committee for consideration.

Sixth grade students Natasha Vaughn, Julie Thompson, Joe Lafleur, Brooke Hastings, Colleen Dumas, and Makayla Dolhenty attended the meeting with their teacher Joanne Rabideau to show slides and present information regarding their week-long educational adventure at the Sargent Center

for Outdoor Education in Hancock, NH.

The students took a variety of courses including pond ecology, geology, astronomy, newspaper writing, and winter sports. Their adventure classes included a ropes course and a "zap" line, which had committee member Joyce Phillips congratulating them on overcoming their fears and Superintendent Gee telling of her experience on a "zip" line.

Ali Urban gave the student advisory committee report, noting that students are preparing for the April 9th Gala. Some students have started to collect money for two Relay for Life teams and the freshman class raised \$843 at a breakfast at the Elks club over the weekend.

Tech Students Excel at SkillsUSA

BY PETER LAFRANCE - Tuesday, March 15th, 37 students from Franklin County Technical School traveled to Bay Path Technical Regional Vocational High School in Charlton, Massachusetts to compete in the Massachusetts SkillsUSA District competitions. Students came away with eight medals and traveled with advisors Elyse Cann and Jim Klaiber.

Massachusetts SkillsUSA hosts four district conferences to determine the competitors for the Massachusetts SkillsUSA Championships.

Electrical shop came away with two of three medals in residential wiring. Steve Craig took the gold medal and Eric Matuszek the bronze medal. Their shop instructors are William Gallant and William Kerivan. Presently both students are studying motor control, programmable logic controls and residential wiring.

Steve is a senior in the electrical shop and is from Heath.

His parents are Mary and Steve Craig. Steve hopes to be an electrician and has interests in computers.

Eric is a senior from Whatley. Eric's parents are Edward and Josephine Matuszek. Eric is the co-president of Franklin County Technical School's SkillsUSA Chapter. He likes to play golf and hopes to become an electrician.

In the community service shop, Sara Hager earned the gold medal in nurse assisting and Allison Bohannon took a bronze medal in preschool teaching assistance. Their shop instructors are Linda Tulenko and Anna Steel.

Sara is a senior in the health and early childhood education program from Colrain. Sara's mom is Earlene Dufresne. Sara is the co-president of Franklin County Technical School's SkillsUSA Chapter and secretary in the National Honor Society. She is a member of the 104th Wing and Fighter

Division of the Air National Guard. She hopes to continue her education in nursing and home health care.

Allison was our youngest winner, a sophomore in the health and early childhood education program, from Greenfield. Allison is president of her sophomore class and has interests in becoming a midwife. Her parents are Lori and Dale Bourbeau and Danny Bohannon. She likes to read and play softball. Her test required knowledge in childhood environment and management.

In the welding and metal fabrication shop, Jesse Edwards took a gold medal in welding. Jesse is a senior from Greenfield. His shop instructors are Dan Morgan and Tony McIntosh. Jesse's mom is Nancy Edwards. Jesse enjoys bowling and golf and hopes to become a welder. In his shop he is learning AutoCAD, MIG, TIG and stick welding.

In information technology the team of Samantha Fabian

and Christopher Woodard took the silver medal in web design. Samantha and Christopher are both in the programming section of the information technology shop. Their instructor is Jocelyn Gutkopf. Presently they are studying web design and syntax including the computer coding languages HTML, Java, and XML.

Samantha is a junior from Shelburne Falls. Her mom is Dawn Girard. Sam is a peer mediator and likes to write. She wants to be a lawyer and writer.

Christopher is a junior from Orange. His parents are Ron and Debbie Maillet. He is in the chess club, likes sports and videogames. Chris would like to be a graphic designer and hopes to attend an art institute in Boston or Philadelphia.

In our office technology program Karlee Bordeaux earned a bronze medal in office computer applications. Karlee is a sophomore from Lake Pleasant. Her parents are Mary and Mark Bordeaux. Karlee's shop

instructor is Tammy Hyson. Karlee is the secretary of Franklin County Technical School's SkillsUSA Chapter. She plays volleyball, softball and is a member of the National Honor Society and Varsity Club. Her test was in Microsoft Office Applications. She is presently studying economics and the Microsoft Office Suite including Word, Excel, Access, and Powerpoint. Karlee hopes to someday own her own business.

All eight students will be competing for hundreds of thousands of dollars in scholarships and prizes at the Massachusetts State SkillsUSA competition held in April this year. Gold winners at SkillsUSA State Competitions will be eligible to compete with Team Massachusetts at the SkillsUSA National Competitions held in Kansas City this June.

Congratulations to all the SkillsUSA winners and the Franklin County Technical School SkillsUSA Team that competed.

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NOTES FROM THE ERVING SELECTBOARD

Memorial Parade Planning Marches Forward

BY DAVID DETMOLD
ERVING - Packing a full agenda into an hour and ten minutes is an art an experienced team can hone, especially when the meeting is guided by the firm hand of a chair like Andy Tessier. Such was the case at the Erving selectboard meeting, of March 21st, when Tessier led the board through plans for a grand Memorial Day parade, manhole repair on Route 2, emergency snow removal funding, recycling awareness, Tech School budget figures, and the annual reappointment of animal inspectors before bringing down the gavel at 8:08 p.m. with business accomplished.

Erving is planning a grand Memorial Day parade this year, to inaugurate the town's new Civil War memorial, honoring the 13 Erving men who gave their lives in the struggle to hold the Union together and restore freedom to those who had been enslaved. Co-chairs Dennis Rindone and Bill Bembury have arranged the event for the Saturday before Memorial Day weekend, May 21st, to invite a larger audience. Five marching bands, including the Worcester fire department fife and drum corps, and

the Westover Air Force base honor guard, will lead the parade from Highland Park in Millers Falls across the bridge to Erving, and then on to Erving Center. Three groups of Civil War re-enactors will also participate, and plan to camp out on Saturday night, May 21st, in Veterans Field in Erving. They will be demonstrating the living history of cooking, drilling, and fire arms demonstration; the public is welcome.

Representative Christopher Donelan will attend the March 28th selectboard meeting, and will be at town hall from 7:00 p.m. to 8 p.m. holding office hours for constituents.

The board authorized an application to Mass Highway for a permit to repair sewer manholes along Route 2. The manholes, part of the town's infrastructure and therefore the town's responsibility to repair, will cost \$75,000 to replace, according to town administrative coordinator Tom Sharp.

Highway superintendent Paul Prest reported the town of Erving will be receiving \$5,420 in FEMA reimbursement for work done during a severe

January winter storm.

A communication from the Franklin County Solid Waste Management District pegged Erving's recycling rate at 35.8%, up from 28.8% the previous year. Through their recycling efforts, town residents not only saved on town waste disposal costs, but were able to save 1476 trees from being cut down, according to the district's estimates. Erving has curbside recycling on Wednesday mornings, alternating paper pickup and cans and bottles every other week. Next week (March 30th) residents should put out recyclable paper.

The Franklin County Technical School budget assessment for Erving for '06 will come to \$157,961, up from approximately \$132,000 this year. Figures for any change in the population of Erving students attending the Tech School were unavailable.

Mick LaClaire was reappointed as Erving's emergency management coordinator; he is also the town's fire chief, and the town of Gill's highway superintendent.

JoAnn Taylor and Dan Hammock were reappointed as Erving's animal inspectors.

NOTES FROM THE MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Lending Available for New Business Start-ups

BY DAVID DETMOLD

Alan Singer, lending manager for the Franklin County Community Development Corporation, came before the board on Monday, March 21st, to welcome increased participation in the CDC's business development lending programs. He began with an overview of the CDC's projects, of which the lending program is the oldest, at 20 years and counting.

The CDC also provides 10 business start-up spaces at the 324 Wells Street Venture Center in Greenfield, where shared facilities, office support, and below-market rents have helped to incubate numerous successful start-ups, that have since moved into the wider community, creating jobs as they grow.

The CDC also provides business technical assistance for area entrepreneurs and for established businesses seeking to consolidate or grow. Singer said six Montague residents are enrolled in the current business planning course.

The CDC's newest project is the Western Massachusetts Food

Processing Center, one of only 35 such shared community facilities in the country, and the newest in Massachusetts. Located in the Greenfield Industrial Park, the center provides health approved food processing and kitchen facilities for the production of value-added agricultural products. Singer said the center now has almost 50 active users, including a Turners Falls-based olive oil import and distribution company and a naturally fermented pickle business from Montague Center.

On the subject of the CDC's loan funds, Singer detailed four separate programs, of which the four-town lending program for Montague, Greenfield, Shelburne Falls, and Buckland is the oldest, having been started with a \$550,000 CDBG grant in 1987; the first such project in Massachusetts. The other funds cover nine northern tier towns in Franklin County, a fund started with a "sudden and severe economic dislocation" grant from the US Department of Commerce in 1991, following the closure of

several major industrial employers in the eastern part of the county, and a US Department of Agriculture funded program, seeded with a \$1,000,000 1% interest government loan to assist agricultural ventures in the county.

"That's the overview," said Singer. "I'm an ambassador to you, in your capacity as community leaders. If you know of entrepreneurs in the pipeline, send them our way." Singer pointed to the Hallmark Institute of Photography as a Montague success story that began with the help of gap financing from the CDC.

"I see several businesses on this list here in Montague that have become quite successful, said board chair Pat Allen."

Unlike other community loan funds which have not carefully monitored and mentored the businesses they backed, Singer said the CDC has a proven track record with a low rate of delinquent loans, and currently has a million dollars ready to lend.

For more info, call Singer at 413-774-7204.

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Kindergarten Dream Comes True

BY KATHLEEN LITCHFIELD
TURNERS FALLS - Cheryl Robertson always knew she wanted to be a teacher. The oldest of five children growing up in Ashfield, Robertson used to turn her playroom into a classroom, complete with desks, a chalkboard and a bulletin board. She and her siblings would take turns playing "teacher," quizzing each other on spelling words and

math problems.

"We had notebooks and things we would write in. My younger brothers and sisters suffered through me," laughed the modest, red-haired kindergarten teacher at Hillcrest Elementary School.

Robertson has taught in the Gill-Montague Regional School District for 22 years, beginning her tenure at Sheffield

Elementary School as a Title I Math Program teacher. She then taught reading, math and a combined first-second grade class at Gill Elementary School before coming to Hillcrest, where she has taught kindergarten for eight years.

After graduating from Lesley College in Cambridge with a degree in early childhood education, Robertson earned a master's degree in reading education from Vanderbilt University in Nashville, TN. She then returned to her native Western Massachusetts to fulfill her long-time dream.

"Working in kindergarten, I just like this age because a lot of the things that we as adults take for granted -- some of the simpler things in life -- the kindergarten children are still discovering, and there's a lot of joy in that for them. I like it when they feel like they've learned something, when they feel that for themselves. I always try to encourage and support them but when they feel like they've got it, there's this look that comes over their face that's just really neat," she said.

She recalled the day a small boy learned to write the letters of his name and remembered what

order to put them in.

"His eyes lit up and his smile and just his whole body, you could tell he was so proud," grinned Robertson, her own eyes lit with enthusiasm.

Hillcrest Elementary School Principal Christine Jutres praised Robertson for her sensitivity to each child's individual learning styles.

"She's very sensitive to the children and to who they are as individuals. She's very respectful, kind and gentle always, without exception. In addition to being very clever in terms of the demands of the curriculum, she has wonderfully supportive interactions with them, to help them do the best that they can do," said Jutres.

One example of this is the book that Robertson read to the 21 five- and six-year-olds in her full-day kindergarten classroom on Tuesday. Entitled, *One Duck Stuck*, by Phyllis Root, the book tells the tale of a duck who gets stuck in the "muck" and how other animals, arriving in numbered sets, attempt to free the duck's orange webbed feet. As you might expect, it is only when all of the animals work together that the duck becomes "unstuck," said Robertson, who chose the book for its lessons in rhyming and counting as well as to teach the benefits of collaboration.

A new initiative in kindergarten curriculum, thanks to a federally-funded grant called "Reading First," calls for an emphasis on "phonemic awareness," or listening, hearing sounds and how words rhyme, Robertson explained.

The book *One Duck Stuck* has



Kindergarten Teacher Cheryl Robertson reads to the 21 five- and six-year-olds in her Hillcrest Elementary School kindergarten-classroom every afternoon, after lunch.

plenty of opportunities for learning rhymes, which one of her students pointed out when she was finished reading, as well as for counting, as the six skunks and seven snails who arrive at the muddy scene are unsuccessful in freeing the duck until they work with the five, four, three and two other animals.

Robertson also tries to integrate as much creativity as possible into her colorful and cozy classroom setting. At the end of each day the kindergartners enjoy "room choice" time, selecting from several activities including reading, math exercises, blocks, painting, drawing or pulling an idea from the "Imagination Box," which is decorated with construction paper.

"I always remember when I was in kindergarten, how much I personally enjoyed art and creating and building things. So I try to make sure kindergarten children have these opportunities each day. Kindergarten children love to create and build and use their imaginations," she said.

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Tee-Ball - Ages 4 - 6

Rookie League - Grades 1 & 2 (1st graders must have played at least one season of t-ball to be eligible.)

Farm Travel Team - Grades 2 - 4 (Players in 2nd grade must be 8 years old as of Sept. 1 of 2004)

Youth Travel Team - Grades 5 - 7 (Players in 7th grade must be 13 years old after Sept. 1st of 2004)

Girls Softball - Girls in grades 3 - 6. Registration has started, become part of Montague's proud softball tradition!

Announcing a New Program ...

Girls Rookie Softball for girls K - 2. Saturdays, April 30 - June 11. Montague Residents = \$20, Non-residents = \$25 (Fees include hat and t-shirt). Contact MPRD for more details

Pepsi Pitch, Hit & Run - Youths ages 7 - 14. To be held Saturday, April 16

Tae Kwon Do for Youth -

Ages 7 & Up. Saturday mornings April and May.

Swimming Lessons -

Session III. Ages 5 & Up

Low-Impact Step Aerobics for Adults - classes held in April & May.

1st Annual Easter Egg Hunt -

(Children ages 4 - 12) Saturday, March 26 @ 10:00am, Peskeomskut Park. Co-sponsors: Montague Elks and Greenfield Saving Bank.

Open Swim has returned!

Contact MPRD for a schedule now! Summer Playground Program

Registration begins Monday, April 4 for Montague Residents only. Non-residents may register starting Monday, May 2.

Spring is on its way - register for some of these great programs now!

For more information, or to receive a Spring Programs Brochure contact:

Montague Parks & Recreation @ 863-3216.

MPRD - 56 First Street - Unity Park Fieldhouse - Turners Falls, MA 01376

Gill-Montague Gala

On Saturday, April 9th the Gill-Montague Education Fund will host a Gala to benefit educational programs for Gill-Montague students. Tickets for the Gala are \$10 and are available at Equi's, Scotty's, all Gill-Montague schools, and World Eye Books in Greenfield. The Gala will be held at 8:00 p.m., on Saturday, April 9th at the Turners Falls High School theater. Please come and support our schools, and enjoy an evening of great music with family and friends.

MARCH FULL MOON

The first full moon after the Spring Equinox will be a celebration of renewal, rebirth, and eggs. A search for the quacking in the



woods will reveal venal pools and their wood frog denizens. Poetry, snacks and a little candlelight will round

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SAP

continued from pg 1

annually produces nearly 400 gallons of syrup. Billings markets his product himself, and sells a good deal directly from his home. Syrup is now far and away the most important product of the Ripley Farm, one of the few remaining active "hill farms" in the area. Such farms once covered the hillsides that rim the upper Connecticut River valley. Now there are only a few, mainly operated by part-timers who produce syrup, hay and wood products.

Although clearly disappointed with the late start of the season, Billings does not seem like a man plagued with economic anxiety. He uses the money from the sale of syrup to "pay the spring taxes and buy some fertilizer." Boiling sap smoothes the transition from winter to spring. Muddy boots, friendly visitors and just tending the fire in a steamy sugarhouse create a relaxing annual ritual.

One wonders if this has always been the appeal of sugaring season. Native American oral tradition suggests syrup was associated with a restful period of relaxation at winter thaw. One story told by tribes in the Great Lakes region tells of an Indian chieftain arriving in camp to find his people on their backs, with pure syrup from the trees dripping into their mouths. When they could not be aroused from their stupor, the chieftain flew to a nearby lake. There he collected water in a huge birch container, and poured it over the maple trees. This method diluted the trees' sap aroused the group from its trancelike state. The legendary chieftain's labor appears to have had a permanent impact on the maple trees, which now produce sap that has to be boiled down to syrup.

As every school child hopefully now knows, the traditional Indian method of making maple sugar was to place hot rocks in the sap held in containers fashioned from logs, birch bark or clay. The sap was boiled down

to make sugar cakes and a course grain sugar. Some syrup may also have been poured on snow to make the hard candy now popular with children.

Maple sugar was one of the many agricultural products Europeans invaders adopted from Indians. The "discovery" of maple products came at a fortuitous time, as these Europeans were developing a "sweet tooth" for sugar products. As social scientist Sidney Mintz recounts in his study *Sweetness and Empire*, the production of sugar, often mixed with tea, coffee and rum, reflected broad changes in taste and culture during the colonial era. In this context, maple sugar was a logical commodity for farmers to produce - an ideal substitute for the more expensive cane sugar.

There were also political implications to the production of maple sugar. As the American Revolution approached, the product may have been particularly appealing to those colonists who rebelled against dependence on the British "sugar islands" in the Caribbean. After the war, nationalists like Thomas Jefferson sought to encourage the production of maple sugar as a homegrown industry. Jefferson apparently planted a stand of maple trees on his Virginia plantation. In the decades before the Civil War, Americans with anti-slavery leanings apparently encouraged the consumption of maple sugar as a form of opposition to the cane sugar produced on slave plantations.

By the mid-nineteenth century, maple sugar production had

become an important part of the mixed agricultural economy of the hillsides of New England. Farmers cleared the hills, marketing wood products in the process, but probably left many maple trees standing. Dirt roads up the hillsides are still often lined with old sugar maples. These hill farmers raised sheep and dairy cattle, grew hay and corn for fodder, sowed vegetable gardens for their own consumption and tapped the maple trees in late winter. It was all part of a mixed, seasonal economy - largely self-sufficient - with a few products sold on the market.

By the turn of the twentieth century, syrup was replacing sugar in the maple market. The primary reason appears to have been the reduced price of white cane sugar produced on Caribbean plantations. Americans seem to have developed a taste for white sugar in their coffee, cakes and cereal. Maple sugar, like "brown sugar" today, came to be considered an inferior product.

Syrup, on the other hand became a valued specialty item, poured on pancakes and waffles. Marketing techniques focused on nostalgia for a rural past, when horses trudged

through the snow, bringing sleighfuls of sap to the sugarhouse. A visit to a rural New England maple farm became a pleasant adventure on a late winter Sunday afternoon.

Yet syrup production itself had changed significantly from the "horsedrawn sleigh" days. Farmers had originally boiled down the sap in a series of large cast iron pots strung over a fire. After the Civil War, there was a good deal of experimentation with evaporators to speed the process. This eventually produced the current flat pan with channels, allowing more sap to come in contact with heat and the syrup moving channels from lower to higher density. Metal taps and metal buckets increased the efficiency of harvesting the sap. In recent years, farmers have made use of plastic lines attached to large containers.

Yet a strong sense of tradition is still associated with the production and consumption of maple syrup. The muddy late winter days at the sugarhouse transport us back to an earlier time, when hard seasonal work dominated the lives of our ancestors. Standing at the boiling pan for long hours forces us to stop and think, and maybe even stop thinking. We sit down to a pile of thick, home-made pancakes with the new syrup, something our grandparents probably enjoyed.

Gary Billings does not seem

overwhelmed with nostalgia as he takes a short break from the boiling pan. But he enjoys talking about his family history. He is the fifth generation of his family making syrup on the Ripley Farm, named after his maternal grandfather Robert Ripley.

Although proud of his family history, Billings expressed no great desire to return to the days of hill farming. It was a hard existence and, by the middle of the twentieth century, increasingly insecure. The neighboring hill farms - and the social life associated with them - had largely disappeared. But the sugarhouse remains, connecting Billings to his family's past as well as to his neighbors and his friends.

The house is now crowded with visitors, who seem more interested in chatting than monitoring the boiling sap. One notes that a bucket on a tree outside the house is overflowing. "They have the day off today," responded Billings, referring to those who help with the collecting. "We always lose some sap." But the visitor leaves the sugarhouse and returns momentarily with the full sap bucket, adding to another year's production at the Ripley Farm. Billings seemed quite pleased.



The sugarhouse at Ripley Farm is steamy this time of year, as clear maple sap becomes syrup.



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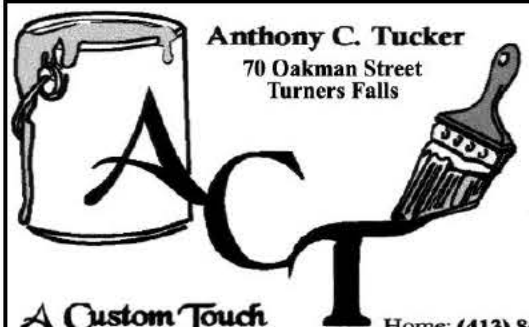
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The Healthy Geezer

BY FRED CICETTI

LEONIA, NJ - The Healthy Geezer is a new column. It is devoted to the health questions of "geezers," all of us lovable and quirky seniors who are wondering what is going on with these bodies of ours. It is written by me, Fred Cicetti, a first-class geezer over 60 who's been writing about health issues for more years than I want to talk about.

The column is in a question-and-answer format. If you want to ask a question, just write me at fredcicetti@gmail.com. Okay, here's the first question:

Q. I've been noticing this thing in my eye. At first I thought it was an eyelash. Then I realized the thing was actually in my eye. One of my friends told me it's a "floater," and not to worry. What exactly is a "floater" and should I see a doctor?

Concerned in New Jersey

A. Dear Concerned,
To allay any fears you may

have, I should tell you that floaters are usually nothing to worry about. I have them myself. More than 7 in 10 people experience floaters. Now for some biology.

The lens in the front of your eye focuses light on the retina in the back of your eye. The lens is like the one in a camera, and the retina is like film. The space between the lens and retina is filled with the "vitreous," a clear gel that helps to maintain the shape of the eye.

Floaters occur when the vitreous slowly shrinks over time. As the vitreous changes, it becomes stringy, and the strands can cast shadows on the retina. These strands are the floaters. They can look like specks, filaments, rings, dots, cobwebs or other shapes. Floaters are the most vivid when you are looking at the sky or a white surface such as a ceiling. They move as your eyes move and seem to dart away when you try to look at



JESSICA HARMON ILLUSTRATION

them directly.

In most cases, floaters are just annoying. When you discover them, they are very distracting. But, in time, they usually settle below the line of sight. Most people who have visible floaters gradually develop the ability to make them "disappear" by ignoring them.

When people reach middle age, the vitreous gel may pull

away from the retina, causing "posterior vitreous detachment." It is a common cause of floaters, and it is more likely in people who are diabetics, nearsighted, had eye surgery, or suffered inflammation inside the eye.

These vitreous detachments are often accompanied by light flashes. The flashes can be a warning sign of a detached retina. Flashes are also caused by head trauma that makes you "see stars." Sometimes light flashes appear to be little lightning bolts or waves. This type of flash is usually caused by a blood-vessel spasm in the brain, which is called a migraine. These flashes can happen without a headache and they are called an "ophthalmic migraine."

If your floaters are just bothersome, eye doctors will tell you to ignore them. In rare cases, a bunch of floaters can hamper sight. Then a "vitrectomy" may

be necessary. A vitrectomy is a surgical procedure that removes the vitreous gel with its floaters. A salt solution replaces the vitreous. The vitreous is mostly water, so patients who undergo the procedure don't notice a difference. However, this is a risky procedure, so most eye surgeons won't recommend it unless the floaters are a major impediment.

New floaters can sometimes appear suddenly. When this happens, it usually is not sight-threatening and requires no treatment. However, a sudden increase in floaters could mean that a part of the retina has pulled away from its normal position at the back wall of the eye. A detached retina is a serious condition and demands emergency treatment to prevent permanent impairment or even blindness.

What should you do when you notice your first floater? It's a good time to get that eye examination you've been putting off.

FISHING

continued from pg 1

Mass. Lurking in shadows behind all the preparation for the move gleamed fish. Now I look back at that decision to leave New York and I have to wonder. Was I actually leaving in order to learn how to fish?

After living in Turners Falls for a few months, I became reacquainted with my college roommate and her husband. I had never really known Tom before. During one visit, I learned that he had been a fly fisher for some 25 years. I told him about my interest - more like a daydream, really - in fly

fishing and he said he would take me out sometime to see what it was like. We planned a date, and one hot July afternoon I drove out to their place in New Braintree, excited to finally have a chance to go out with someone who could show me how to fish.

Before going to the river, Tom gave me a casting lesson in their backyard. It was harder than I expected. I felt awkward and embarrassed by my clumsiness, but persisted until it was time to go.


Things I Hadn't Thought of
As Tom was putting his gear in the van, I suddenly realized I

hadn't given any thought to what one should wear while wading in a river. I only had an old pair of chinos and sandals with me. Oh well, it was only water. Right?

We walked through a field until we reached the bank of the Ware River. I followed Tom (who wore waders) down the embankment and was horrified to discover the reality of actually walking into a moving body of water. Trees overhung the banks and little swarms of mosquitoes buzzed above the surface. Apart from trout, what else was in the dark brown water? Suddenly the inadequacy of my clothing struck me. If

I went into this unknown water would something strange swim up my pant legs? Vivid pictures from the movie *African Queen* presented themselves, pictures of Humphrey Bogart pulling the old boat through a shallow swampy section of a leech-filled river, Katherine Hepburn pulling the leeches off his back when he returned to the boat, his revulsion. It's one of those movie images that stays with you always, like Janet Leigh's shower scene in *Psycho*. How well did I know Tom, anyway? I hesitated.

These were not the images I had enjoyed in my daydream of fishing in a river. In my mind,

the water was always rushing by, clean and clear, inspiring a feeling of joy, peace and well-being. The large blue sky overhead was bright and optimistic. There weren't any mosquitoes. In my dream the river was friendly and welcoming, not threatening and filled with anxiety. I wanted to go back to the van and wait until Tom was done fishing. At the same time, I knew I had babbled on about wanting to go so much it would be humiliating to back out now. Pride won the day, and I cautiously followed him down the bank and put one sandaled foot in front of the other and walked into the water. 

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Drugs for Sale

Thursday 3-17

11:30 a.m. As the result of an investigation, [redacted]

[redacted], Montague, was arrested and charged with possession of cocaine with intent to distribute, possession of a class D drug, possession of a class E drug, and distribution of a controlled substance within 1000 feet of a school or park.

2:40 p.m. Report of loitering in front of the Turners Falls Post Office. A woman was hanging around for an hour and a half. Officer moved her along.

Friday 3-18

1:07 a.m. After a motor vehicle stop on 3rd Street by

the Exxon station, [redacted]

[redacted] was arrested and charged with possession of a class D drug and a stop sign violation.

8:20 a.m. A male juvenile was arrested at TFHS and charged with two counts of assault and battery with a dangerous weapon.

Saturday 3-19

3:15 p.m. Report of a disturbance on the hill across from Food City on Avenue A. Kids were throwing snowballs at cars. They apologized.

6:10 p.m. Report of a possible breaking and entering at

the Shea Theatre. Under investigation.

7:16 p.m. Walk-in to station reported vandalism at a J Street address. A brick was thrown through a window. Report taken.

Sunday 3-20

7:30 a.m. Walk-in to station reported unattended child under the bridge in Montague City. Officer found people fishing, everything fine.

9:41 a.m. One-car accident reported on Millers Falls Road. One person taken to FMC. Summons issued.

Monday 3-21

2:07 a.m. While on patrol, officer noticed broken window at the Scalper's Lodge in Lake Pleasant. Under investigation.

12:55 p.m. Report of an assault at a Park Street address. Neighbor dispute. Found to be verbal only.

9:12 p.m. Report of a disturbance at a 3rd Street address. [redacted] was arrested and charged with disturbing the peace and disorderly conduct.

Tuesday 3-22

3:14 a.m. After a motor vehicle stop on Millers Falls road, [redacted]

[redacted] was arrested and charged with operating a motor vehicle under the influence of liquor, miscellaneous equipment violations, and failure to operate within marked lanes.

11:30 a.m. As the result of an investigation, [redacted]

[redacted] was arrested and charged with possession of a class D drug with intent to distribute, possession of a class D drug, and distributing a controlled substance within a 1000 ft of a school.

10:01 p.m. [redacted] was arrested on a default warrant.

OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

Sugar Shack Crawl

BY FLORE

Can you tell, when winter is slowly blowing away?

Three distinct things happen. And when we see them, "Hurrah!" Spring is tiptoeing along the hillside.

Even if a carpet of snow lingers around Earth's feet, it is not pure illusion!

Follow me, first, along the rows of metal silvery buckets carefully pinned on the hips of the maple trees.

That's one lead. As if they have become milk maidens, carrying the sweet liquid back, like in the olden days!

Second lead?

Then, in the sky you see and hear squadrons of Canada geese honking happily their return.

Have you often wondered who takes command up there in the phalanx of broad-winged messengers? What determines the capacity of being chief goose? Do they take turns? Or is the oldest goose in charge transmitting his or her routing knowledge to the next wisest one in line?

Have you noticed how gracefully they land, on fields more crowded than the tarmac at JFK, while some take off to join their

brothers and sisters in the sky? What a sight!

Then the third spring clue appears. A certain black caterpillar was shown to me by

'un habitue du Canal a Turners Falls.' As this fuzzy

according to unlimbers after a long winter's nap, taking great care to cross the road escaping 'de justesse' our footsteps.

You can scream and shout: "Ca y est, c'est l'printemps!"

That's right, now is the time for you to tour leisurely around the local sugar houses, affectionately known as sugar shacks. They serve hearty meals

to the whole family. Yes, we deserve to smell that blond sap bubbling now around us.

sweet secret from the maple trees?

The venerable sugar maple tree is also known as ACER SACCHARUM.

If you taste the sap, before being boiled, it taste like a sugary water

they will soon close when the temperature is no longer freezing at night.

In Shelburne; Gould's Sugar House, Exit 26 off I-91, seven miles west on Route 2
1-413-625-6170.

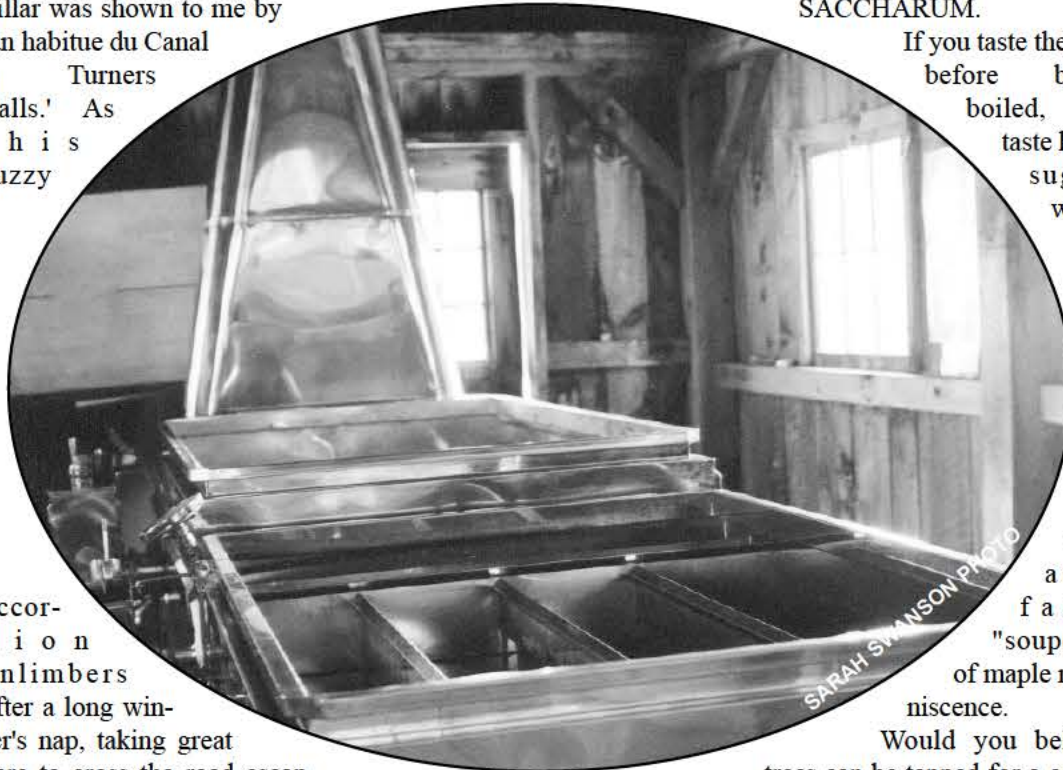
In Orange; Johnson Farm, off Route 2A at 210 Wheeler Avenue.
1-978-544-7835.

In Deerfield; Williams Farm Route 5&10, one quarter mile south from Historic Deerfield Village.
1-413-773-5186.

In Ashfield; South Face Farm, off Route 116 four miles northwest of Ashfield.
1-413-628-3268.

For details and information, contact the Massachusetts Maple Producers Association. Their website is: www.massmaple.org; email: info@massmaple.org.

They offer an informative updated leaflet of all gifted "sappers."



SARAH SWANSON PHOTO

with a very faint "soupcon" of maple reminiscence.

Would you believe trees can be tapped for a century? This occurs late February through early April.

So, don't delay!

We have selected for your "sugar shack crawl" four sugar houses that serve copious breakfasts in Franklin County. Try them all, at your pleasure, as

Like the discovery must have been, by the first settlers. Think, it was the Native Americans who shared with them their knowledge of collecting sap in hollow logs. How do you suppose the Native Americans unlocked that

Farmwife's Journal

BY PATRICIA CROSBY
MARCH, 2005

GILL - I had to laugh when I was first asked to keep this journal. I'd be bragging to call myself a farmwife. I work in an office and always have, of one kind or another. My husband's the farmer. What I know about farming would fill an apple basket. No, that's too big.

On the other hand, for a long time now, many farms have

been worked by one spouse while the other takes an off-farm job, so who's to say it's so much different in our case? The rhythms and patterns of the life permeate the days of both of us, and that of our children, too, those away and those at home.

For example, my husband has decided not to sugar this year, which will make two years in a row we haven't been part of that sweet and steamy society of

neighbors across the county whose "clubhouses" look so inviting as you drive by, in the rain or wind or cold of a dark March evening. The sugar house here is empty: no bubbling evaporator, no battered kitchen stool drawn up to the vat, no coffee mug with a shot of sap like brandy. With two children off to college and the one at home only seven years old, sugaring would have

become a one-man operation, and while that's not impossible (a 77-year-old man in my church set his 20 taps last week) it's not a carefree and easy task either. There's the preparation of the sugar house, the equipment, and the wood; the setting of the taps and buckets; the daily, late afternoon collection -- often by tractor, sometimes by foot in deep snow, (neither simple to manage with a home-from-

school small one in tow); and then of course, the slow, patient, careful process of sugaring off itself: a delight if you've not too much else to do, but a strain if you've got cheesemaking, milking, and calving at two separate farm sites going on at the same time....well, you get the picture.

Blossom and Nutmeg will have to be our sugarplums this year. More about them later.

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THE PERSISTENT GARDENER

Planting Just Around the Corner

BY WOODY BROWN
MONTAGUE CITY - While I write this, there is snow covering most of the ground in my view. Yet the persistent gardener knows we will soon be sticking our hands into the soil and planting.

Of course, if you get with it right away, it's still not too late to start tomatoes, peppers and melons indoors. After they germinate, you'll want to keep them in a sunny window until it's warm enough to plant them outdoors. For these crops, that's pretty close to Memorial Day. They appreciate a warmer soil. Incidentally, I know the experts will tell you, and I've even advised this in an earlier article, start tomatoes and peppers in a soil-less starter mix. To be safer in the avoidance of damping off, the experts are undoubtedly right. I would just interject here that I've started my tomatoes and peppers and melons in good old-fashioned potting soil for close to fifty years, and

never had a serious problem.

As soon as your soil is at all workable you can start planting some vegetables outdoors. These include

spinach, radishes and at the end of April, lettuce. I think lettuce will take a light frost, but nothing too severe.

The varieties you plant are dictated by your table favorites. Some people don't like radishes at all, but for those of us who do, it is surprising how many different varieties there are. My suggestion is: try more than one. Although my wife is the



WOODCUT BY MARY AZARIAN

principal lettuce grower, I know that she plants many varieties. She is also the planter of peas. You don't have to wait until a frost-free date to start peas. Wow! No pea that

ever showed up in a supermarket can match the flavor-filled peas that come from the garden. I pop them in my mouth like candy. Something I've come to realize rather late in my gardening career is that carrots do grow bigger in raised beds. The difference between these carrots and ones just started in garden soil is almost startling. They are both larger

and longer. Around here, carrots can be planted anytime after the first of May.

There are vegetables that need both warm weather and soil. All vine crops seem to like heat. Cucumbers and squash can be started before Memorial Day, but not by much. Just a snap of frost, and you have to start over.

I haven't said anything about the garden and preparing it for seeds and plants. My hope is that you turned it over last fall. If you did, don't do it again. Too much churning of the garden soil discourages worms. You want worms in your garden, so don't scare them away. They are busy making the soil fertile for you.

Seed packets today have good instructions for planting individual crop types. Do what your seed provider tells you and you should be reasonably assured of success. Happy gardening.

MONEY MANUAL

Earn Eight Percent Interest on Funds Received by March 31st

BY FRANCES RAHAIM
MONTAGUE CITY - Hard asset accounts rose by eight percent as of March 18th. Investors looking to hedge against declining stock market or other losses can still take advantage, and receive the eight percent increase, if they act quickly.

Accounts must be opened by March 29th in order to receive the increase. The increase will be applied to your account immediately.

Due to processing time, this

means that paperwork must be completed no later than Tuesday, March 29th by 12:00 noon.

This can

be a good choice if you feel most comfortable with your funds secured by tangible assets with proven value, and a



modicum of risk. If you choose this option, you should be willing to commit to a three to five year minimum term.

Historically, these accounts have well out-

performed other conservative types of accounts. In 2004 they are up an impressive nine and a half percent and have started

2005 off with a whopping eight percent on March 18th. There may be additional increases before year's end.

These accounts may be used to provide immediate income, or you may leave the returns in for future use.

As the saying goes, "The early bird gets the worm." In this case, those who act before noon March 29th get eight percent!

For more information, call me at 413-773-3330, or email me at dr@moneymanual.com.

HOME COOKING

Here is a recipe Leslie Brown of Montague City sent in recently. We encourage other readers to mail favorite recipes, with any introductory remarks you may wish to include to Montague Reporter, 24 Third Street, Turners Falls, MA 01376, or via email to reporter@montaguema.net.

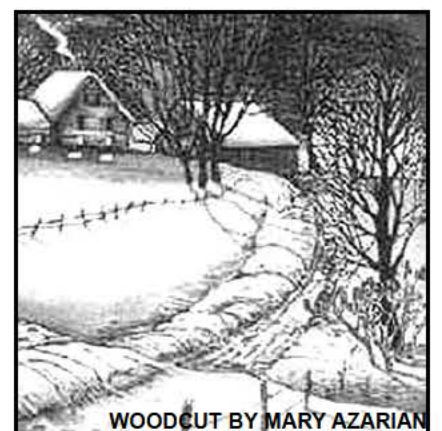
Leslie Brown's

LIGHT BUT HEARTY PANCAKES

These pancakes are nothing like the hefty but rather tasteless commercial variety. Try them and you'll want to make them again. The tart taste of the cranberries is the perfect foil for the sweetness of the new syrup of the season.

1/2 cup flour	
1/3 cup quick oatmeal	1 1/2 tsp. baking powder
pinch baking soda	1 teaspoon sugar
1 half-ripe banana	1 egg
1 teaspoon oil	1/2 cup orange juice
3/4 cup fresh or frozen cranberries	

Mash the banana with the oil and then add the orange juice. Stir in the cranberries. In a large bowl, blend the dry ingredients and then add the liquid ingredients. Add enough more juice to make a blend you can pour onto a hot frying pan or griddle. The secret is to stir lightly and not to beat. This keeps the batter light. This recipe makes 6-8 small pancakes. Double if desired. Enjoy!



WOODCUT BY MARY AZARIAN

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Patriots Sign Dwight

BY LEE CARIGNAN

TURNERS FALLS - The Patriots signed wide receiver Tim Dwight this week to a one-year deal. Terms of the contract were not disclosed. It's believed to be a minimum veteran contract with incentives. The Dwight signing probably puts an end to any chance the Patriots will be re-signing Troy Brown. Brown, an eighth round pick out of Marshal University in 1993, had been with the Patriots longer than any other current player. He was a key player during the championship years, making big plays during crucial moments of big games. Brown's best year statistically was in 2001 when he had 101 receptions. Last year, when the Patriots secondary was banged up, he played cornerback and had three interceptions. Brown was the quintessential Patriot player on the team. He was selfless; team-oriented, and made the most of his talents. Some fans even wondered if owner Bob Kraft would step in to try to retain Troy Brown and keep him in a Patriot uniform for his entire career. Troy Brown's five million dollar cap number was

too much for the Patriots this year, and a new deal could not be reached.

Dwight, who is only 5'8", has blazing speed and will probably take over Brown's punt returning duties. He should have a chance to become the slot receiver behind starters Dion Branch and David Givins. Third year speedster Bethel Johnson should also challenge for the third receiver spot. Johnson is coming off a somewhat disappointing season with very little production as a receiver. Dwight is 29 years old, and is a seven-year veteran. He began his career with the Atlanta Falcons but was traded in 2001 to the San Diego Chargers as part of the Michael Vick trade. He had a career high 50 catches in 2002, but only had 16 receptions during the last two years due to injuries. Dwight has career totals of 153 receptions for 2,422 yards and 14 touchdowns.

Earlier this month, the Patriots tried to make a big free agent signing of wide receiver Derrick Mason. Mason chose to sign with the Ravens over the Patriots. The Mason rejection,



along with the loss of David Patten and Troy Brown, have left the Patriots thin at wide receiver. If

Tim Dwight can stay healthy he should be a good addition.

Expect the Patriots to draft another wide receiver in April's pick to fill the fifth receiver spot.

The Patriots also have last year's fifth round pick receiver P.K. Sam who will battle for the fifth receiver spot. Sam gives the Patriots much needed size at 6'5", but is very raw and will need to develop his skills this year to make the team. The Florida State receiver was expected to go higher in last year's draft, but

dropped down into the fifth round where the Patriots grabbed him. Sam looked good in rookie mini camp, impressing Patriot coaches with his good hands, size, speed, and route running. But he had a knee injury during training camp and was put on injured reserve for his entire rookie season. With a full year to learn the Patriots offense under his belt, he could be ready to be the fifth receiver next season. Stay tuned.

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Celestial Sphere

by Bette Black, edited by David Detmold

Across

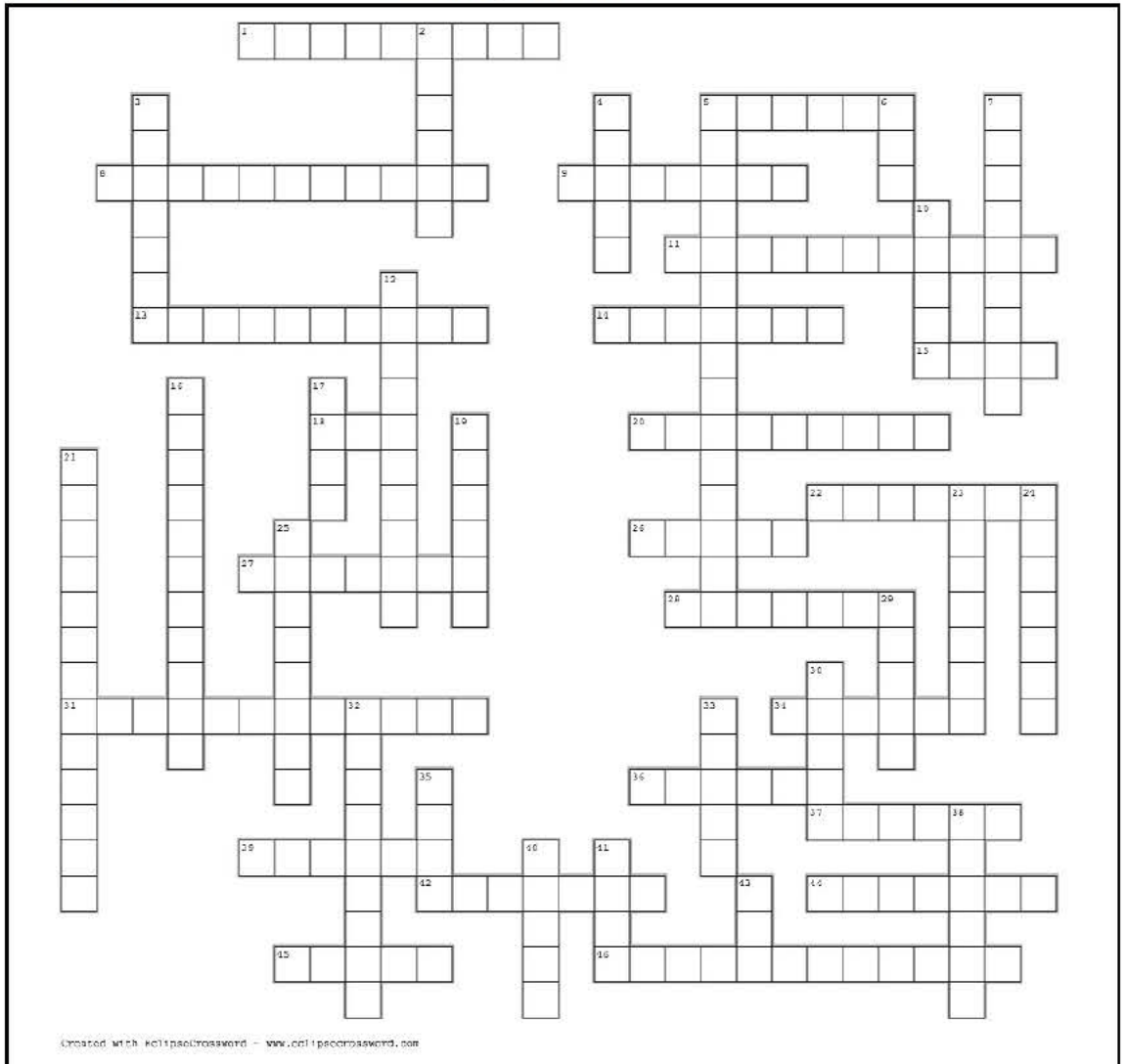
- 1. Light cannot escape it.
- 5. Parking space for a meteor.
- 8. New York's is the Hayden.
- 9. First stargazer with a telescope.
- 11. Fear of lightning and thunder.
- 13. Extraterrestrial science.
- 14. He dwarfs Saturn.
- 15. Lunar pull or laundry detergent.
- 18. Gemini's element.
- 20. Spangled with small stars.
- 22. Goddess of the moon and the hunt.
- 26. He has Betelgeuse on his belt.
- 27. Eighth planet from the sun.
- 28. Navigational instrument for shooting stars.
- 31. Native name for March full moon.
- 34. Milky Way is one.

- 36. Moon-gazing animal of lore.
- 37. Famous space telescope.
- 39. Rotating neutron star.
- 42. Big imaginary circle.
- 44. When night equals day.
- 45. The morning star.
- 46. The science of space flight.

Down

- 2. Lighter than air.
- 3. Celestial shadow.
- 4. Tycho _____, Danish astronomer.
- 5. An old name for China.
- 6. Color of Mars.
- 7. Measure of stellar brightness.
- 10. Traveler with a vapor tail.
- 12. Famous Polish astronomer.
- 16. Revolving around the sun.

- 17. Star-crossed government agency.
- 19. German astronomer, the founder of modern astronomy.
- 20. Charged particles hang out here.
- 23. Winged messenger.
- 24. I only record the sunny hours.
- 25. Of or relating to the firmament.
- 29. Vonnegut's favorite moon.
- 30. Tauruses are in their element here.
- 32. Illegally distilled whiskey.
- 33. Celestial path.
- 35. Aries element.
- 38. Moonlight madness.
- 40. It's elemental for a Pisces.
- 41. Erratic star.
- 43. What comes between a Cancer and a Virgo.



April Events at the Great Falls Discovery Center

Nature photographer Glenn Corbiere's display of damselflies and dragonflies of the valley will be in the Great Hall through April 16th. At the Great Falls Discovery Center,

Cloutier of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service to learn about important native trees in the watershed.

Friday & Saturday, April 1st and 2nd - Preschool Adventure: 10 - 11 a.m. Preschool children with adults are invited to join activities with Suzanne de Lesdernier as she explores matter at either or both events.

Saturday, April 16th - Drawing from Nature: 10 a.m. - noon, Annie Chappell, artist and chair of the Friends of the Great Falls Discovery Center, will demonstrate how to sketch from the wildlife in the exhibits. Please bring a 9x12 firm sketchpad, #2 pencils, and one or two black waterproof pens (Uniball or Micron). Limited to 8 participants, 14 or older. Please call to register.

Saturday, April 9th - Trees in the Valley: 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. Visitors are invited to join Sue

2 Avenue A, Turners Falls.
For further information, please call 413-863-3221.

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REDBIRD

Saturday, April 2nd, 7:30 p.m.,
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FRIDAY MARCH 25TH

Moonlight & Morningstar jazz/gospel concert, Franklin Medical Center's main lobby. 164 High St., Greenfield. Noon to 1:00 p.m. 413-773-2573.

March Full Moon

The first full moon after the Spring Equinox will be a celebration of renewal, rebirth, eggs and a search for the quacking in the woods will reveal vernal pools and their wood frog denizens. Poetry, snacks and a little candle light will round out the evening woods ramble. Northfield Mountain Recreation Area, Route 63. 6:30 to 9:00 p.m. For ages 10 and older. Pre-registration 800-859-2960.

Fourth Friday Contra Dance with David Kaynor & Greenfield Dance Band Guiding Star Grange Hall, 401 Chapman St., Greenfield. 8:00 p.m. - midnight. 413-367-9380.

FRIDAY AND SATURDAY, MARCH 25TH & 26TH

Media Arts Cafe features the film *Fly Away Home*, rated PG. Thomas Alden (Jeff Daniels) and his daughter, Amy (Anna Paquin) can't seem to get along. But when thirteen-year-old Amy takes on the responsibility of raising abandoned goslings, relations improve between Amy and her father. After the geese imprint on Amy, Thomas and Amy must teach the geese to migrate. The airborne adventurers rediscover their love for one another while overcoming a host of pitfalls and arriving safely at the geese's winter home in this touching family adventure. Media Arts Cafe is in the Green Trees Gallery, 105 Main St., Northfield. 413-498-2100.

SATURDAY MARCH 26TH

Pancake Breakfast, Second Congregational Church located near the Common (Court Square) in Greenfield. 8:00 to 11:00 a.m.

Psychic Fair

sponsored by the National Spiritual Alliance from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Thompson Temple, across from the Post Office in Lake Pleasant. Readers use different techniques to obtain information for those who consult them, including astrology, I-Ching, hand reading, psychometry, spiritual counseling, and tarot cards. Consultation is with a medium of choice. "Spirit and Spa," an anecdotal and pictorial history of the "glory days" of Lake Pleasant as a Spiritualist resort, is available via the TNSA internet website, <http://www.thenationalspiritualallianceinc.org> and also from the Lake Pleasant Village Association at the Post Office, Carroll's Super Market in Millers Falls, and the Book Mill in Montague Center.

The Gypsy Wranglers

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The Gathering Place at First Parish of Northfield, Unitarian offers card and board games, mah-jong lessons, open mike for musicians and writers, coffee & light fare on the last Saturday of every month from 7 to 10 p.m. 72 Main Street, for more info call (413) 498-5957.

SUNDAY, MARCH 27TH Got Kids?

Special Easter Family Dance

at the Montague Grange: child-friendly contradancing at 4:00 p.m. The Montague Grange continues this wonderful family series, now in its fourth year. The series goes through April and features family-style contra dancing, paced for little feet (no age restriction) or adult beginners, in a beautiful, restored historic building, across from the Town Commons in picturesque Montague Center. Each dance is on the last Sunday of the month, from 4:00 to 5:30 p.m., priced a sliding \$5-\$10, and includes a light snack.

Purim Carnival

Come in costume for a Purim parade, Purim skit, face painting, and carnival featuring games and hamantashen (pastries). Temple Israel, 27 Pierce St., Greenfield. 11:15 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. 413-772-8689.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 30TH

Mid-Week Music featuring *Northside Saxophone Quartet* All Souls Church, 399 Main St., Greenfield. 12:15 to 12:45 p.m. 413-773-5018.

SATURDAY, APRIL 2ND

Redbird to perform live at Memorial Hall in Shelburne Falls, 7:30 p.m. Redbird is Peter Mulvey, Kris Delmhorst and Jeffrey Foucault. What an album, what a tour! Redbird is born out of a tour that Peter, Kris and Jeffrey played together in England in 2003. Upon returning home, they recorded Redbird in 3 days around one microphone, with the talents of producer and multi-instrumentalist, David "Goody" Goodrich. Listening to any one of these artists is a delight; put them all together, and it's pure ecstasy! \$15 advance / \$18 door / under 18 half price!

SATURDAY AND SUNDAY, APRIL 2ND & 3RD

Touch of Class Cat Fanciers Spring Cat Show. Find out who's top cat and pick your own favorite feline. More than 300 beautiful purebred

cats and kittens of over 25 breeds. Best Western Royal Plaza, Fitchburg. 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. 978-975-3644.

SUNDAY, APRIL 3RD GCC CHORUS SPRING CONCERT

Greenfield Community College Chorus will continue its spring semester performance series with a concert of music from the Renaissance to the present at 7:30 p.m. at the Unitarian Church in Northfield. The chorus of twenty singers will sing under the direction of Margery Heins, with Amy Crawford, accompanist. The concert is free and the public is encouraged to come and enjoy the program. Donations will be accepted to defray concert expenses. Music will be performed in French, Latin, German, and Italian, and will include pieces for one to five voice parts. Soloists drawn from the chorus include Michelle Plummer of Greenfield, Gretchen Harbour of Bernardston, and Alec MacLeod of Montague. Guest instrumentalists include Shanti Archer, flute; Seth Ainsworth, violin; and Paul Tacey, percussion. The GCC Chorus will also be performing at 12:15 p.m. on Wednesday, April 27th, at the Mid-Week Music Series held at All Souls Unitarian Church in Greenfield. For more information, call 775-1171.

Guitarist/singer/songwriter and Greenfield native Bob Lord returns to the area for a solo acoustic show at Cafe Koko, Main St., Greenfield at 7:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, APRIL 9TH

SPRING + MUSIC + FUN = ENRICHED EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES - At 8:00 p.m. the Turners Falls High School Theater will host the first Gill-Montague GALA. The event is being co-sponsored by Greenfield Savings Bank and the Montague Elks #2521. This family-oriented GALA is presented by the Educational Fund Board of Directors in partnership with Nick Waynelovich of Ja'Duke Productions. Among the performers will be the Shea Swing Orchestra, students from the elementary and secondary schools, several local artists including David Weidenfeld, John Waynelovich, and *Haven't Got a Clue*. The price of admission is \$10.00. Tickets are available at Equi's, Scotty's, World Eye

Bookstore, all the Gill-Montague Elementary Schools or by calling Turners Falls High School at 863-9341. The Gill-Montague Education Fund is a non-profit organization established for the purpose of raising funds for student's enrichment through the academic, arts and athletic programs.

The Pioneer Valley Symphony, Paul Phillips, Music Director and Conductor, presents

SCOTTISH ADVENTURE

featuring James Buswell, violin soloist. Works to be performed are Mendelssohn's *The Hebrides Overture*, Bruch's *Scottish Fantasy*, and Walton's *Symphony No. 1*. 7.30 p.m. in the Greenfield High School Auditorium on Lenox off of Silver St., Greenfield. Advance tickets are \$16.00 general, \$14.00 senior, \$10.00 student and \$5.00 children, available at World Eye Bookshop, Greenfield; Broadside Bookshop, Northampton; and online at www.pvso.org. Door prices are \$18.00 general, \$17.00 senior, \$10.00 student and \$5.00 children. This concert is generously sponsored by The Loomis Communities and Greenfield Savings Bank. Info: www.pvso.org or (413) 773-3664.

Hot Spot Teen Center

Mondays - Ongoing Digital Arts Project, 3 to 5 p.m.
Tues & Wed - Ongoing Music Project, 3 to 5 p.m.
Thursdays - Technology Drop-in hours, 3 to 5 p.m.
Friday, March 25th - Open Mic, 6 to 9 p.m.

These programs are free (except some skate trips) and open to local teens. Some require permission slips. For more info about any of these events or programs please call Jared at 863-9559. Hot Spot Teen Center is in The Brick House Community Center, 24 Third St, Turners Falls

Sunday at 7 All films free donations accepted

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MATINEE SAT,SUN,&WED 12:00 2:15 4:30	
2 GUESS WHO	PG13 in DTS sound
DAILY 6:00 9:00	
MATINEE SAT,SUN,&WED 12:00 3:00	
3 THE PACIFIER	PG
DAILY 6:00 9:00	
MATINEE SAT,SUN,&WED 12:00 3:00	
4 MILLION DOLLAR BABY	PG13 in DTS sound
DAILY 6:15 9:15	
MATINEE SAT,SUN,&WED 12:15 3:15	
5 ICE PRINCESS	G
DAILY 6:15 9:15	
MATINEE SAT,SUN,&WED 12:15 3:15	
6 THE RING 2	PG13 in DTS sound
DAILY 6:30 9:30	
MATINEE SAT,SUN,&WED 12:30 3:30	
7 MISS CONGENIALITY	PG13 in DTS sound
DAILY 6:30 9:30	
MATINEE SAT,SUN,&WED 12:30 3:30	

MABEL ZOBLE BY SANDRA FACTO

THREE MORE LAPS... THAN YOU AND I ARE GOING TO HAVE A LITTLE CONVERSATION, MR. BUNNY RABBIT.

Snowdrops

BY FRAN HEMOND

MONTAGUE CENTER - Snowdrops are little white flowers that brave the late spring cold and poke up through the vestiges of winter snow. Some folks may have hyacinths appearing in a cultivated, sheltered, southern exposure, while my snowdrops make their way in a rough backyard lawn, in the shade of the hickory tree or underneath the grape arbor. Galanthus, the Latin name, comes from 'small bulbs'. They establish perennials that multiply year after year if they like their habitat. A few bulbs can expand into a circular clump from which new plots can be started.

Reader's Digest Garden Book warns that the bulbs should never be allowed to dry

out. Plant them right away if you are expanding their space.

Left alone they seem to travel on their own if they are happy. We do not cut the foliage until it has died down, as with daffodils. This is a nuisance for the person who mows the lawn, but an easy trade in March for folks who love them.

Snowdrops go on and on. They will be there for the next generation.

This same backyard, bordering the fields, is on the route of



the twenty or so turkeys who find the Greenfield Road farm-lands a good source of winter

food. The released birds that have formed flocks all over the state usually have their mind on food, and the male's handsome display with his tail spread on high like a fan is rarely seen. But their shiny brown backs and wings, their bluish heads that seem to have no feathers, but boast red wattles, are certainly unusual features. Too, their busy yellow feet and good size invite inspection. These turkeys don't seem to resent people.

They don't seem to fear autos, and their survival is dependent on wary drivers.

A straggler who has strayed from his flock has only an elemental, mindless, flap and run method of joining his group, even if it means crossing the road in the path of a car. In comparison, the crows who frequent the area seem to judge the approach of an oncoming, intruding vehicle and to make a judgment as to how long they can wait before flying.

Backyard life changes with the season. The snowdrops are particularly lovely in early spring when one really appreciates the glory they bring. The turkeys and crows give diversity and color year round, and they survive and add interest to the darkest days of winter.

A Hot Spot for Inclusive Birdwatching

BY MARCY MARCHELLO
TURNERS FALLS - At the Great Falls Discovery Center, a new bird watching program is developing that is inclusive of people of all ages and abilities. Outings start from the Great Falls Discovery Center on the first Saturday morning of the month. If you would like to observe and learn to identify birds at a leisurely pace, inclusive bird watching may be a good opportunity for you. Seniors, families, and persons with disabilities - whether new or experienced with bird watching - are especially encouraged to take advantage of this free program.

At recent programs in February and March, people gathered at the Center and then drove to nearby locations to look for birds together. Some people who attended had disabilities such as knee problems, quadriplegia, autism, or mild cognitive impairments. Everyone fit right into the welcoming atmosphere and experienced the thrill of viewing an Eastern Screech-Owl in a pine tree and waterfowl in the canal.

resource. Any personal limitations were soon forgotten as people compared the difference between mallards and other ducks, watched gulls bathing, identified an Iceland gull among more common varieties. Some used a scope to see the white chin patch that separates the great cormorant, an unusual visitor from the coast, from the more typical double-crested cormorant seen along the river.

"I had a great time," commented Nila Patterson of Orange. "It was great to get outside. Seeing an owl was the highlight for me. I wish I could have stayed until evening to see it fly."

Dan Bolton of Athol used a field guide and a scope to learn how to identify different gulls. "Wow," he said, "I didn't realize that it takes from two to four years for them to become full adults." Bolton returned in March and saw the Iceland gull a second time,

along with a hungry flock of cedar waxwings feasting in crabapple trees.

Jan Ortiz, longtime member of the Hampshire Bird Club, is a

my love and knowledge of birds has inspired me to help organize opportunities for others at a slower pace", she says. "The Pioneer Valley is a wonderful place for bird watching and Turners Falls can be quite a hot spot."

Upcoming inclusive birding outings will take place on Saturday, April 2nd at 9 -11 a.m. and Saturday, May 7th at 8 -10a.m. As birds in migration arrive and pass through the Turners Falls area, the program will focus on birds that are easy to find and view, and identify birds by song. Pre-registration is required for Saturday morning programs. Please call 413-527-8980 for more information and to pre-register. There is a limit of twelve people per program.

On Saturday, April 16th, from 1 - 4 p.m., an Accessible Bird Watching Open House will take place in the Great Hall at the Discovery Center. Local birders will be on hand and

inclusive birding resources will be available for people to learn about and use. Short excursions will take place to Unity Park and the State Boat Ramp to view eagles and other birds that are out on this spring afternoon. Stop by, see the exhibits, learn about birds, and enjoy some refreshments. This event is free; everyone is welcome.

Turners Falls, with the Great Falls Discovery Center, easy urban access to the river, and a wide variety of birds that frequent the area year round, is a perfect area for bird watching. The bird watching program is being developed under a federal grant called Project INSPIRE, which stands for Initiative for National and State Park Inclusive Recreation Expansion. Under this three-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education, the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation's Universal Access Program has teamed up with the Hampshire Bird Club of Amherst and All Out Adventures of Easthampton, to combine birding and inclusion expertise. For more information on Project INSPIRE and other inclusive outdoor recreation opportunities, call DCR's Universal Access Program at 413-545-5353.



Observing an eastern screech owl Migratory Way Turner's Falls, MA

PHOTOS BY MARCY MARCHELLO

From left to right: Ted Butynski of Greenfield, Dan Bolton of Orange, and Cyndy Chamberland of Easthampton view the screech owl with assistance from Jan Ortiz of the Hampshire Bird Club.

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