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at Turners High
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SPECIAL ELECTION ISSUE

Montague Center School Referendum • School Committee
Candidate Statements • and all Your Letters! **INSIDE**

LAKE PLEASANT MILLERS FALLS MONTAGUE CENTER MONTAGUE CITY TURNERS FALLS

The Montague Reporter

YEAR 5 - NO. 32

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THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

MAY 17, 2007

Study of Elementary Schools' Capital Needs Nears Completion

BY DAVID DETMOLD
MONTAGUE - The ele-capital needs task force for elementary school buildings is nearing completion of a study of the costs that will be required to renovate the three elementary schools in Montague and bring them into compliance with the Americans with Disability Act. The numbers are still in draft form, but after months of meetings, document review, and tours of Sheffield, Hillcrest and Montague

Center schools, a rough consensus is taking shape among the members of the task force as to the capital needs, their approximate price tags, and the schedule by which they should be completed. As revised at the task force meeting on Monday, May 14th, the draft report shows that Montague Center School will take the most money to renovate over the next 15 years: \$945,971; with repairs to the old and new see **NEEDS** pg 11

Wendell Has First Affordable LEED-Certified Homes in America



Solar panels top the roof of this Old Stage Road home.

BY KEVIN FOLEY

Two Wendell homes were Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certi-

fied earlier this year by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC). The homes are the first affordable see **HOMES** pg 13

Montague Grange Receives \$10,600 Grant to Restore Wildlife Habitat

BY DIANE PETIT
MONTAGUE CENTER The Montague Grange will receive nearly \$10,600 in federal cost-share assistance to restore important wildlife habitat on the state-owned Montague Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in Montague Center. The funding was provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service

(NRCS) through the agency's Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program. The funds will allow the Grange to mow and brush hog the field during a three-year period, to reduce the presence of invasive plants and improve the overall quality of grasslands habitat. The Grange will implement the project in partnership with MassWildlife, which owns the see **GRANGE** pg 14

Pruitt Lays Out an Agenda for a Final Term

BY DAVID DETMOLD

MONTAGUE - Her style is collaborative, low-key, supportive. So it is not as surprising as it might seem, when asked what her major frustration has been over the last three years serving on the Montague selectboard, when Patricia Pruitt answered, "the open meeting law." It's not that she favors secret backroom deals. It's just she feels constrained not being able to talk things over with the other two people she has to make decisions with each week, as the board attempts to keep Montague running on an even keel.

"It takes some getting used to," she said. She spoke about the open meeting law in a wide-ranging interview on the eve of town elections. "I've learned a lot about how to talk at meetings. You have to be very verbally efficient."

In the years before her term on the selectboard began in 2004, Pruitt served on a committee examining the possibility of expanding the selectboard from three to five members. Among other things, an increase to five would allow two members of the selectboard to confer outside of open meetings, or to work together on a subcommittee, without violating the open meeting



DETMOLD PHOTO

Patricia Pruitt seeks a second and final term on the Montague selectboard, Monday, May 21st.

law.

The idea of expanding the board comes up from time to time, but has failed to gain majority support at town meeting. As it is now, Pruitt, who is running unopposed for reelection on Monday, May 21st, said the main advantage she could see to having two extra hands on the selectboard would be to share the workload. She said she is often at meetings three or four nights a

week, and during the day as well. "It's at least a 20-hour-a-week job," she said.

"I can remember Sam Lovejoy saying, 'I can't imagine not doing so much, because there is so much to do.'" Thinking back on the Lovejoy era, (not a period typified by a collaborative approach to town government or enthusiasm for the open meeting law) she laughed and

see **PRUITT** pg 10

Arts and Blooms May 19th & 20th Features Collaborative Show of Local Artists

BY CHRISTOPHER

SAWYER-LAUCANNO
TURNERS FALLS - Arts and Blooms, held each year in May to celebrate the creative arts in downtown Turners Falls, features an array of delights this weekend, May 19th and 20th, from 10:00 a.m. to 5 p.m. Among the participants in the art walk and studio tour are woodworkers Mike Langknecht and Spencer Peterman, sculptor and stone carver Tim de Christopher, and fiber artist Anne Harding. In addition, the Brick House Community Resource Center will host the



DETMOLD PHOTO

Woodworker Mike Langknecht holds a decorative frame he constructed to display proclamations from the Reconciliation Ceremony between the Town of Montague and the Narragansett Indian Tribe. The frame will be on view this weekend during Arts and Blooms.

Great Falls Art Fest on the grounds of the Discovery Center, with 25 juried artists from around New England, music and children's activities. Other art walk participants include the Hallmark Museum, Four Directions Healing Arts, Great Lighting, the Discovery Center and Couture Brothers.

Of special note this year is a group show of eight artists on display at two locations: on the ground floor of the Brick House at 24 Third Street and on the first floor of Montague Catholic Social Ministries at 36 Third Street. According to artist see **ARTS** pg 14

PET OF THE WEEK

Waiting For You



Nudge

Nudge is an eight-year-old tortie female cat in need of a good home. Nudge has got double-paws in the front to make her stand out and a round adorable face. This pretty lady has lived as an indoor and outdoor cat, and has never been aggressive to other animals. Believe us she's lived with everything from mice to birds to fish! She loves to be petted, although she might also play hard to get, then meow for your attention. Her people loved her but they live in a no pets allowed apartment, and so they must part with their sweet friend in the hopes she finds another happy home soon. For more information on adopting Nudge please contact the Dakin Pioneer Valley Humane Society at 413-548-9898 or via email at levrett@dpvhs.org.

GFMS Students of the Week

Grade 7
Daniel Colton
Grade 8
Derek Sicard
Morgan MacConnell

NANCY L. DOLE BOOKS & EPHEMERA

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Published weekly on Thursday. (Every other week in July and August. Wednesday paper fourth week of November. No paper last week of December.)
PHONE (413) 863-8666
FAX (413) 863-3050
reporter@montaguema.net
Postmaster: Send address changes to
The Montague Reporter
24 3rd Street
Turners Falls, MA 01376

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SLATE LIBRARY NEWS

Magic Map Books

JOCELYN CASTRO-SANTOS GILL - On Saturday, May 26th, the Slate Library is offering a workshop entitled "Magic Map Books," taught by book artist and illustrator, Jeannie Hunt. Explore your place in the world through creative map-making. Personal maps tell stories about the locality you call 'home' and offer a glimpse into your heart and your imagination. They can be playful, poetic, or just plain silly. In this workshop, participants will make their own personal map, with a decorative border and a fancy cartouche.

Then you'll learn the magic map-fold and create an 'explosion' book with a clamshell cover and Velcro closure. The workshop will begin at 10:30 a.m. It is open to children age 8 and up! Pre-registration is

necessary. Please call the Slate Library at (413) 863-2591. The Slate Library's hours are Monday 2-6 p.m., Thursday 2-8 p.m. and Saturday 10-2 p.m.

The Art of Pastel

For adults, Slate Library is offering a workshop entitled "the Art of Pastel." Holyoke resident and artist Gregory Maichak has won regional and national awards for his portrait and landscape pastels. He will be teaching this workshop on Thursday, June 7th from 6 to 8 p.m.

Have you wanted to do a landscape, portrait, or special project in pastel? Bring a simple photo and come to participate in a hands-on art workshop. Pre-registration for this workshop is necessary. Call 413-863-2591 for more details.

CARNEGIE LIBRARY NEWS

Spring Planting



PHOTO: LINDA HICKMAN

Margaret Rachel and Emily Nichole of Hinsdale, New Hampshire enjoyed the Carnegie Library's spring planting program on Saturday, May 12th. Their mothers found out about the program through the RiverCulture website.

Permanent Paving

BY JOSEPH A. PARZYCH

TURNERS FALLS - Palmer Paving, Inc. paved 7th St and Ave A with 'permanent paving' on Tuesday, May 15th. Permanent, that is, until they tear it up again to pave the entire width of both streets, possibly this July. The paving machine is a Blaw-Knox PF 200. The roller in the foreground is a 12-ton Gallion. A Dresser 5-ton roller, not pictured, is sneaking up behind the photographer. The Granite Mack truck, with dump body uplifted on the horizon, is dumping 24 tons



PARZYCH PHOTO

of asphalt into the Blaw-Knox paver's hopper. At least. Palmer Paving is a subcontractor to Ludlow Construction.

SENIOR CENTER ACTIVITIES May 21st to 25th

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

Monday, 21st
10 a.m. Senior Aerobics
11 a.m. Easy Aerobics
1 p.m. Canasta
Tuesday, 22nd

9:30 a.m. T'ai Chi
Wednesday, 23rd
10 a.m. Senior Aerobics
11 a.m. Social Security Presentation with Dan Moraski, public affairs specialist.
12:45 p.m. Bingo
Thursday, 24th
1:00 p.m. Pitch
Friday, 25th
10 a.m. Senior Aerobics
11 a.m. Easy 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 11:00 a.m. Transportation can be pro-

FACES & PLACES

DETMOLD PHOTO

On Friday, May 11th, workers from the Montague DPW brought heavy equipment and loam to prepare the ground for a planned sculpture garden at the site of the former Dubois Garage on Canal and 3rd Streets. The sculpture garden is part of this year's RiverCulture project.

Corrections

Last minute layout errors on page 5 of last week's paper caused unintended omissions.

We did a poor job of maintaining the last sentence of Joe Janikas' editorial on poorly maintained road signs in Montague (MR V#31 Entering Montague: Lower Your Expectations.) For the record, the last sentence should have read: "What I do know is that unless we make our town more appealing visually and give the appearance of one that sees order and neatness as important, we're not going to attract what we want to attract to help our tax base." We agree, and we apologize.

On the same page, the signature was left off a letter of endorsement supporting Joyce Phillips for school committee. The letter was written by Cori Urban. We reprint the letter in this week's issue, and again, we apologize.

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Raffle to Benefit Reporter

BY LYN CLARK

GREAT FALLS - Please stop by the *Montague Reporter* table at the Great Falls Art Fest this weekend, on the lawn next to the Discovery Center on Avenue A, to purchase your raffle tickets. The raffle is being held to raise funds to help the non-profit *Montague Reporter* newspaper move to new quarters, in the former Charron dental office on 4th Street.

A special "thank you" to the businesses and individuals who are donating an array of attractive prizes to make this raffle one of the hottest tickets in town:

- Northfield Mountain Environmental Center: Riverboat Cruise on Quinnetuket II, 2 gift certificates, 4 guests each
- Rugg Lumber: Milwaukee 8 1/4" Circular Saw
- Ristorante DiPaolo: \$50 gift certificate
- Country Players: Two Tickets to *the Wizard of Oz* at the Shea (for the second weekend, July 13 -15th)
- Ann Harding: Hand woven scarf
- Greenfield Savings Bank: Tool Kit
- Turners Falls Pizza House: Two \$10 gift certificates
- Good Dirt Pottery:

Stoneware Bowl

- Flore: Photo

Ticket winners will be drawn during the July 7th performance of *the Wizard of Oz* at the Shea.

At the table you can also purchase t-shirts with the *Montague Reporter* in bold letters across the front - a bargain at \$12 - or a must have subscription to your community non-profit newspaper.

We look forward to seeing you on Saturday or Sunday at the Great Falls Art Fest, 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.!

Blood Drive

Give blood at the Turners Falls Fire Department on Turnpike Road on Tuesday, May 22nd from 1 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Oldest Veteran?

Stella Skrzypek of Turners Falls writes to ask, "With Memorial Day nearing, who is oldest veteran in Montague?" She says, "I was a U.S. Navy nurse, but at age 86 I'm sure I'm not the oldest."

Who knows the answer to her question?

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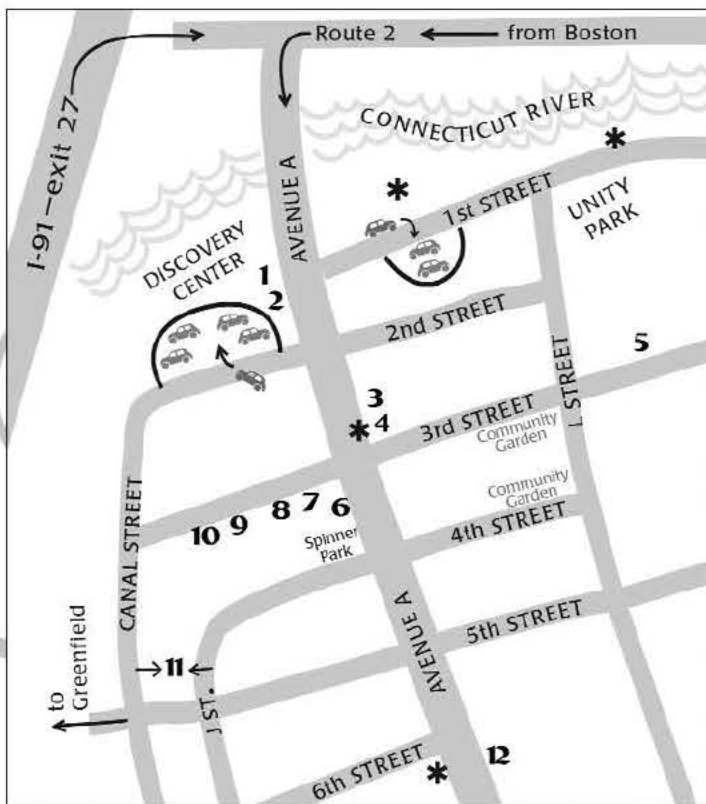
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ARTS & BLOOMS

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MAY 19TH & 20TH
STARTING AT 10AM



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2. GREAT FALLS ART FEST
3. VALLEY IDOL
4. HALLMARK MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHY
5. TIM DE CRISTOPHER
6. FOUR DIRECTIONS HEALING ARTS
6. ANNE HARDING FIBER ARTIST
7. GREAT LIGHTING
8. & 9. A COLLABORATION OF ARTISTS
10. PETERMAN'S BASKETS AND BOWLS
10. HOTTSAAP WOODWORKS
11. JACK NELSON
12. COUTURE BROTHERS, INC.

PUBLIC ART INSTALLATIONS:

- * Powertown; by James Rourke - End of 1st Street by the bike path parking area
 - * Rock, Paper, Knife; by Gary Orlinsky - 1st Street by bike path and Fish Viewing Facility
 - * Doosel; by Stephen Cahill - Avenue A + 3rd Street in front of Hallmark Museum of Contemporary Photography
 - * Atlantic Salmon Mosaic; by Cynthia Fisher - Peskeomskut Park Avenue A + 6th Street
- These public art pieces will be on view for three years

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- SETH AND EVA'S, Turners Falls
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- THE STYLE INN HAIR SALON, Turners Falls
- THE WAGON WHEEL RESTAURANT, Gill
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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

Photography

Lisa Davol

Joe Parzych

Technical Administrators

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A Divisive Referendum

Folks in Turners Falls, do you recall how you felt when you heard your community elementary school would be closing? You felt like the heart and center of your community would soon be shutting down, didn't you? Well, the folks who live in Montague Center feel that way all the time.

Parents in Montague Center are constantly put in the position of feeling as if it is somehow a privilege to have a school in the center of your village where your very young children can walk with you to school. Wouldn't the parents in Turners still be assured of having that, and all the positive associations that spring from having a community school, even if the grades in Hillcrest and Sheffield were combined in one school?

Children learn best not simply by being drilled until they can pass an MCAS test. They learn best by being in the middle of a loving, caring community of supportive parents, teachers and staff. That is what the children of the whole town have enjoyed - up until now - while attending Montague Center. As all parents of children who have attended Hillcrest can attest, the same is also true of children who go to Hillcrest.

This attribute of our children's primary school education is in fact a very positive common bond that *should* unite our school district. Recognizing this, isn't it possible for us to proceed in unity to settle the difficult questions outstanding on school configuration, rather than in discord and division?

This past weekend, it was disorienting to drive through Montague Center and see lawn signs urging people to come to a benefit school fundraiser in Turners Falls to raise money for physical education and reading programs for the entire district, and then to drive through the Hill sec-

tion of Turners Falls and see signs that said "Vote Yes to Close Montague Center." (They didn't even bother to include the word "School.") Which lawn sign campaign represents the spirit of community our schools need now?

The folks who put forward the petition seeking to "Close Montague Center" ought to have the grace to withdraw their support from the referendum drive. They should extend a hand of dialogue to all parents in town who love their kids and care about their education.

In cooperation we can best solve the problems that beset our schools. The costs of operating our school system have escalated beyond our ability to pay them. Property taxpayers are being saddled with the steady rise in school assessments, whether or not they are living on fixed incomes. A high proportion of our students live in poverty or come to school with special needs. Our high school has one of the highest dropout rates in the state. We are losing over a million dollars in state aid a year to school choice out. Those who believe closing Montague Center - and dividing one end of town from the other - is a method of solving any of these very real, very intractable problems, are kidding themselves.

Those who believe that saving the \$150,000 a year that *could* be gained from closing Montague Center will do anything but worsen our school choice losses are not being realistic. Taxpayers who are unwilling to consider the one time capital costs of renovating Montague Center School, in light of the impact this would have on the annual loss of state aid for the more than 150 students who already leave Gill-Montague for neighboring school districts, are being plain foolish. This path leads one way: to enrol-

ment decline and further financial burdens for all the taxpayers in town.

Turners Falls, did the taxpayers of Montague Center complain when they were asked to help pay for the renovation of the high school, middle school, and Hillcrest?

Two possible futures are emerging for our schools, and we have reached a decisive point. In one future, our school system thrives, balances the budget through fiscal discipline, retains and attracts school choice students, and realizes the full potential of the renovated classroom space in the high school and middle school by first filling the rosters of vital elementary schools, supported by their school communities. Another possible future sees a school system in accelerated decline, with further loss of enrolment and the millions in state aid that follows, with closing schools and empty classrooms at an underfilled high school and middle school. Montague can do better than that.

The schools' endemic budget shortfall is solvable, if the good will of the community is brought to bear on it, not squandered in anger and division. As we balance the budget, we need to weigh the needs of our elders equally with the needs of our young.

Attention must focus mainly on the operating side of the budget, rather than capital costs, for that is where the huge deficits are accumulating and rolling forward.

SO, I ARRANGED A \$50,000 RAISE FOR MY GIRLFRIEND. WHAT'S THE PRESIDENT OF THE WORLD BANK SUPPOSED TO DO IF NOT HELP PEOPLE IN NEED?



Paul Wolfowitz, in a Reflective Mood

With nearly 90% of the schools' operating budget tied to personnel costs, it does not require a new math curriculum to figure out where the solution to the schools' structural deficit lies. The mantra of the "Yes to Close Montague Center" supporters has been, "Money for Teachers, Not for Bricks and Mortar." But after the dust settles from Monday's vote, we are all going to have to take a hard look at just how much more money we can afford to pay those teachers - and the staff and administrators who support them - each year.

According to town administrator Frank Abbondanzio, G-M teachers get joint step and cost of living increases each year totaling 6%. The price for teachers' health insurance - the district pays 85% of the cost of this benefit - will climb by 20% this year. Yet the town needs to hold the increase in the school budget to no more than 3% a year if it hopes to manage within the constraints of new growth and Proposition 2½. How will that be possible?

Of course, the school district needs to look for efficiencies, and the move to close a school is part of this analysis. But school closing needs to be weighed carefully - by the

policymakers elected to do so - or we will easily end up losing more than we gain.

To cut the budget significantly, we are going to have to save more than the one or two staff positions that can be gained by closing a school.

In a union town with high employment and good paying jobs, it might be easy to support the steady increase of teachers' and administrators' salaries and benefits. But these are tough times, and the local economy is hurting. With personnel costs making up the lion's share of the operating budget, it is time for school (and town) employees to take a hard look at financial reality in Gill and Montague and forego a percentage of their benefit package to make a balanced budget possible.

American Dead in Iraq as of 5/16/07

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Afghanistan 388
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LETTERS TO



THE EDITOR

VOTE FOR PHILLIPS

Joyce Phillips is running for the Gill-Montague Regional School District school committee, and I plan to vote for her.

Ms. Phillips seems filled with energy and enthusiasm equaled only by her organizational skills and good ideas on how to enhance education for all of the students in the district. She is informed about the issues and willing to speak up about them.

Ms. Phillips is committed to the best interests of students district-wide. Whether she is attending a special event to support a student, sending a congratulatory card for some job well done or publicly acknowledging the good things a student does, she is ever conscious of highlighting the positive while working to enhance and improve that which needs to be enhanced and improved.

A former member of the school committee and producer of three Gill-Montague Education Fund galas to raise funds for enrichment programs in the district's schools, she has maintained her interest in the district and continued to attend meetings both on local and state levels to stay informed. She is knowledgeable and articulate, and I believe she will serve the school district well.

Her extensive experience will be valuable to the school district as it faces budget, personnel and configuration issues. She knows our school system and our community, and she has proven her dedication and capability to serve.

Please join me in casting a vote for Joyce Phillips for Gill-Montague Regional School District school committee.

**- Cori Urban
Millers Falls**

GO WITH GOBEIL

The Gill-Montague school committee needs a positive change, and Kelly Gobeil will give us that.

I have known Kelly for a few years now, and have been very impressed with her soft-spoken voice that speaks for all the children in our district. She has the ability to follow through on tasks and gets all the information she needs to make a responsible decision for all students in this district. With a teaching background, she knows it is more important to have teachers, not buildings.

Kelly is running for a seat on the Gill-Montague school committee. Get out and vote on May 21st for Kelly Gobeil.

**- Pam Grimard
Turners Falls**



JACK COUGHLIN ILLUSTRATION

DO THE RIGHT THING. VOTE NO.

Everyone has heard it a thousand times before; our schools are underfunded. The state and the nation put a financial burden on our school district that they cannot meet. The schools, in turn, ask an already overburdened and stressed taxpayer to pay more. It is a bill neither can afford. We have no solution in place to reverse this trend. Economic and social pressures, most beyond our control, are playing out in Montague over the closing of a school.

We are given an impossible task. We can choose to lower standards or place an insurmountable financial burden on our neighbors, friends, and fellow community members. In towns, cities, and villages across the nation, there is much debate and rancor. Sadly, in our town, there is division, anger, and outright hostility.

This is not a battle between rich and poor, the have and have-nots. Studies show us that small schools have better attendance, higher test scores, and more intimate and personal learning for students. The structure itself allows teachers to foster a cohesive vision for their school as part of a community. It is only common sense to keep a high-performing school open.

Please do not let a campaign of divide and conquer hurt us all. Vote No on May 21st.

**- Marje Levenson, Mimi York
Lake Pleasant**

CANDIDATE ENDORSEMENTS

I am pleased to add my endorsement of Mary Kociela to the many already published here. She has consistently impressed me as the person on the school committee who listens to others, and is open to creative compromise where it seems possible. She has come through a most difficult period in the school committee's tenure, and continues to seek to serve. She is dedicated to our schools and responsible in her role. We need her experience as we go forward.

On the Gill side of the slate, I am also urging people to vote for Sandy Brown, a former member of the Gill finance committee. She is knowledgeable about school financing realities, and promises to bring a fresh perspective to the school committee.

There are two other experienced candidates before us: Joyce Phillips and Richard Colton. Both have demonstrated involvement and commitment to the schools; both hold

strong positions about what happens in the Gill-Montague schools; each has a constituency of loyal supporters.

The question I am forced to ask myself is: 'Can either of these candidates find a way to work effectively toward an educationally and fiscally sound school system?' Can they work within the context of the school committee to bring about a school system that serves the realities we (as well as other districts) are facing? Does each appreciate the value of constructive compromise?

I admire Mr. Colton's championing of the individual student's benefits in the small school - small classes model that Montague Center, Gill, and Hillside represent. After all it is individual students that a school serves.

Ms. Phillips could be said to hold a system-wide view of the schools, which helped bring the town a new high school 'state of the art' building.

As we know, the era of building new is waning, if not over. Our financial scale must be tighter and involves hard choices. Nonetheless we still must educate our children.

I am looking for an experienced candidate who can join with Ms. Kociela and Ms. Brown and the other school committee members to unite the district and make a coherent education plan for going forward into the financially lean and, by necessity, innovative future. I am looking for the candidate who is "for" that above all else. To that end, Mr. Colton holds a slight edge.

**-Patricia Pruitt
Turners Falls**

COMMITMENT WITH A K

Mary Kociela has been a strong advocate for the children of the Gill Montague Regional School District for the past six years. She has guided the committee through some very tough times and with the new challenges that face our district - a new superintendent, budget constraints, changes in the district agreement and possibly even greater challenges when the Governor releases his education plan - it is necessary that people like Mary, with experience and commitment to the district, be elected to serve. I'm voting for Mary, and hope you will too.

**- Ann Banash
Gill**

GOBEIL GIVES HER ALL

We first meet Kelly Gobeil a few years back when she used to volunteer for Little League fundraisers. Her husband, Richard, was a coach and at that time they had no children in the league. Yet weekend after weekend they volunteered their time to help raise money for the Little

League. They both knew it is important to support the youth in town.

Today, Kelly and her husband have two children in the school district and their youngest is starting next year. She knows the importance of a quality education, and we believe that her children are her motivation to once again help the youth of the district. Not only is she a member of the Hillcrest PTO and school task force looking into the capital improvement needs of Sheffield, Hillcrest and Montague Center, but also she now wants to volunteer to be a member of the school committee. What we have seen in Kelly is a very positive, hard worker and dedicated young lady who puts her all into everything she does. Please support Kelly Gobeil on May 21st.

**- Mike and Calista Crowell
Turners Falls**

VOTING FOR PHILLIPS

I am very pleased that Joyce Phillips is running for the Gill-Montague school committee.

Joyce has shown great devotion, energy and commitment to our children and our school system in the countless hours she has spent as a past school committee member and chair, as a past member of several contract negotiation teams, as a past member of various school configuration studies, and as a leader in the current Gill-Montague Education Fund.

Joyce has dedicated her efforts to learning the details of the school budget, not an easy task under normal circumstances but especially difficult in recent years, and knows the ramifications of any cut on programs as well as the budget.

Joyce does not make a decision until she has educated herself on the details of an issue and its impacts. Once she has made a choice, you know that she has weighed the issue from every angle. She is an advocate and champion of all the children in the district and her goal is to provide them with the most equitable education our town can provide.

Joyce's dedication and energy has won her the admiration and respect of her peers as demonstrated in the recent statewide award for her services.

Please join me in voting for Joyce Phillips on May 21st to rejoin the Gill-Montague school committee.

**- Pat Allen
Montague City**

HILLCREST NOT ACCOUNTABLE

One of the more depressing aspects of the Gill-Montague school committee debate last week was the constant reference to the so-called "campus model" for elementary education. This idea refers to the status

quo in Turners Falls, where there is one Pre-K through 2nd grade school (Hillcrest) next to a 3rd grade through 6th grade school, soon to be a 3rd grade through 5th grade school (Sheffield). In fact, there is no such thing as a "campus model." Nothing in the research supports it and the school district has made no effort to justify it in educational terms.

Because of this, the Montague "configuration committee," which studied the question of reconfiguring our elementary schools for over a year, supported normal K through 5 or 6 schools. Last October the school committee (unanimously!) seemed to agree. But now we have turned 180 degrees with no explanation and no vision, conjuring up a non-existent "model" simply to justify the angry demand to close Montague Center School.

As it is now, one of the big problems with the "campus mode" - accountability - is revealed by the federal "No Child Left Behind" mandate. Right now Sheffield is being held accountable for low test scores in third grade, but Hillcrest is not. If anything it should be the other way around. Furthermore, this problem suggests that closing a high performing school (Montague Center School) and putting students into a school that is not meeting benchmarks may be a violation of the spirit, and perhaps the letter, of the federal mandate. The school committee elected next Monday will have to deal with this reality.

**- Jeff Singleton
Montague Center**

LESS DESIRABLE

Ms. Hebden, you are right in questioning Mr. Costa's ability to deal with "less desirable" children when it comes to being on the Montague park and recreation commission. He coaches for the parks and rec department and at the Great Falls Middle School, where he lacks sportsmanship and has a constant need to win. Our children need to learn about sportsmanship, learn the skills and the value of playing a good game. We need someone who has the ability to deal with adults that question them. I find Mr. Costa less desirable for this position.

I, too, am casting my vote to reelect Linda Ackerman.

**- Pam Grimard
Turners Falls**

LET'S VOTE FOR CHANGE

The town of Montague has an opportunity to make a positive change for its school committee. On Monday, May 21st, your vote for Kelly Czernich Gobeil would be the best choice for our district. Kelly has

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



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lived in this area all her life. She has a passion for the education of the children in the community she has been a part of. Her experience as a parent and an educator would be a strength for her in making decisions as a school committee member. She has researched and educated herself about issues the committee has struggled with. Her enthusiasm, dedication and compassion will guide us through the challenges our district faces. She is open-minded and respectful when it comes to hearing the ideas and opinions of others. Kelly will bring integrity back to our school committee. A vote for Kelly would be a step in the right direction. Please join us in voting for Kelly Czernich Gobeil on May 21st. Let's Go With Gobeil!

- Eileen and Tony Tucker
Turners Falls

GOBEIL IS THE ONE WE NEED

Kelly Gobeil is the person we need on our school committee.

The reasons are: she is a life-long resident, a mother of three young children that will be educated in our district, K - 12. Kelly is a taxpayer raising her children and understands the costs associated with working, paying taxes and raising a family.

She has two degrees, a bachelor's in communication, and a masters in education. If anyone would know about education it would be Kelly Gobeil.

Kelly has parents that live in our community and will eventually be on fixed incomes, like 33% of the town voting population.

Kelly will be able to help promote a central campus elementary education. to give all the children a fair and equal education.

So please vote on May 21st, for Kelly Gobeil for school committee.

- Edward Voudren
Turners Falls, MA

SUPPORTS PHILLIPS AND GOBEIL

I support Joyce Phillips and Kelly Gobeil in the coming election for Gill-Montague school committee. They are both ready to attack the problems that need to be taken care of. This is no ordinary time. Their election is critical. We need school committee members with common sense and courage.

Joyce Phillips has been a school committee member for twelve years. She has proven herself as an excellent leader and a person who gets things done. You can be assured that she will watch the budget and at the same time provide the students with the best education

possible. Wherever she has gone in the past, success has followed.

Kelly Gobeil will be new to the committee, but she is a person with lots of experience with education. She has a master's degree in education from Springfield College. She has been a fourth grade teacher in special education, and she has worked with autistic children. As a Montague parent, she wants to make sure all students are treated equally and the money spent on education is put into curriculum development, programs, and teachers.

Joyce and Kelly will bring back some common sense to the school committee. These are times when tough decisions need to be made. As Josh Billings said, "Common sense is the knack of seeing things as they are, and doing things as they ought to be done."

Vote for Joyce Phillips and Kelly Gobeil.

- Richard Kovalsick
Turners Falls

VOTE SANDY BROWN FOR GILL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

I'd like to introduce my neighbor Sandy Brown to voters in Gill and Montague who may not know what a fine public citizen they have the opportunity to elect for a 3-year school committee term on May 21st. Please go to the polls and vote.

Sandy served on the Gill finance committee for three years, as chair for one year. She embodies the spirit of civic participation in her public service, her attendance and thoughtful questions at town meetings and school forums, and in her active role in organizations that promote a sense of community such as the Friends of Gill. She has frequently been seen picking up trash along our road. She cares about community.

Sandy was a fiscal hawk on the Gill finance committee. She asked detailed questions of departments that were not always popular, but were always informative. At the candidates' debate last week she emphasized the need for all school committee members to be well versed in the budget and comfortable with detailed analyses of both the income and expense sides. Sandy has the experience and sharp mind to perform this role.

School closings arise due to budget crises, and Sandy maintains an open mind on the issue, believing that decisions

should be based on educational research and the positive educational values the public has expressed.

While a fiscal hawk, Sandy is also a compassionate neighbor. She has been a hospice volunteer for 14 years. She also cared for an ailing elderly neighbor whose family lived too far away for daily care, long before he was eligible for hospice.

Many of us in Gill are concerned that the negative campaign to close the Montague Center School will overwhelm our opportunity to cast a meaningful vote for a Gill school committee member who has the experience and positive outlook we need to tighten our fiscal reins and heal the district. We need to keep Gill-Montague families in Gill and Montague schools, or our budget crisis will only grow larger. Sandy Brown is committed to this goal.

- Sally Shaw
Gill, MA

RE-ELECT KOCIELA

Mary Kociela ably represents the towns of Montague and Gill on the regional school committee. Our communities need to re-elect her. She displays courage, intelligence and grace in bringing our diverse constituencies together. She strives for academic excellence in our climate of intense fiscal stress. This is a good thing. Vote for Mary Kociela.

- Deborah Radway
Montague

VOTE NO. KEEP A HIGH PERFORMING SCHOOL OPEN

As I drove through the Hill section of Turners Falls the other day, I saw several hand-written lawn signs urging people to "Vote Yes on May 21." At first I was heartened to see such political activism in a place I hadn't noticed it before, and I foolishly assumed that something positive was being encouraged. Then I remembered. Oh yeah, they are urging their neighbors to vote to close one of their neighborhood schools. I didn't feel too heartened after that.

In fact, as a former resident of Montague, current resident of Greenfield, and as a parent of a child who attended the Montague Center School, I felt a little ashamed of my former town. I wonder if the folks behind this movement to close a school are aware of how bizarre it looks from a distance. Most citizens

in most towns get all fired up when one of their schools is threatened with closure; they don't actively try to shut one down!

They particularly don't try to close a successful, high performing school in a district that is struggling to keep students in, and attract students to, its system.

Do these folks have any idea how bad this makes Montague look? I hope other residents of Montague do, and VOTE NO on May 21st.

- Dori McCormack
Greenfield, MA

SPEAKING FOR OUR KIDS

It is obvious to me why everyone should vote for Kelly Gobeil to become a member of the Gill-Montague Regional School District school committee. Simply put, we should all vote for Kelly because she cares about what happens to all of the children in this district. She is a mom with three children under the age of six and wants what is best for her own children as well. Since her children are so young, she will be involved in the schools for a very long time, and that is such an important factor for anyone joining the school committee. She is clearly doing all of this for the children. That is what we need: someone who is thinking and speaking for our kids. Her experience, education, and involvement speak for themselves.

Go with Gobeil!

- Monica Lane
Montague

WE CAN NO LONGER AFFORD MONTAGUE CENTER SCHOOL

We sent our three children to Montague Center Elementary School when they were growing up. Our children received a wonderful education there, as they also did at Sheffield, Great Falls Middle School and Turners Falls High School. But we believe that it is the teachers, staff, students and families that make a child's education, not a building.

In its time Montague Center was a wonderful facility, but the school district and town can no longer afford to maintain it. In the next five years alone it will need \$901,550 worth of work done to it, such as a new roof, electrical upgrades, wheelchair ramp, and elevator, work that does not need to be done at the new side of Sheffield or at Hillcrest.

We have heard many times that our student enrolment is dropping. So why are we maintaining three elementary schools in the town of Montague? Why don't we bring all

our students together in a campus model at Sheffield and Hillcrest? A building project is neither needed or in the plans for the elementary schools at the moment, but someday it will be. When that day comes wouldn't it be nice to be able to use the 25 acres we already own between the Hillcrest and Sheffield elementary schools? Currently, Montague Center doesn't even have the room to expand its parking, never mind adding on to the building.



JACK COUGHLIN ILLUSTRATIONS

A vote of "Yes" on May 21st will ask the town to start taking the necessary steps

to close the Montague Center School permanently by September 1, 2007. This is a non-binding vote. However, your vote of Yes on May 21st will send a message to the town and school committee that we are no longer willing or able to maintain the Montague Center School building.

- Chet & Charlene Czernich
Millers Falls

KELLY GOBEIL FOR GMRSD

I urge voters in Gill and Montague on Monday May 21st to elect Kelly Gobeil to the school board of the Gill Montague Regional School District.

Kelly has demonstrated to me the ambition, enthusiasm and background needed for this position, which has always required a major personal commitment of time and energy. One attribute I have learned over the years is that if you want to get a job done correctly, ask a busy person. Kelly is such a person, a fulltime substitute teacher in the Montague schools, mother of three children, housewife, Girl Scouts leader, and member of the task force looking into the capital needs of Hillcrest, Montague Center and Sheffield Schools.

Kelly has the educational background and experience for such a position. She is a graduate from the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, with a BA in Communications and her Masters of Education from Springfield College. She has taught in the Orange elementary schools. She is a former respite worker for Community Resources for People with Autism and a paraprofessional in the Gill-Montague Regional School District. To be on a school board, you have to know the curriculum, needs, and tasks teachers need to perform, and how they relate to the schools' overall infrastructure. Kelly knows and meets these requirements.

Kelly also has another

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



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background requirement that is vital for this position and that is her experience working in the private business world, and her understanding of how one individually or as a business has to balance one's expenses with one's income; that there is a major difference between what one wants and what is truly a need. As an example of her experience, she has assisted her husband Richard in running their business, Books & More in downtown Turners Falls. Kelly has also demonstrated to me, through her participation with those taxpayers in Montague who were the driving force to have the GMRSD school board reverse their decision on the closing of Hillcrest, her ability to understand the full financial picture of the GMRSD's true financial needs; to differentiate between needs and wants. She also demonstrated to me that one's personal motives, drives and ambitions should not be a goal of a school board member.

Finally, who would be best suited for this position, but one who was brought up in Millers Falls, who attended all levels of the Montague schools, who knows the residents, who knows the "in and outs" of the GMRSD, has business experience and who wants the opportunity to use her skills and background to provide the citizens, taxpayers, teachers and children the opportunity to have the best education they deserve and should receive. Let's vote for Kelly on May 21st.

**- Russell Dean
Turners Falls**

TAKE IT FROM ME, VOTE KOCIELA

I'm writing to ask you to vote for Mary Kociela for the Gill-Montague Regional School District school committee on Monday, May 21st.

Mary has been a member of the school committee for the past six years. Over the past year, she has made some very difficult decisions, and some have not been popular on either side of town. But I assure you she did not make these decisions lightly. She draws on her experience and knowledge of the district and education in general to help in her opinions and decisions. She agonized over them, and she voted for what she felt was in the best interest of the entire



school district.

When I met Mary over thirty years ago, what most impressed me was her integrity. Her integrity allows her to be objective and open to all points of view. She treats everyone with respect and dignity, regardless of the issues. She has chaired the GMRSD school committee this past year through some very difficult times. These difficult times are not over. We need her leadership to see the district through the upcoming years of tight budgets and declining enrollments.

I'm voting for integrity. I'm voting for respect. I'm voting for leadership. I'm voting for experience and knowledge. I'm voting for whom I feel will serve the best interest of Gill and Montague and the entire Gill-Montague Regional School District.

I'm voting for Mary Kociela and I hope you will to.

**- Mike Kociela
Montague, MA**

VOTE NO FOR CLOSING MONTAGUE CENTER SCHOOL

It is unfortunate and unwise for an opinion question to close Montague Center School to be placed on next week's town election ballot. I sincerely acknowledge that the school committee and superintendent are faced with difficult budget issues to resolve. They initially demonstrated a sound approach to addressing budget shortfalls by gathering community input via a number of public forums held throughout the villages this past fall and winter. The major topic was whether to close a school and if so, which one. They did their homework, a decision was made, but then they backstroked.

The school committee's original decision was based on community input and the committee's knowledge of pertinent factors that could lead to more budget woes, i.e. students choosing out of the district. Their vote

to keep Montague Center open was a sound compromise, given having to close any school is a tough decision. Their initial decision would have been ideal by having three elementary schools situated in areas capitalizing on the natural and man-made resources that lie in close proximity to schools and with locations across the Gill and the Montague villages.

With parental intra-district choice you've added yet another promising element.

Now, five months later, how have things gotten to this point? A community divided and negative emotions overshadowing people's common courtesy to one another. As families with young children look on, why would they even consider sending their children to one of our schools? We have lost sight of what we should be doing to improve and support our schools and our district and instead have created a negative climate by polarizing the community



into believing closing Montague Center will take care of the problem.

School budgets are indeed complicated, with very little discretionary money to make up any shortfalls. Do not think that the schools' budget problems will disappear upon the closing of a school. The much bigger long-term problem will need to be addressed.

While lack of funds is the current issue, there are low cost and no cost ways to begin turning this school district around. Finding ways to establish a welcoming image is critical. If the district does not actively invest more positive energy into promoting its image, more families and students will lose faith in the schools and leave. My concern goes beyond the Montague Center families, because I feel a Yes vote sends a negative message to all families throughout the villages. It is sad that the closing of a school is a rallying point for the community.

I encourage residents of the town of Montague to vote NO on the closing of Montague Center School. Your No vote will send a message that negative campaigning has no role in truly working to improve and support our schools. We need to believe in ourselves that strong schools make a strong community, and that can not be accomplished by dragging any school down.

When and if a school must close, that question lies with your elected school committee, with direct, firsthand information. The closing of a school cannot be based on emotion. It is the challenging task and responsibility of the school committee and superintendent.

For now the community needs to vote NO.

**- Anna Garbiel
Montague Center**

TIME FOR A CHANGE

With the school committee elections coming up in Montague and Gill next week, it's time for a change. We have two incumbents up for re-election on the G-M school committee.

Mr. Colton, you recently put forth a ten point plan on how to improve our school district. Where has that plan been for the last six years? Instead, you have been spending your time telling the citizens of this town that they are divisive if they sign a petition to close the building that houses the Montague Center School, a building that the town owns and can no longer afford to maintain.

Ms. Kociela, I appreciate the fact that you went to the Montague Center School a few weeks back to answer parents' questions on the fate of their school. But where were you to answer the questions of Hillcrest parents when you voted close half of that school? You didn't even send them a letter. Instead, you explained at the next school committee meeting your reasoning behind your vote. You told everyone that you came in ready to vote one way, and initially you did, but as you mentioned, the time was getting late and you said you changed your vote for the sake of making a decision. In your heart, do you really feel you did what was right for all the students in this district?

I really do appreciate the time both of our incumbents have given us in the last six years, but it is now time for a change. While watching the school committee debate the other night, I found some candidates I can support, candidates who I think have the knowledge and backbone needed to be on the school committee. Please vote for a change: Kelly Gobeil, Joyce Phillips, Heidi Englehardt, and Linda Kuklewicz on May 21st.

**-Michele Podlesny
Turners Falls**

VOTE YES. CLOSE MONTAGUE CENTER SCHOOL

In Montague, on May 21st there will be one question on the town ballot. A vote of "Yes" will ask the town officials to close the building that houses the Montague Center School. Our town can no longer afford to maintain this building. To upgrade and maintain Montague Center Elementary school for the next five years will cost the taxpayers over \$900,000. More than approximately three times the amount needed to maintain and upgrade the new side of Sheffield and Hillcrest over the next 15 years. Please vote Yes on May 21st. Our town can no longer afford to maintain

three elementary schools.

**- Connie Renaud
Turners Falls**

RESPECT KOCIELA'S HARD WORK

I am writing to urge the citizens of Gill and Montague to vote on May 21st for Mary Kociela, to continue her service on the Gill Montague Regional School Committee. In a very difficult period of transition and change, Mary has brought a calm and reasoned voice to the table. I know that every time that I get hot under the collar about one issue or another affecting Gill students, Mary's careful explanations of the committee's reasoning, and her willingness to listen to and incorporate yet another point of view, have helped me to take a step back and think hard about what is best for our children. We may not always agree, but with polarizing issues on the committee's agenda, and strong-willed and opinionated citizens abounding, Mary has never flagged in her efforts to keep the discourse civil and the debate constructive. I am amazed but gratified that she is willing to continue these efforts for another term, and I hope that Gill and Montague voters from all villages will respect her hard work and reward it with their votes on May 21st.

**- Patricia Crosby
Gill**

VOTE PHILLIPS FOR RESULTS

I am in full support of Joyce Phillips for the Gill-Montague school committee. This woman has done so much for the students within our school system that it is hard to believe she would need any support at all. The effort she has put into the success of the Gala she puts on each year to support our students is proof enough to me. All you have to do is count the ticket sales and witness the financial results of her endeavor, and you can see a candidate worth supporting.

Joyce has proven herself when she was a past member of the school committee, and has certainly proven herself as a hard working member of this community, a person who possesses the qualities of leadership needed within our school system.

**- Art Gilmore
Millers Falls**

IN SUPPORT OF BROWN

I have yet to see the entire debate among the candidates for the Gill-Montague School Committee, but I attended the Gill hearing explaining the proposed amendments to the regional district agreement and have seen part of Sandra Brown's opinion

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School Committee Candidates' Statements:

I Pledge to Do What it Takes to Make the District Thrive

BY MARY KOCIELA

MONTAGUE CENTER - Being a part of the Gill Montague Regional School District, and its caring public school community, is meaningful work and it makes me feel very proud. This is why I am running for re-election to the school committee.

I am also running because this is an extremely pivotal time for the district and I feel a responsibility and a commitment to see through the things we have started.

The school committee has been very busy working on many important initiatives and issues that deeply affect the district. We recently passed an amendment to the regional agreement allowing intra-district choice. This policy creates more options for parents within the district, but it's also a new policy, in need of more public input and further clarification. We have voted to move our 6th graders in Montague to the Great Falls Middle School, which is a major change and transition for families and teachers needing our close attention. We have hired an interim superintendent who will start almost immediately. This transition would benefit most from stability and consistency as we acclimate the new superintendent and quickly begin a comprehensive search for a permanent leader for the district.

We are facing an enormous budget gap that requires our constant attention and continued positive collaboration
see KOCIELA pg 9

My Plan for the Schools

BY KELLY CZERNICH GOBEIL

TURNERS FALLS - As a candidate for school committee, I bring with me numerous qualifications. Among these qualifications are my B.A. in Communications from UMass Amherst, a Masters of Education from Springfield College, previous teaching experience in the Gill-Montague Regional School District as well as the Springfield and Orange school districts. I have worked for Community Resources for People with Autism as a respite provider, as well in the classroom one-on-one with autistic children. I am also a member of the Hillcrest PTO and a member of the school task force looking into the capital improvement needs of the Hillcrest, Montague Center and Sheffield elementary schools. Most importantly, I am a product of this educational system. Growing up in Millers Falls, I started at Montague Center School and continued right on through to Turners Falls High School. Even with all of these experiences and qualifications, it doesn't matter unless I have a plan of action, and that is what I present to you now.

We need to start listening: The district hires people to do a job. Whether it is the superintendent, principals, business manager, physical plant or food service managers, these people have all been hired because they are experts at their jobs. We need to respect the information they present to us, and believe it to be the truth. Does this mean we should never question any of the information presented to us? Of course not, people make mistakes, it's human to err. But, time after time, when these people check their facts and the answers remain the same, we need to respect their knowledge as reality whether it supports our personal opinions or
see GOBEIL pg 9

Leadership - Change - Vision: My Platform for the GMRSC

BY JOYCE PHILLIPS

TURNERS FALLS - During the past year, I have watched, listened and actively continued to support the Gill Montague Regional School District. I believe we need a school committee that demonstrates leadership, a willingness to embrace change and a commitment to focus on the future for all students. Too often consensus could not be reached on process; district professionals' input was scrutinized, evaluated and challenged, and decision-making was next to impossible or continually reversing. As a result, I found school committee meetings very frustrating. Leadership must have the vision and conviction that a goal can be achieved. Leadership inspires the power and energy to get it done.

Budget work should be viewed as 'Fiscal Recovery' rather than 'Budget Crisis' and budget decisions must be made accordingly. We must be proactive as we reverse the controls of budget to the choices of education. Budget is a shared responsibility with federal, state and local government. We must make our presence felt and voices heard day-to-day. Government must demonstrate the value of education by funding their mandates. This requires working together, speaking out in a strong voice, and reminding our legislators of their political commitments. School committee members must use the avenues of communication such as the MASC Day on the Hill, Senator Rosenberg's
see PHILLIPS pg 9

LETTERS TO



THE EDITOR

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of where the Committee's attention should go in the next years. We live in different towns, but her priorities are district-wide and deserve consideration.

Regardless of how we each may rank the district's educational goals, or choose grade or program alternatives, our district must address financial constraints that will not abate. Sandy's belief that every committee member must understand the cost of materials, instruction, infrastructure and external requirements is one that the entire committee should share. Every programmatic decision has a cost element, and the best way to "Remember the Children" is to put the resources where they will best serve that goal.

- John Hanold
Turners Falls

SCHOOL CHOICE PARENT SPEAKS UP FOR GOBEIL

As a parent of two school choice students in the Gill-Montague

Regional School District, I will not be able to vote in the May 21st school committee election. However, I would like to encourage those of you who can to vote for Kelly Czernich Gobeil. Not only does Kelly have a strong background working in the field of education, but she also volunteers her time as a Girl Scout leader working with young girls from the ages of 4-6. I first met Kelly a few years ago when my youngest daughter was in her troop. In this troop there were girls from all different villages and schools in the town of Montague, yet there was no divide or competition. She worked hard to bring these kids together, making sure everyone got to know each other and respected each other.

After the school committee voted to close half of Hillcrest, Kelly once again impressed me by the genuine concern she showed over my displeasure with the vote. She knew that my children were choiced into the district for a reason, and

was shocked to learn that when a school committee member surveyed school choice families, he never once contacted any of the families that choiced into Hillcrest or Sheffield. When I thought about writing to the school committee about the situation, she encouraged me by telling me that my voice needed to be heard.

Kelly has the ability to look at the big picture and has a true desire to improve the quality of education for every student attending schools in the town of Gill and Montague. With your vote of support on May 21st, she will.

- Michele Rubin
Greenfield

THANKS FOR VOLUNTEER HELP ON MONTAGUE CENTER PLAYGROUND

On behalf of the Montague parks and recreation department, I would like to extend my deepest appreciation towards the members of the Montague Center Volunteer

Firemen's Association for helping us install a new climbing structure, teeter totter and playground surfacing at the Montague Center Playground on Saturday, May 5th. Local children will certainly enjoy the new playground units, and parents will greatly appreciate the protective wood chip surfacing. A special note of thanks to Rick Sawin (and family) for providing their Kubota during the workday, as it no doubt saved our backs by digging all the holes and spreading the wood chips.

A project of this scale can be a very challenging venture for those of us with limited resources. Therefore, receiving volunteer assistance from such a committed crew is invaluable. Once again, we thank MCVFA, and look forward to working with them on similar projects in the near future.

-Jon Dobosz
Montague Parks and Recreation

KNOWLEDGE AND DEDICATION COUNT

Please vote to elect Joyce Phillips to the G-M school committee. Joyce served over 12 years, dedicating herself to quality educational programs for the students from grades 1-12. She was very involved in the new addition of the middle school and the upgrade of the high school and grounds, making it one of the best schools in the area. Her knowledge of state mandated programs and state aid will be a valuable tool in the budgeting process. She is not afraid to make tough decisions whether it is reconfiguration or closing a school. She always has the students, teachers and Gill-Montague district first on her agenda. We need a person of her caliber in the years ahead to lead the district to become the best educational system in the area. Please vote for Joyce Phillips.

- Dave Thompson
Turners Falls

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GOBEIL
continued from pg 8

not. Remember, the school committee is there to represent the voters who put them on the committee in the first place.

We also need to start listening to our elected officials. Our state senators and representatives have told us that schools with less than 330 students are considered to be less than efficient schools. The fact of the matter is, Chapter 70 funding does not work for small schools. This is another reason I recommend the campus model of education using the Hillcrest (175 students) and Sheffield Elementary (176 students) buildings, bringing over the students from Montague Center Elementary School (82 students) and let's make one united town elementary school campus. The projected enrollment numbers show that combining these three schools into one would give us a school with approximately 433 students, well over the amount of students needed to make Chapter 70 start working for us.

Use the resources we already have: Our new high school and middle school building is an excellent example of this. In the library project room you have the technical ability to have our students participate in virtual high school. This would enable students to take classes with other area students without ever having to leave the library. This would be helpful for students that are interested in classes not offered within their own school. If only three students take the class, in today's hard financial times a teacher cannot always be justified to teach that class. However, if we have three kids, students from other districts join and we end up with 15 kids wanting to take the class, we can still offer these classes to our students.

I have also heard much discussion on the infamous

\$1,000,000 dollar pool. Instead of just hearing the complaints from people let's start making the pool work for us. Why not start a cooperative swim team with other districts around who do not have the facilities we have? Why not charge a fee to let students from other districts join our swim team? This is one way our district can generate revenue for itself.

A chance at excellence: In the Gill-Montague Regional School District we have a chance at excellence when it comes to our elementary schools. We have to reinvent our elementary configuration in the town of Montague. If we bring all of our elementary staff and students together in a campus model, the possibilities are endless. A school like Montague Center that usually only has one teacher per grade level can combine to expand the teaching pool, allowing for better teacher/student match-ups as well as the possibility for weekly if not daily collaboration. I've heard time and again that our educators can collaborate on their multitude of half-days. We need to remember that our teachers also use those days for such things as teacher training to learn how to implement the new math curriculum. In a campus model, our students can begin in preschool and kindergarten to form lasting friendships that will continue right on through to high school. We must end the divide that has become apparent in the town of Montague, and it must begin with the adults of this town coming together for the good of all our children.

We also must not forget Gill. More effort must be shown from all schools to bring our students together before entering the middle school. Even though we are two different towns we are one school district. So let's start planning all elementary school events or even field-trips together. The isolation and comparisons between

schools are what is at the heart of this district's problems.

School choice can work for us: First of all we need to market ourselves to families and to other school districts. We need to start with basics like advertising in the local papers. Let people know that we have quality schools. Tell people we have space in our state of the art high school and middle school. Explain to people that at those schools their students, thanks to technology, can participate in such things as distance learning via computer with such places as GCC and NASA!

Then our next step should be to send letters to local school districts. We have so much to offer to other districts. One example is our Old Mill behavioral program. School districts spend \$200,000-\$300,000 on out of district placements. If we could offer a neighboring district a space in our Old Mill program for a child in need of a behavioral program at \$50,000-\$100,000 we could save our neighboring districts two-thirds or more on what they would spend on a different placement, and still be generating revenue for our district.

Let's also focus more on the students who choice in to our district. They are here for a reason and we should know why. There should be communication between school choice families and our administration, letting these families know that we are pleased that they chose our district and that we value the continued enrollment of their child.

While school choice can work for us, it won't if we leave people hanging in the balance when it comes to the reconfiguration issue and continue to cut our teaching staff and programming.

A face in the community: We need the school committee to be positive about our schools; all of our schools. I believe that this

can begin by simply touring schools during school hours and visiting during school events such as all school meetings, musicals, open houses and graduations. This is the way to really get to know our schools and the people in them.

We also need our school committee to be a continual voice in lobbying efforts, as well as encouraging others to do the same. It is great to write a letter and show up at an event or two, but we need to remember that almost every school district in this state is lobbying for more money, too. How quickly we will be forgotten if we don't keep a constant presence known. So let's band together with other districts and start advocating for proper funding to cover the mandates placed on our systems.

Working with the towns: The school district budget has become an annual dilemma. Throughout the year there should be communication between the school committee and the towns, each keeping the other informed on their budgetary situation so that when it comes time to finalize the budget there are no surprises.

We also need to discuss such topics as what will happen to the Hillcrest Elementary School or Montague Center Elementary School if either is closed. In all the school committee meetings and forums I have attended in the last year, I have never heard this discussed. If a building we lease from the town is closed, what is the plan for that empty building? Will the town divest the property? If a building is sold, how will that money be reinvested in the town or school district?

These are only a few of the ideas I have for our school district and school committee. With your vote of support on May 21st, I hope that these ideas will only be the beginning.

PHILLIPS
continued from pg 8

Annual Municipal Conference and our local fiscal collaboration meetings as opportunities to learn and better understand the issues, as well as an opportunity to speak directly with legislators about the issues concerning Gill-Montague. Most importantly, we must be constructive for our cause without being destructive to our students. The budget cannot be balanced on the backs of our teachers, or the loss of programs and services to our students. The work must be done constructively, respectfully, and collaboratively. The resources of the district must be allocated with equity. This requires effective and efficient use of facilities, resources and staff, taking into consideration the educational impact on all students.

It is very difficult and emotional when closing schools becomes a necessary option. However, with budgets cut, grants reduced or eliminated, resources pulled or duplicated, consolidation is necessary. Maintaining Hillcrest and Sheffield facilities as an elementary campus allows for effective and efficient use of facilities and resources while providing equity in quality learning environments. The campus PreK-5 school would best serve today's students and build for a future. The recent quality ratings of these facilities by the Massachusetts School Building Authority were high.

Maintaining the Montague Center facility impacts the fiscal recovery. Its closing would bring immediate savings with regard to maintenance, custodial, needed repairs, ADA compliance, busing, heat, utilities, insurance, technology (networking), and duplication of services. I believe the campus model could decrease competition between the schools in our own town. It would remove uncertainties, while demonstrating a strong 'sense of community'. The quality teachers, programs, and parental support can and should continue in any educational facility. It's a solution that has a focus on today's students and vision for their

future. I believe removing uncertainties and focusing on quality elementary and secondary education that provide equity in programs, services, staffing and facilities is key to attracting more school choice. The school committee must be positive, proactive and demonstrate pride in the GMRSD. Our community and those around must see by their actions that the GMRSC continues to make every effort to provide quality educational programs. Communities must see that the GMRSC values its staff with their high quality professionalism, dedication, commitment and hard work to make each day in the lives of all our students the best they can be. Confidence in our schools begins with the GMRSC.

There will always be school choice out, because there are personal issues and reasons beyond buildings, budgets and curriculum. One element that is fundamental to minimizing school choice out is having parents' enthusiasm, support, ideas, and energy follow their children throughout their educational experience at Gill-Montague.

While I sat in the 'public area' of SC meetings this past year, I appreciated the placement of the community, parents, teachers, and administrators. Often, it was like looking through a keyhole, while school committee members were allowed to see into the entire room. Even though school committee meetings are held in public and are not 'public meetings'; there is great value in decision making when everyone has an equal voice in the process. The school committee must represent all of their constituents with decision-making that is based on factual data and not emotion.

I believe my past 12 years of service to Gill-Montague and the professional development training with MASC are evidence of my ability to effectively utilize my time, energy, and experience. I am committed to finding ways that will reverse the 'controls of budget' to the 'choices of education'. I ask for your support on May 21st to return to the GMRSC.

KOCIELA
continued from pg 8

ration with town officials in Montague and Gill. Unprecedented discussions have begun with neighboring school districts regarding possible sharing of resources, and even staff, around issues such as school choice, special education and curriculum development. And, of course, the elementary building and configuration decision is still very present as we wait for the report from the building task forces.

It has been a privilege to serve on the GMRSD school

committee for the past six years, and as its chair for the past two years. I am very proud of my tenure and I would be honored to continue. I believe in the teachers and families of this community who have done nothing but persist in the face of many obstacles. I pledge to work hard to provide our students with the absolute best we can offer and to do what it takes to keep the district thriving and viable.

I have the knowledge and experience to do the job and to do it well. If you agree, I hope you will give me your vote on May 21st.

Signs in Montague

Here is a little information pertaining to the article from Joe Janikas, in the May 10th issue (*MR V#31: Entering Montague, Lower Your Expectations*). If only the highway were contacted prior to this article appearing in print, Mr. Janikas would have found out that not a week or two earlier I had spoken to the Mass Highway Department pertaining to the signs that were mentioned in his article. The state highway will be checking on ownership, and hopefully will get back to me soon.

I'm sorry to say that if the signs do belong to the town, they will not be replaced soon. It's as simple as there is no money in the budget for this.

- Tom Bergeron
Superintendent, Montague DPW



PRUITT from pg 1

said, "You can get an exaggerated sense of self-importance in this job. I'm not interested in doing that." Pruitt, a grandmother of four, said if she is re-elected she intends to be more careful in how she allocates her time in her upcoming term.

But she gave no hint that she was planning to drop any of her other committee involvements. Pruitt presently serves on the planning board, the RiverCulture steering committee, the police station building committee, and regularly attends finance committee meetings and school-town fiscal collaboration meetings.

Looking back, Pruitt stressed a few of the selectboard's tangible achievements in the last three years: hiring a new police chief and returning the cable television access contract to Montague, for example. She also stressed a less tangible aspect of the post-Lovejoy era of town government. "This is a reasonable board that makes positive responses to issues. We are seen as a responsible board, operating in good faith."

She said the board has worked to improve relations with the schools. But she cautioned, "Just because you have a collaborative relationship doesn't mean you automatically solve problems. It takes time."

She recalled the hiring of police chief Ray Zukowski as a very open process, with televised hearings and public interviews. "I was very interested in the board carrying out an open process," she said. "We got a good police chief out of it."

Regarding MCTV, whose return to authority running the town's cable access station Pruitt championed, she said, "The station has come up to standard, and beyond. I'm very proud of that."

She gave credit to former town planner Robin Sherman for initiating the arts-based economic development RiverCulture project in downtown Turners. Pruitt has worked closely with this project in the

last two years. She said RiverCulture, partially funded by Mass Cultural Council grants, matched by town funds and by contributions from local businesses and organizations, is planning now for how to become self-sustaining in years to come. This year, Pruitt said the town could look forward to a block party, concert series, sculpture park and other arts-related initiatives designed to make the downtown a vital cultural center, and to stimulate new business growth.

At the same time, Pruitt sounded a warning note on an alternative proposal for the town's economic development: the plan to open a landfill on 32 acres of town-owned, DEP-permitted land off Turnpike Road. The economic benefits to the town of leasing a landfill for disposal of incinerator ash or contaminated soils, for example, would likely include revenue of \$10 - \$20 million or more, over the course of a decade or two.

"We have to make some decision on that in the next three years," she said. "The challenge is, how do you have a landfill without ruining the downtown and the roads?"

Pruitt said the town already was millions of dollars behind in road repairs. Companies interested in developing a landfill in town have projected as many as 30 round trips a day for trucks hauling to the site. DPW superintendent Tom Bergeron said the best route for trucks to access the Turnpike Road neighborhood would be to travel down Avenue A from Route 2.

"What would that do to RiverCulture programs, DiPaolo's patio, the Discovery Center, and all the other things we are doing to make Avenue A an attractive place to visit?" Pruitt asked. She also cited the ongoing liability to the town of maintaining a landfill site after a developer pulls up stakes and moves on.

Nevertheless, Pruitt said, "We have to look at it, because it is a potential source of revenue for the town."

Higher on her agenda for

another term in office is the need to develop a new industrial park, since the town's present facility is nearly at capacity. She said negotiations are ongoing with Mass Heritage over the constraints of the Endangered Species Act, which may limit development of a new industrial park on the south side of Millers Falls Road - on land now owned by FirstLight Power - to fewer acres than the town had originally hoped for. She said if the outcome of those negotiations shrinks the planned footprint of a new industrial park across from the airport too much, then the option of using the town land off Turnpike Road as an industrial park instead of a landfill might begin to make economic sense.

In the absence of some major new source of revenue, it seems likely the selectboard will be faced with tight budgets and fiscal cutbacks in the years ahead. Pruitt spoke well of town administrator Frank

Abbondanzio's analysis of town revenue and expenditures over a thirteen-year period, which calls for curbing escalating personnel costs and parceling out a \$2.7 million Indeck surplus on capital expenditures over the next five years, to try to balance the budget. Abbondanzio's plan, "is aimed at allowing ourselves to make some efficient use of overlay reserves without just feeding deficits and worsening our operating shortfall in the long run. On the other hand," she said, "it's a plan, and plans are subject to changing circumstances."

Pruitt strongly supports building a new police station on Turnpike Road, next to the fire station, but does not anticipate tapping into the overlay reserve to do so. "The cost of running the town is increasing. We have to take care of that as we're going along. At the same time, we have to take care of some of these building projects." Speaking of the yet-to-be-determined price tag of the proposed 11,800-square-foot police station, Pruitt said, "You can't sugarcoat it. It's a big expense, and it's going to come out of our

pockets."

As to 'taking care of the increasing cost of running the town,' Pruitt pointed to the upcoming labor - management meeting between the town, the schools, and the unions representing school district and town employees. That meeting will take place on Tuesday, May 29th at 7 p.m. at the Turners Falls High School. Pruitt said, "A decrease in percentages of step increases and cost of living adjustments (COLAs) will be suggested. We hope we can at least plant the seed for that, and there will be fiscal discipline when the union contracts come up for negotiation." After all, Pruitt said, step increases are annual increases town and school employees get in addition to COLAs. "They're not saying they are merit increases. They're just saying, 'You've been here another year' in generous times, when everyone's flush, that's something you can afford to do. But these are tough times."

[She spoke of the huge expense of the Iraq War, the need to relieve the Republican administration in Washington of the responsibility of trying to govern, and other matters outside the scope of this article.]

Closer to home, on the topic of the campaign to close the Montague Center School, the subject of a non-binding opinion question sharing space with her on the May 21st ballot, Pruitt said, "I worry about it. On the surface, it says, 'Close a school and let's not spend our tax dollars on it.' But it's very short-sighted. It says Montague Center School is almost solely responsible for a \$1.2 million deficit. This is self-deluding. Until we get changes at the state level, deficits are part of our future."

"On a deeper level," Pruitt said the campaign to close Montague Center School, "seems to want to pit four villages against a fifth. We can't do that if we're a town. Every village needs to realize we are part of one town. Every village fares as well as the entire town fares. These are not five villages in a loose confederation; they are

Montague."

She continued, "Personally, I've always had a problem with the idea, 'You close a thing that is working well.' If schools are 90% personnel costs, that's the problem driving our deficit. Twenty percent increases in the cost of health insurance are driving up this deficit. We have to look there first." She advocated getting the school and town employees enrolled in the state's Group Insurance Commission, if the legislature permits them to. Health care costs for the GIC are rising at the rate of about 6½ percent a year, she said.

Looking ahead to what she said will be her final term in office, Pruitt said if elected she would like to work to incorporate "Green Energy" solutions for reducing the cost of utilities in town buildings. She said the option of geothermal heating and cooling for the new police station, possibly sized to include the neighboring fire station, held promise for creating a "Green Corridor" along Turnpike Road, to include the newly renovated Turners Falls high school and middle school with its photovoltaic panels and energy saving innovations. Geothermal design can pay for itself within seven years, and then provide cost savings for the life of the building, according to architect Brian Humes, who is designing the new police station.

Pruitt said she hoped to see the former Strathmore Mill redeveloped in the next three years. She also said putting the former Cumberland Farms building to use again would be a priority of hers.

Pruitt said getting an access road opened to the derelict town cemetery on Dry Hill Road would be another goal, resources permitting. Once the police station is built, she said she would like to see the library, senior center, and recreation department - in some configuration - develop a new building project for a community center.

The polls are open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. in Montague on Monday, May 21st.



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NOTES FROM THE MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Between a Rock and a Hard Place

BY JOHN HANOLD - The agenda for Monday's selectboard meeting (5/14) presented a study in contrast: a single, difficult issue with no satisfactory conclusion, balanced by several noncontroversial approvals of familiar requests. The difficult issue involved protection of a medicine prayer hill on the site of the planned expansion of the Turners Falls Airport runway. The presenter was Doug Harris, of the Narragansett Indian Tribal History Preservation Office (NITHPO).

Harris came up from his Rhode Island office to request selectboard support of an appeal by the Narragansett and Gayhead Wampanoag tribes to change the current Federal Aeronautical Administration (FAA) design for the extension of the airport runway. Citing the confirmed existence of a stone row that comprises a prayer site, Harris reminded the selectboard of the shared conclusions of the formal reconciliation ceremony on May 19th, 2004, between the Montague selectboard and the

Narragansett Indians. The document of cooperation signed by the two parties in May of 2004 pledged them to "mutual vigilance for historic preservation." The affirming phrase "Let These Words Be" was invoked as a basis for asking Congressman John Olver and the FAA to alter the path of the runway extension by several degrees to avoid impacting a spiritual site. A good deal of the ensuing discussion concerned the effect that such a change would have on the timing of the project, the possible amount and source of funds for any cost increase, and a possible need to re-position part of Millers Falls Road.

Harris spoke eloquently of the ancients who laid out the rows as a spiritual site to enhance harmony and balance, a goal he feels is as important now as it was in ancient times. A suggested solution, from federal regulations, would be to disassemble the rocks during runway construction and to re-assemble them at the same point

afterward, but the NITHPO asserts this would disrupt if not totally destroy the sense of harmony and balance. Harris also asserted his opinion that an altered runway design would improve a tricky aircraft approach between Chestnut and Dry Hills, a safety matter that would be even more important if jet aircraft were to use the airport in the future.

Board member Al Ross pointed out that a 3-degree slope change, over a runway length of 4250 feet, represents a significant design change, with unknown cost and schedule impact. His preferred approach is to let the normal appeal process run its course. The selectboard acknowledged that they cannot evaluate the value of the spiritual importance of the site, and in other statements Harris similarly acknowledged that he and his office cannot assess the economic impact of a delayed or abandoned project on the town, nor the engineering challenges involved.

Harris described later discov-

eries of "manitou stones" in the leaf and soil debris at the airport, confirming that it is a spiritual site of uncertain age. A nearby 12,000-year-old campsite on airport land has been analyzed and evaluated by archaeologists, but he observed that their survey techniques and conclusions are inadequate for evaluation of ceremonial sites, since litter would not be left at such a place. Native groups may be reluctant to publicize sacred sites, fearing vandalism, but he pointed out that there are no bones or pottery shards here, only stones with a spiritual significance. The NITHPO would prefer that neither site be disturbed, but covering the campsite with fill would preserve it. In this situation, Harris said he is more concerned about the effects of bulldozers already at work at the prayer hill than about possible vandalism.

Both the selectboard and town administrator Frank Abbondanzio shared their concern that a redesign, schedule delay, or realignment of Millers Falls Road could jeopardize grant funding of airport project. All parties understand that it is viable only if there is no cost to the town, that Montague cannot cover any cost increase caused by redesign, and that the tribes also have no available

resources. Harris mentioned that his proposed joint municipal-tribal appeal would break new ground in federal consideration of spiritual-site protection, and does not oppose the runway extension in principle. Similarly, the town is sensitive to the cultural issues raised, and both parties were careful not to judge the importance of the other side's concerns.

In the end the selectboard agreed to consider this request in connection with other pending airport design, operation and financing issues, but not to actively join the tribes' appeal.

The remainder of the evening's agenda proceeded quickly. Lew Collins of the 2nd Street Sports Bar requested permits for "license and use of public space" for four Outdoor Café days, on summer weekends May through August, when patrons could enjoy live music from 3:00 to 7:00 p.m. in an outdoor area enclosed by sawhorses. The area would be cleared and the patrons moved inside by 8:00 or 9:00 p.m., and no actual beverage service would occur outside the building. Based on the incident-free success of prior occasions, and Collins' understanding that any problems would put later dates in jeopardy, the permits were

see ROCK pg 12

NEEDS

continued from page 1

sides of Sheffield combined totaling \$906,200 over the same time frame. Hillcrest will cost \$327,221 to renovate during that time, according to the draft report.

Amid the broad areas of agreement the task force, which is made up of town and school officials, parents and teachers of the various schools, has concluded it will take \$158,000 to repair the roof at Montague Center, a job that needs to be done in the next year. Other immediate improvements needed at Montague Center are the installation of an ADA ramp (\$80,000); upgrades to the electrical system (\$31,000); upgrades to the security system (\$5,000); and new kitchen agreement (\$14,000), for a total of \$288,000. The only immediate repairs needed at the other two schools are a \$5,000 upgrade to the Sheffield technology lab.

However, during the '08 - '09 school year, the capital needs of Hillcrest and Sheffield will outstrip the costs at Montague Center, the report shows. In year two of the study, Montague Center will require \$119,221 to repair a damaged sewer line, upgrade restrooms, insulate the attic, change out damaged ceiling

tiles and asbestos flooring, and improve the phone system. Hillcrest will require \$156,250 in repairs in year two to change out ceiling tiles and asbestos flooring, upgrade security and improve the phone system. Sheffield would require \$249,000 in year two for new doors and windows, an improved phone system, kitchen equipment, and to replace ceiling tiles.

Major costs in year three of the study include a \$200,000 roof on the old section of Sheffield; \$107,250 in asbestos flooring removal at Hillcrest; and a \$300,000 elevator at Montague Center.

The cost of an elevator at Montague Center has been the subject of some dispute among task force members. Sheffield is scheduled to install a chair lift in the old section of the building in year five, for a cost of \$90,000.

Reached after the Monday night meeting, building inspector David Jenson, who has been advising the task force, said that chair lifts, such as the one proposed for Sheffield, no longer meet ADA requirements. He said an elevator would be needed at Sheffield to remove architectural barriers in the old section of that school, and an elevator at Montague Center, due to the

extra floor it would have to service. Additionally, Jenson said ADA requirements in Montague Center might be able to be met by a lift (different from a chair lift), a less expensive form of elevator that meets code for buildings with two floors, which does not require fireproof shaft walls.

Jenson said that some of the figures in the study are "placeholders" for work that needs to be done in the next decade and a half at the schools.

In advance of the recent petition drive to close Montague Center School, a flyer distributed over the signature of the Hillcrest PTO in January claimed capital improvements to the Montague Center School would cost \$3.6 million. Even in draft form, with a \$300,000 price tag for an elevator, the task force study supports a figure 75% less than the flyer advertised.

Members of the task force include GMRSD facilities manager Tom Thornton, Montague capital improvements committee chair Les Cromack, school committee members Terry Lapachinski, Michael Langknecht, Richard Colton, teachers Wendy Mieczkowski, Maureen Jorgensen, Donna Klaiber, and parents Sue Dresser, Anthony Tucker, Mike Esposito, Kelly Gobeil, and David Leh.

MCTV Schedule
Channel 17: May 18th - May 24th

<p>Barton Cove Eagles: *Eagle Broadcast is dependent upon working Equipment at Barton Cove* 7A-8A (Daily); 10A-530P (Thursday); 1P-6P (Wednesday); 230P-6P (Friday); 230P-630P (Saturday); 3P-6P (Sunday); 330P-6P (Monday); 4P-6P (Tuesday).</p> <p>Friday, May 18 8:00 am Montague Select Board (5/14/07) 10:15 am Discovery Center: Birds of Prey 11:30 am Farmers Market: Pat & Tex LaMountain 2:00 pm Candidates Views 12:30 pm People's Harvest 6:00 pm Nasa Destination Tomorrow #22 6:30 pm Candidates Views 7:00 pm GMRSD meeting 5/8/07 10:00 pm Carlos W. Anderson: "So What"</p> <p>Saturday, May 19 8:00 am NASA Destination Tomorrow #22 8:30 am Candidates Views 10:30 am Great Falls Art Fest (Live Broadcast) 2:00 pm Candidates Views 6:30 pm The Well Being: "Health Peace and Community" 7:30 pm School Committee Candidates Debate"</p> <p>9:30 pm Valley Idol 2007: Night One</p> <p>Sunday, May 20 8:00 am The Well Being: "Health Peace and Community" 9:00 am School Committee Candidates Debate 11:00 am Valley Idol 2007: Night One 6:00 pm Candidates Views 6:30 pm Breaking The Silence: What Was, What Is, What Will Be 7:00 pm School Committee Candidates Debate 8:30 pm Candidates Views</p>	<p>9:00 pm Valley Idol 2007: Night Two</p> <p>Monday, May 21 8:00 am Candidates Views 8:30 am Breaking The Silence: What Was, What Is, What Will Be 9:00 am School Committee Candidates Debate 11:00 am Candidates Views 11:30 am Valley Idol 2007: Night Two 6:30 pm On The Ridge: Denise Murchison 7:00 pm Valley Idol 2007: Night One & Night Two</p> <p>Tuesday, May 22 8:00 am On The Ridge: Denise Murchison 8:30 am Valley Idol 2007: Night One & Two 6:00 pm GED Connection #1 6:30 pm Independent Voices #28 7:00 pm Select Board (Live) 9:30 pm Valley Idol 2007: Night Two</p> <p>Wednesday, May 23 8:00 am GED Connection #1 8:30 am Independent Voices #28 9:00 am Valley Idol 2007: Night Two 6:30 pm NASA Destination Tomorrow #22 7:00 pm GED Connection: Language Arts: Writing 7:30 pm The Well Being: "Health Peace and Community"</p> <p>8:30 pm Valley Idol 2007: Night One & Night Two</p> <p>Thursday, May 24 8:00 am NASA Destination Tomorrow #22 8:30 am GED Connection: Language Arts: Writing 9:00 am The Well Being: "Health Peace and Community" 7:00 pm Montague Select Board 5/22/07 9:30 pm Let's See It Again 10:00 pm Discovery Center: Tracking The Willy Coyote</p>
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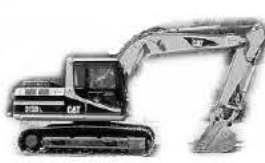
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Fifth Grade Science Fair at Sheffield

BY BRIDGET SWEET
TURNERS FALLS - “It’s fantastic!” This was one of the positive comments heard from the many visitors at last Thursday’s 5th grade science fair at Sheffield Elementary School. School committee member Kris Boyle and principal Chip Wood toured the fair along with parents. All of 5th grade teacher Sue Guy-Greene’s students earned medals for their life science research project.

Austin happily told what he had learned about the octopus. Did you know they have three different ways of moving and that their eight arms were really arms, not tentacles?

Kaylannah chose the poison dart frog for her science topic. She said, “What influenced me to do this (was) my dad worked at Black Jungle, which is a reptile and amphibian store.” Stephen liked how the paradise tree snake from Singapore could fly through the air. The pygmy marmoset, Kathryn explained, has a skull the size of a nickel.

The students researched for almost three months and knew their information well. They gave oral reports in class prior to the fair. Visitors could browse through their typed three-ring binder reports and find pictures downloaded from the internet, with sources cited. Some students referred to their report when asked questions. Kaineeca used a town library book to compare and contrast Arctic foxes.

All of the students worked hard on models for their research projects,

with *papier mache* the most widely used material. Most models took three to five days to dry.

Marcel created a very impressive model of a wild boar, that resembled a store bought animal. In fact, he used fur from a store to



Danielle's hedgehog displays an innovative use of toothpicks.

complete the look. The Atlantic salmon model Jonathan made was to scale, with an added recipe included in the report. Jessica’s orangutan was a multi-media project.

It had painted clay hands, feet, stomach and face with scarf material fur. She explained how orangutans share 97% of human DNA. Mikey’s narwhal whale had a long tooth, true to nature. Scientists now theorize a narwhal’s tusk is used to test water pressure and temperature.

Other animal models such as the American beaver, the bald

eagle, the river otter, the wolf, the barn owl and the hedgehog were all proudly on display. Brett liked the fact that the beaver, before the ice age, weighed 800 pounds, but now averages only 24 to 57 pounds. Alyssa made a twig and leaf nest for her

“important, local, cool, national bird” the bald eagle. Emma explained the river otter is diurnal. That means, “it sleeps at night and is active in the daytime, like humans.” New student Tasheen, was absent, yet his wolf display was up. Briana was very excited to tell about her barn owl. It has a heart-shaped face and “cute-like facial patterns.” Barn owls have



Atlantic Salmon model made to scale by Jonathan - accompanied by a recipe. Now that's practical science!

their “own separate classification from other owls.” Danielle’s

hedgehog generated high interest with her innovative use of toothpicks for spines.

The panda, dolphin, the zebra and the proboscis monkey completed the class projects. Elyssa had fun making the panda, and said she enjoyed the research. Eric told how the dolphin’s life-span is decreasing from pollution and drift nets. “The zebra walks 40 kilometers a day at the average speed of 10 miles-per-hour,” Cameron related. He added store-bought hair for his model’s mane.

Samantha wanted to thank her mom, dad, sister, Deb Savage, and Grandma and Grandpa Rich after she reported about her proboscis monkey. She chose this research topic because, “I saw it in a book and it looked fun to do.”

The students in Guy-Greene’s class outdid themselves with this informational science fair. They covered life science, the ecosystem, and the classification of animals. Guy-Greene said she “taught them to stay on a schedule,” during the research project. “It takes time and patience to make a quality project; and it builds student pride and commitment to complete one.”

So how do octopuses (octopi?) move about on their eight arms? They crawl, they swim, or they use jet propulsion, expelling water with a muscular siphon. You can learn all sorts of things at the Sheffield Science Fair.

ROCK from page 11

granted. Pavel Angelchev was granted a Class II license to Paul’s Auto Sales for repair and resale of used cars from his mother’s property at 15 Chestnut Street in Turners Falls. Inspection and review by the building inspector, fire department and health director concluded that since there will never be more than one car at a time on site, all work will be done inside sturdy walls, and no painting will be done, there are no objections to the license. Angelchev was

wished good luck and given a green light to proceed.

In rapid succession, thirty articles were approved for the June 2nd annual town meeting warrant, with the only brief discussion addressing Article 13, the assessment requested for the Gill-Montague Regional School District. The requested \$7,803,065 is greater than the amount recommended by the selectboard and finance committee, and will doubtless provoke discussion on the floor of the meeting.

The selectboard closed the

evening by signing a contract and notice to proceed for a \$227,410 Crosswalk Upgrade project on Avenue A, starting June 1st and covering the corners from Seventh Street down to First Street. Adequate notice of work schedules will be provided to business operators, and work will be concentrated on two-block stretches, one side of the street at a time.

The next selectboard meeting will be held on Tuesday May 22nd, and a pre-town meeting will be held at the senior center in Turners Falls at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, May 30th.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE GILL POLICE LOG

Fight on Millers Falls Road

Wednesday 5-9

11:00 a.m. Neighbor complaint on North Cross Road.

Thursday 5-10

4:30 p.m. Assisted Northfield police with fight on Millers Falls Road (Route 63).

7:20 p.m. Neighbor dispute on Cove View Lane.

Friday 5-11

12:33 p.m. Assisted Bernardston police with scam investigation.

9:20 p.m. Assisted Bernardston police with OUI arrest.

Saturday 5-12

1:20 a.m. Arrested

charged with operating with a suspended license (subsequent offense) and speeding on Main Road.

2:30 p.m. Assisted with lost dog call on Mountain Road.

7:25 p.m. Assisted Erving police with arrest on Mountain Road.

Monday 5-14

11:45 a.m. Report of erratic operator on Main Road, unable to locate.

3:00 p.m. Motorist dispute on Main Road.

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MONTAGUE POLICE BUILDING COMMITTEE UPDATE

Floor Plan Available; Geothermal Considered

BY PAM HANOLD

TURNERS FALLS - At last Thursday's meeting (5/10) the police station building committee got the first look at the progress drawing for the new police station. Earlier, architect Brian Humes had translated the final Space Needs Assessment into a floor plan. Then he and police chief Ray Zukowski, aided by Turners Falls fire chief Ray Godin and captain John Zellmann, worked those details over thoroughly, fine tuning the space needs prior to the progress drawing.

The final space assessment had listed 11,850 square feet for the main building with an estimated 4,600 square feet for an out-building to house bulk storage items and provide carport shelter. Humes surprised us by designing a building which used space so well that he was able to add the out-storage on the outside wall of the sally port, as part of that much less expensive construction. Even with that addition, the economy of the shared-use spaces and careful design resulted in a single building of just 11,800 square feet.

Record storage space is located close to the front window for

quick response to the public. The high density rolling file units are both very compact and easy to access. In response to dropping the need for a receptionist, the dispatcher is located at the front for walk-in traffic, but the station secretary and records are also close by. Corridors and outside doors are placed to make it easy for patrol officers to stop in and quickly move directly through to the rooms they need to access.

Processing both people and evidence in a coordinated area looks very efficient, in terms of both the time involved and in handling and preserving evidence. The sally port arrangement now gives officers easy access for unloading evidence and prisoners safely. It also provides a sheltered, lighted space for fingerprinting and for processing vehicles.

For more details, or to see the progress drawing, please call Chief Zukowski to set a time to go in and meet with him.

After incorporating any suggestions from the police department, and a couple of minor ones from the committee, the next step is to determine what materials we want Humes to use in construction. A piece of good news is that, "The construction climate is get-

ting more favorable. We are getting more bids on our projects and the square footage cost is down."

The committee is also looking into the benefits and cost of energy-efficient technology. Massachusetts building codes mandate certain standards of efficiency. Beyond those are questions of different yearly maintenance costs, longevity of materials, and ongoing energy savings.

Humes' experience with public safety buildings leads him to prefer the cost effectiveness of geothermal climate control, because the high energy requirements of police stations make wind and photo cells less effective in terms of total energy needs. Costs from geothermal are recovered in seven years, with cumulative savings thereafter. We will be examining the information he has and looking to see if there is additional funding help for energy-efficient construction. We are aware that utility costs, along with health care and salaries, exert steady pressure on town budgets.

Other cost benefits Humes mentioned include planning outdoor lighting carefully so that areas are covered with fewer poles and lights.

HOMES
continued from pg 1

able single family LEED certified homes in the nation, according to Anne Perkins of Rural Development Incorporated in Turners Falls.

"It's not easy to get LEED certification," said Perkins. Projects that will potentially be certified as LEED homes are evaluated on six categories: sustainable building sites, water efficiency, energy and atmosphere, materials and resources and indoor environmental quality. The homes have a long list of environmentally sound and energy efficient features, including dual flush toilets, drought resistant grass seed, minimal use of lumber and no use of tropical wood. The homes also improve the indoor environment of the house, according to Perkins, who said a lot of people get sick from off-gassed toxins from materials commonly used in home construction. During the building of the Wendell homes, steps were taken to minimize waste.

Only 90 homes in the nation are LEED certified, most of

which are built for higher end markets than the two in Wendell. Although it may cost more to build a LEED certified home, Perkins said the net cost of owning one in the long run may be no more than that of a conventional home.

The Rural Development Inc. Home Ownership Program is dedicated to building green homes in Franklin County and the North Quabbin region. They are the builders of a near zero net energy community on Ed Clark Road in Greenfield. Perkins said near zero net energy houses are more environmentally sound and energy efficient than LEED houses. "There will be almost no need for energy use," said Perkins, although some heat may be required in the winter months.

RDI currently has one near zero net energy home under construction in Colrain, along with three homes Perkins hopes will receive LEED certification in Colrain. To find out about more green building projects in the area, visit www.ruraldevelopmentinc.org.



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Downtown Disturbances

Thursday 5-10

7:24 p.m. Report of a motor vehicle accident at the corner of Avenue A and 3rd Street.

_____ was arrested and charged with failure to use care and operating under the influence of liquor (2nd offense).

Friday 5-11

11:50 p.m. Report of a domestic disturbance on 4th Street behind Equi's. One party put in protective custody.

Saturday 5-12

9:24 p.m. Report of a disturbance at Jake's Tavern on Avenue A. Subject put in protective custody.

Sunday 5-13

12:02 a.m. _____ was arrested and charged with violation of a restraining order.

1:48 a.m. After a motor vehicle stop on 3rd Street at Avenue A, _____

was arrested and charged with operating with a suspended license, possession of an open container of alcohol in a motor vehicle, failure to wear a seatbelt, speeding, and being a minor in possession of alcohol (subsequent offense).

Monday 5-14

10:01 p.m. Report of disorderly conduct at a 4th Street address. _____

was arrested and charged with violation of a restraining order.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE ERVING POLICE LOG

Breaking and Entering

Wednesday 5-9

11:00 a.m. Report of a telephone scam at a Prospect Heights Lane address. Subject called with a health care offer. Requested biographical information. Under investigation.

Thursday 5-10

4:40 p.m. Report of a medical emergency at a West Main Street address. A female teen fell from a chair putting her hand through glass. Subject went to hospital on her own.

Friday 5-11

9:35 a.m. Report of a missing Boston Terrier from a Prospect Heights Lane address. Dog later located.

Saturday 5-12

12:23 p.m. After a motor vehicle stop, _____ was arrested on two default warrants and

also charged with marked lanes violation, license not in possession, unregistered motor vehicle, and operating after suspension (subsequent offense).

7:26 p.m. Report of a disturbance at a Mountain Road address. _____ was arrested and charged with domestic assault and battery.

Sunday 5-13

4:50 p.m. Called in report of breaking and entering in progress on Paper Mill Road.

5:04 p.m. Responded to Route 2 in Gill; Montague sergeant had vehicle stopped. _____

was arrested and charged with trespassing with a motor vehicle, breaking and entering for a felony, and malicious destruction of property.

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ARTS from pg 1

Stephen Cahill, who curated the show, the idea originated with Eileen Dowd of Carriage House Designs and Karen Stinchfield of the Brick House. Both Dowd and Stinchfield were concerned that many local artists who did not have downtown studios were being left out of the regular Turners art walks. Stinchfield said that since the Brick House would be hosting the Art Fest at the Discovery Center, the first floor of the Brick House would be available to showcase local talent. They approached Cahill (whose public installation "Doosel" graces the sidewalk in front of the Hallmark Museum) who eagerly agreed to put together a show. Once the word was out, Montague Catholic Social Ministries donated use of their space, two doors down on 3rd Street, as well.

"I'm very excited about the show," said Cahill. "It provides an opportunity for artists without downtown studios to be able to show their work. And the quality of the art, in my opinion, is exceptional." The eight artists in the exhibition are Jed Clarke, John Clarke, Cathe Janke, Kerry Kazokas, Seth Lacata, Nina (Bander) Rossi, Jeremy Young, and Cahill himself.

Cahill said he's hoping to create an atmosphere in each of the gallery spaces where people will want to linger. At the Brick House, for instance, he's



Steve Cahill pictured in front of Seth and Eva's Consignment Shop on Avenue A with his trademark Ghetto Fabulous skateboards.

incorporated the house couch into his installation of found objects including fossils, crystals and rocks. "The idea," said Cahill, "was to create a loft living room." Both floor and wall space will be utilized to advantage.

"Much of the work is quite bold and expressive," said Cahill. Jed Clarke's oil pastel paintings, called by the artist

"Autistic Interpretations," are, according to Cahill, bright canvases painted as memorials to his autistic son, who died recently. Nina Rossi's art features mixed media work of familiar Turners streetscapes, but with highly imaginative twists. Seth Lacata's expressionistic figurative paintings depict the human figure with tongue-in-cheek humor. Jeremy Young will exhibit a range of charcoal drawings. Cahill described John Clarke's three oil paintings as

"abstract beauties." Kerry Kazokas, known by many as the director of the film "Free to Fly," will be exhibiting a selection of recent paintings. Cathe Janke, according to Cahill, has promised him "a surprise."

To find out what that might be, and to see how much talent exists in our town, you'll have to come to the show and see for yourself.

GRANGE from pg 1

wildlife management area, and NRCS.

On the 35-acre management area, grasslands and old fields are being invaded by non-native plants, including multiflora rose, Japanese barberry, Japanese knotweed and bush honeysuckle. The invasive plants degrade the quality of the grassland habitat, making it unsuitable nesting habitat for bobolinks, savannah sparrows and other grassland-dependent birds experiencing population declines throughout New England. The restoration work will also ensure easier access for outdoor enthusiasts who use the area for fishing, hunting, hiking, bird watching and wildlife viewing.

"Members of the Montague Grange are thrilled to receive this grant so we can restore these old fields for critical wildlife habitat, while also providing opportunities for our community to experience the scenic beauty of our rural heritage," said Chris Mason, Steward of the Grange. "By working with MassWildlife and NRCS to restore these old fields, which were first established and then maintained by Montague farmers, the Grange honors our

traditional role of supporting rural agriculture while fulfilling our newer role as a community service organization for all residents in Montague."

"MassWildlife has long viewed the restoration and maintenance of habitat as critical to the many creatures dependant on available and suitable habitat. Invasive species pose one of the greatest threats to the native biodiversity of Massachusetts," said Jill Liske-Clark, MassWildlife's Upland Habitat Coordinator. "These kinds of projects create valuable partnerships with groups such as the Montague Grange, who share common concerns about wildlife and wildlife habitat and make it possible for partners to accomplish their habitat management goals."

Through the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program, NRCS provides technical and cost-share assistance to landowners to protect or restore valuable ecosystems and wildlife habitat on their property. Landowners may receive up to 75 percent of installation costs for conservation practices. For more information on the WHIP program, visit www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/whip.html.

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Grange to Host Habitat Walk
MONTAGUE CENTER - The Montague Grange will host a public walk at the Sawmill River Access Area on Saturday, May 26th at 10 a.m. to discuss a project to restore important wildlife habitat on the state-owned Montague Wildlife Management Area in Montague Center. Those interested in attending should meet at the entry gate at the end of North Street. Parking is limited on North Street; please park at the town common and walk to the entry gate. See www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov for more info.

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NOTES FROM THE ERVING SELECTBOARD

DEP Issues Warning on Farley Plant

BY KEVIN FOLEY

A Notice of Noncompliance (NoN) was issued from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection on May 4th for the Farley wastewater treatment facility, specifically the confined space entry into its control room. The NoN was issued just a month after the town received a DEP compliance evaluation, a less serious warning, relating to lab procedures at the Erving wastewater facility, and the confined space of the entrance at Farley. The selectboard discussed ways to solve the problem at their May 14th town meeting.

"We are looking for ways to open up the back of that underground [passage] so it will no longer be a confined space," said Tom Sharp, town administrative assistant. Currently, wastewater employees must climb down into the control room by way of a narrow passage. Digging out the back will make it possible to install a door in the back of the room, according to Sharp.

The search for an environmental supervisor for the wastewater treatment plants has been narrowed down to three candi-

dates, including one Erving resident. Gary R. Gannon, a Mountain Road resident, attended school at Idaho State University and his last employment was as an Amtrak general foreman. Mark Depont, an East Dover, VT resident and California State University graduate, has over 20 years of experience in the wastewater industry. Kevin Boissonault, of Chicopee MA, attended Holyoke Community College and the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. His last employment was at the City of Chicopee Water Department. The selectboard will interview all of the candidates before a decision is made.

Julie Hubbard, of the Erving Paper Mill, is trying to organize a recycling program at the mill, along with Sharp. The program would include special barrels for plastic bottles, cans and any other recyclables. The town would be charged \$10 a month in order to organize recycling pickups from the mill. However, the selectboard wants to wait until the service can be offered to every business in town before implementing it. "I need to do a little more homework," said

Sharp. "[The selectboard] threw the ball back into my court."

Judi Collins, the former tax collector, was named assistant tax collector at the May 14th meeting. Collins, who moved out of Erving recently, isn't eligible to be the tax collector any longer. However, the assistant tax collector is an appointed position, not an elected one, and out-of-towners are eligible.

Town hall's phone system has been misbehaving, according to Sharp. Telecom was the lowest bid for the contracted service of repairing the phone lines, coming in at about \$5,000 lower than the other two companies for a total price of \$3,200. The other two bids were \$8,800 and \$8,200.

The town of Erving will soon enter the Internet age. They are actively seeking a web designer to create a town website that will make it easier to people to access information and obtain forms, such as building inspector forms, right from the comfort of their own home. Sharp has met with three designers already and is planning to meet with a fourth in the near future. The timetable for the website's completion is unknown.

NOTES FROM THE GILL SELECTBOARD

Maddern's Last Meeting

BY DAVID DETMOLD

Complaints about a semi-trailer truck parking on the field behind the Riverside municipal building led the Gill selectboard to send a letter to the rig's owner to ask him to move the vehicle. Last winter, the board had told the owner, a Riverside resident, that he could park his semi behind the Riverside building, in order to get it off the street during plow season. But now that kids are playing on the field, and Howe's Lawn Care Service is trying to mow it, the board has asked the owner to find other parking arrangements for his rig.

At the other end of the playing field, the Four Winds Charter School is in the midst of annual lease negotiations with the board. At their Monday, May 14th, meeting, the board, concerned about rising utility costs, proposed a \$150 a year increase to Stephen Hussey, director of the independent school, which has rented space in the Riverside building for a number of years. Hussey will consult with his board of directors, and get back to the selectboard by their next meeting, May 25th at 3 p.m.

After consulting with the conservation commission and plan-

ning board, the selectboard voted to relinquish the right of first refusal on 25 acres of land on Ben Hale Road. The land is being removed from conservation protection by owner Richard French.

The board agreed to place a question on a special town meeting ballot to list 8.8 acres of town owned land on Barney Hale Road as surplus land. The land, located near wetlands at the southwest end of Barney Hale, was taken for back taxes from Oliver and Alice Fisher. A buyer is interested in the parcel.

At the end of the meeting, the board adjourned to attend the wake of Edward Ambo, Sr., and returned to town hall around 7 p.m. for a farewell party for longtime board member Phillip Maddern, who is stepping down after 15 years in office.

Nancy Griswold, of Walnut Street, is running unopposed for the open selectboard seat in Monday's election (May 21st). A \$300,000 override question is on the ballot to fund the town and schools' operating budget. Also on the ballot is a \$125,000 override question to purchase a new single axel dump truck for the highway department. Polls are open from noon to 8 p.m.

AP Fish Story on Australis Accident

BY KEVIN FOLEY

TURNERS FALLS - Readers of over 100 newspapers worldwide woke up on May 12th to an Associated Press story of four employees of Australis Aquaculture, LCC in Turners Falls dropping from perilous heights into a tank of fish manure. Truthfully, the story was a little less exciting.

During regularly scheduled maintenance, a platform inside of an empty manure tank collapsed due to heavy weight concentrated on one side. Four employees, who were working inside the tank, and some water filtration materials that were covered in fish manure,

sand and slimy substances fell about eight feet to the bottom of the tank. Three workers landed on their feet, while one was trapped beneath one of the filtration devices. However, Josh Goldman, managing director of Australis, pointed out filtration materials are very open and there was never a chance of the trapped employee suffocating.

"We have two stories here: the accident and the way the media reported it," said Goldman, who believes most accounts of the story were inaccurate or embellished, including local daily newspa-



KEVIN FOLEY PHOTO

Emergency workers from the Turners Falls Fire Department cut a hole in the tank (above) to free a worker trapped in Friday's accident. The tank had been emptied for maintenance

per accounts that reported a drop of over 30 feet. "Basically we have a sprained ankle, a few people are sore, but at the end of the day everyone is okay."

Australis issued a press release explaining their account of the accident on Monday, May 14th, noting there was no manure or liquid inside the tank. It is believed that all of the employees followed the proper safety procedures. A full investigation of the accident is being conducted. "We take safety very seriously at this company, and are relieved that all four workers

sustained only minor injuries," Goldman said.

Australis doesn't expect the accident to have a major effect on their output of Barramundi, an Australian specialty fish grown at the indoor fish farm for consumption in the American market. Only one week will be added to the tank's (pictured left) regularly scheduled maintenance. All fish that would have been affected by the accident were moved prior to the scheduled cleaning.

Goldman said the Associated Press had agreed to print a retraction. But how does a wire service do that?

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Stars of Track and Field at TFHS

BY SALLY DELANEY

ERVING - Faster than a speeding bullet, more powerful than a locomotive, able to leap tall obstacles with a single bound... that's right, it's the Turners Falls boys track team. This gifted group includes four senior athletes who have all qualified for Track and Field Individuals, and many have participated in Western Mass Championships over the years. With a mere baker's dozen on the team it has been a difficult season to accumulate wins, although the team has pulled off a few. Other schools bring dozens of athletes to compete at the meets, but the Turners Boys have made their presence known by consecutively posting wins as well as placing in many events. Collectively they have brought home 45 first place wins.

Coaches Ron Hebert and Bob Avery bring seventy years of track and field experience to this team. Their dedication to the athletes is greatly appreciated by all.

The senior boys are:

Greg Dorman: Greg comes from Erving and has been on the Varsity Track Team since the 8th grade. He is a three-sport athlete, playing football and ice hockey along with track and field. His events include 110



Greg Dorman



Ethan Kociela



Scott Rau



Dan Leveille

high hurdles, 300 intermediate hurdles, javelin, and pole vault. When the vault is not available, Greg hurls the shot put. Greg accounts for 19 of the team's first place wins this season. He will be attending UMASS Dartmouth in the fall, where he will be a factor to contend with on both their football and track and field teams.

Ethan Kociela: Ethan comes from Montague Center and has been on the Varsity Track Team since the 9th grade. He is a two-sport athlete, running cross-country in the fall and track and field in the spring. He is also a member of the Turners Falls

Marching Band and takes part in numerous other school activities, including being an emcee for pep rallies. His events include the javelin, discus, one mile, 400 meter, and 800 meter races. Ethan accounts for seven of the first place wins this season. He will be heading off to the University of Hartford in the fall.

Dan Leveille: Dan comes from Turners Falls and has been on the Varsity Track Team since the 7th grade. He is a two-sport

athlete playing soccer in the fall and track and field in the spring. He also competes in drag racing. His events include the triple jump, high jump, 100 meter, and 200 meter races. Dan accounts for 13 of the first place wins this season. He will be going to Morrisville State College in the fall.

Scott Rau: Scott comes from Erving and has been on the

Varsity Track Team since the 7th grade. He is a two-sport athlete, playing football in the fall and track and field in the spring. He is also involved with many other activities throughout the year. His events include the long jump, high jump, 100 meter and 200 meter races.

Scott accounts for six of the first place wins this season. He is undecided about college at this time.

All four of these athletes also earned a multitude of points, placing at 2nd and 3rd. They are an asset to the Track and Field Team at Turners Falls High School.

Pictured left to right: Dan Leveille, Greg Dorman, Ethan Kociela, Scott Rau. Back row: Coach Bob Avery, Coach Ron Hebert



Edge Takes Western Mass Shootout Championship

COACH DAVID HASTINGS BERNARDSTON - At the Western Mass Shootout in Granby on May 12th and 13th, the Edge 16 and under basketball team went 4-0 on route to the championship.

- Game 1: Edge over Western MA Select 80-46
 - Game 2: Edge over MA Jaguars 87-64
 - Game 3: Edge over Granby DARE 76-47
 - Game 4: Championship Game Edge over Western MA Wildcats 71-49
- Jamie Bell of Frontier led

the offensive attack over the weekend, scoring an average of 21 points per game, followed by Tyle Kendrick of Smith Academy with 17 points per game, Cody Snow of Pioneer with 14 points per game and Tyler Price of Smith with 11 points per game.

The EDGE team has run their record to 23-4 on the season. They will next play for the National Qualifier at Westfield State College, June 1-3.

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Support Our Schools Benefit Raises \$3,300



Laurel and Jack Bassett

BY MATTHEW ROBINSON
TURNERS FALLS - The Golf Tournament and Montague Mile honoring Jack Bassett presented by Support our Schools (S. O. S.) was held on Saturday, May 12th. Seventeen foursomes played in the tournament at the Thomas Memorial Golf Club, and 32 individuals competed in the Montague Mile held at the Edward Bourdeau Memorial High School Track. Other activities included kids' games, a silent auction, a bake sale, raffles, a dunking booth and a benefit concert performed by former TFHS music director Steve Ciechomski and his band.

Organizer Stacey Langknecht said \$3,300 was raised to help offset cuts in reading and physical education in grades K through 12 in the Gill-Montague school system.

"This event is a way to honor Jack Bassett for his service to the community and schools. It is also a great way to

raise money for reading and physical education," said Bob Avery, organizer of the Montague Mile.

Langknecht, who put together the golf tournament, was passionate about the benefit. "I would like this to be an annual event," she said. "As a parent of three children in district schools, I know how important these programs are to the students and I wanted to do something to help."

The benefit was held in honor of Jack Bassett, described by the organizers as an "outstanding and beloved former Turners Falls High School coach, teacher and community volunteer." Bassett, the man honored on Saturday, who placed so much importance on education, who eventually became a high school teacher, coach and vice-principal, affecting so many young lives, almost didn't graduate high school himself.

"My father made me graduate

high school before I could join the service," he said with some regret. Back in World War II, many boys entered the war before they were out of high school. Some were killed in action before their own graduation. A simple cap and folded gown laid upon an empty seat designated that the boy had died.

"I joined the Navy one day after graduation," Bassett recalled. Within weeks of his enlistment, the Allies invaded Europe. He served out his hitch in the Atlantic Theater and returned home after the war. He then attended Arnold College and from there began his life of service to the community.

On Saturday, Bassett sat on a bench at the high school track watching the Montague Mile, his family and friends around him, feeling a mixture of pride and humility. "I can think of dozens of others who are more worthy than I am," he said. Five hours later at the Thomas Memorial Golf Club, he could only say, "I'm overwhelmed."

His wife Laurel said she would like to see other community members honored at future benefits. "So many people have contributed to the town and the schools. I'd like to see them honored also."

Steve Ciechomski, who taught music at the schools for 33 years said, "Jack is a great guy." But Mr. C. agreed to do the benefit concert to help the students. "I taught grades 4 through 12 for 33 years. I know these programs are important for our students," he said.

Jack touched the lives of many people, educators and students alike. "Mr. Bassett was tough but fair," said one anonymous participant, who was suspended by Jack Bassett back in 1973.

Barry Auskern, running in the

40 - 54 category, took first place in the Montague Mile with a winning time of 5:54. Second and third runners up, competing in the 13 - 19 category, were Lucas Foley (trailing Auskern by a hair) at 5:55, and Scott Brown at 6:10.

Summer Programs

Montague Parks and Recreation

July is National Parks & Recreation Month

YOUTH PROGRAMS

SUMMER PLAYGROUND PROGRAM

Monday, June 25 - Friday, August 17; Mondays thru Fridays:

9:00am - 3:00pm (Discovery and Sports & Adventures)

9:00am - 12:15pm (Pre-School Playgroup)

PRE-SCHOOL PLAYGROUP - Ages 3 - 5

Fees: Residents - \$25/child/week, Non-residents - \$35/child/week

DISCOVERY PROGRAM - Ages 5 - 12

Fees: Residents: \$40/child/week, Non-Residents: \$50/child/week

SPORTS & ADVENTURES - Ages 9 - 14

Fees: Residents: \$50/child/week, Non-Residents: \$60/child/week

YOUTH TENNIS PROGRAM - Ages 5 - 12

Session I: Week of June 25 - Week of July 20 Reg. Deadline: Fri, June 15

Session II: Week of July 23 - Week of Aug 17 Reg. Deadline: Fri, July 13

Fees: Residents = \$35/session, Non-residents = \$40/session

PLAY SOCCER CAMPS *

PLAY SOCCER™, is New England's leader in Youth Soccer Education. All PLAY SOCCER Coaches are all highly experienced, trained, and certified to ensure a safe and enjoyable environment.

When: Monday, August 6 - Friday, August 10

Fees: \$100/participant (Montague Resident & Non-resident); \$10 sibling discount available. Registration fee includes a PLAY SOCCER T-Shirt, soccer ball and water bottle.

SCHOLARSHIPS ARE AVAILABLE THROUGH PLAY SOCCER, Inc.

Enrollment Minimum per age group: 12

GROUPS INCLUDE: TOTS - Ages 4 - 6, JUNIORS - Ages 7 - 9

FAST TRACK - Ages 10 - 12 Registration Deadline: Friday, August 3

BABYSITTING COURSE - AMERICAN RED CROSS

Who: Youths ages 11 - 15

When: Monday, June 11 & Monday, June 18

Fees: Montague Resident = \$50, Non-resident = \$55

Included in the registration fee, students will receive a book and first aid kit.

Registration Deadlines: Friday, June 15

TEEN PROGRAMS

PLAY SOCCER CAMPS *

ADVANCED TRAINING - Teens ages 13+

When: Monday, August 13 - Friday, August 17

Fees: \$100/participant (Montague Resident & Non-resident); \$10 sibling discount available. Registration fee includes a PLAY SOCCER T-Shirt, soccer ball and water bottle.

SCHOLARSHIPS ARE AVAILABLE THROUGH PLAY SOCCER, Inc.

Registration Deadline: Friday, August 3

BABYSITTING COURSE - AMERICAN RED CROSS

Who: Youths ages 11 - 15

When: Monday, June 11 & Monday, June 18

Where: Unity Park Fieldhouse, Turners Falls

Fees: Montague Resident = \$50, Non-resident = \$55

Registration Deadlines: Friday, June 15

ADULT TENNIS PROGRAM - Ages 18 & Up

Session I: Week of June 25 - Week of July 20

Session II: Week of July 23 - Week of August 17

FEES: Montague Residents = \$30, Non-residents = \$35

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FAMILY PROGRAMS

FAMILY TENNIS PROGRAM

Session I: Week of June 25 - Week of July 20

Registration Deadline: Fri June 15

Session II: Week of July 23 - Week of August 17

Registration Deadline: Fri, July 13

Fees: Residents = \$12/Family Member, Non-residents = \$15/Family Member

SCRAPBOOKING

Who: Families (at least one parent/grand-parent and one child)

When: July 10 - August 1 Tuesdays & Wednesdays; 6:00pm - 7:30pm

Fee: Residents=\$30 / family member, Non-residents=\$35 / family member

Instructor: Robin Whiteman Registration Deadline: Friday, June 15

THE ART OF GARDENING

Who: Families (at least one parent/grand-parent and one child)

When: July 2 - July 30 - Mondays & Thursdays; 6:00pm - 7:00pm

Fee: Residents=\$30 / family member, Non-residents=\$35 / family member

Instructor: Donna Grover Registration Deadline: Friday, June 15

KAYAKING - Being offered as a Youth/Teen/Adult/Family Program

Where: Barton's Cove, Gill

Fees: Montague Residents = \$65, Non-residents = \$70

Registration Deadline: TBA

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Community Building Day at Turners High

BY ALI URBAN - Turners Falls High School students had a chance to enjoy last week's warm weather and celebrate Unity Day, the school's annual community-building day, on Wednesday, May 9th. With the stress of advanced placement exams and the end-of-the-year stretch, they were excited to spend time outdoors, play games with friends, eat at a barbecue and watch a talent show.

"It was a nice break from the day," said junior Kayla Pecor. "After studying for the AP test, it was nice to just be with friends and have fun." Pecor chose to play tennis for the hour of outdoor games. Each student signed up for an activity ranging from a pie-eating contest to softball or board games. Even some teachers joined in the games, while others watched and basked in the sun.

Following the outdoor



Gina Varuzzo, Alix Ackerman and Steph Joly, juniors, enjoy a barbecue served by TFHS teachers and staff on Unity Day.

games, students enjoyed a free barbecue served by teachers and staff with hot dogs and hamburgers, chips, cookies and watermelon. Many chose to eat on the grass, a nice change from the cafeteria. "The sun was great," said Pecor. "It was great just to be outside and maybe even get a tan."

Apart from the fun of the activities, the goal of the student council sponsored day

was to bring students together. "This was a great opportunity to build school community," said principal Jeff Kenney. He thanked the students and staff who helped to make the day possible.

A talent show ended the day with a variety of acts including dancing, singing, band performances of both students and faculty and a percussion performance. Katie Bailey, a senior, was an emcee of the show and was impressed with the performances. "I think everyone did a phenomenal job," she said.

"We had a lot of different acts this year, even more than we've had in the past," she added "There really is great talent in our school, and everyone has their niche."

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

The Razor Strap

BY JOSEPH A. PARZYCH GILL - I hated getting hit with the strap. It hurt outside and inside, too. Ma never tried to stop him. I felt that she had deserted me.

She was intimidated by Pa, though he'd only struck her once. Emmy had picked up a chair - said she'd kill him if he ever did it again - and he never did. But we children were still fair game.

Pa sometimes hit me until

he got arm-weary, put his hand on his chest and groaned. "Now, see what you've done, you've worn me out - not good for my heart."

I felt like I was in trouble most of the time, no matter what. It's true I was mischievous and felt I deserved the thrashings, but still they only filled me with resentment. I longed for the day I could leave home, like the others had, to escape his

tyranny.

One day when Pa was away and Johnny was burning brush, I took the hated strap down, ran out and threw it in the fire. Emmy fished it out and brought it back to the house. "I know you hate the strap," Emmy said, "but if Pa found out you'd burned it up, you'd really get it." The fire shriveled the end of the strap just a bit, but Pa didn't seem to notice.

Sometimes, he was in a far better humor. He'd find a

bargain at the grocery store and we'd have a feast. Once he bought pork chops - his favorite - for five cents a pound. When he paid off his bill with the bread man, the peddler rewarded us with a free gift of pastries. In good times, we saw pastries on a weekly basis, in bad times it was weeks and weeks before the bread man got his money and we got a prize.

Pa often spent his days at the Polish Club weathering the bad times. The club also

served as a pipeline to news of call-backs. With no telephone at the farm, he often missed out on being called back to work after a lay-off. At the Polish Club he could at least catch a rumor and try to be one of the first to respond. Meanwhile, playing cards and having a few beers with other unemployed men offered some solace and the hope of winning some money. He was good at card playing and once won in a tournament.

- Continued next week

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HELP WANTED Community based Country Store seeking manager. Fulltime manager wanted for the Gill Store.


Incentive-based program with ownership possibility. Must be energetic, detail minded, with retail/food service experience. Send letter and resume to the Gill Store, attention Second Wind Ventures, 326 Main Road, Gill, MA 01354.

HELP WANTED RiverCulture project looking to contract graphic designer to create project print materials Please call Lisa (413) 230-9910 or email riverculture@montague.net or send samples by May 9th to: Lisa Davol, Turners Falls RiverCulture, One Ave. A, Turners Falls, MA 01376. www.turnersfallsriverculture.org for RiverCulture background info.

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Film on Genetic Engineering in Turners

A public informational meeting on local efforts to stop genetically-engineered crops and livestock will be held in Turners Falls on Thursday, May 24th, at 7 p.m. at Equity Trust, 177 Ave A.

Ben Grosscup and Jack Kittredge from the Northeast Organic Farming Association will answer questions and show the film, "Unnatural Selection" on the dangers of genetic engineering.

Call 413-658-5374 for more information.

Who will this year's Valley Idol be?



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Last year's Valley Idol winner, Abraham Oyola of Charlemont, took the \$1000 prize. Who will this year's winner be? Auditions for the event, a benefit for Turners Falls' Shea Theatre, begin tomorrow night, Friday, May 18th at 6 p.m. Cash prizes for runners-up.

Go to www.theshea.org to download registration and view contest information.



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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



FRIDAY, MAY 18TH

Concert at The Bookmill, Montague Center: *The Two Man Gentleman Band*, NYC duo swings Vaudeville, ragtime & jazz. 8 p.m. \$10/\$12.

Pioneer Valley Cappella: *J.S. Bach, His Forebears, Family and Followers*. Geoffrey Hudson conducts this choir. 7:30 p.m. at Amherst Unitarian Society, suggested donation: \$12 general, \$6 students/seniors. Info: users.crocker.com/~unitar

Route. 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: ****YARN** - warmth of old vinyl, the soul of Gram Parsons, alt. country, bluegrass, folk rock from Brooklyn, N.Y. 9:30 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Josh Levangie*, Johnny Cash covers. 9 to 11 p.m.

SATURDAY, MAY 19TH

Gill School Carnival at Gill Elementary School, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Pony rides, plant sale, dunking booth, famous firemen's fries, bake sale and more!

Concert at The Bookmill, Montague Center: *David Jacobs-Strain*, Acclaimed guitarist plays roots and blues on the edge. 8 p.m. \$10/\$12.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Mawwal* - World Music. 9 to 11 p.m.

Route. 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: *Turn it Loose* - rock & roll, come to dance! 9:30 p.m.

Echo Lake Coffee House presents Erica Wheeler. Town Hall, Leverett. Refreshments for sale. Doors open at 7 p.m. concert 7:30 p.m. \$10/\$8.

Annie Patterson & Eduardo Reyes in concert at Mt. Toby Friends Meeting, Leverett. Annie (co-creator of *Rise Up Singing*) performs contemporary & traditional folk songs from Appalachia & the British Isles. Eduardo performs Latin American folk songs & Brazilian jazz with vocals and classical guitar. Benefit for Quaker Blivia Link, donation requested. 6 p.m. potluck, 7:30 p.m. concert.

FRIDAY & SATURDAY, MAY 18TH & 19TH

"Valley Idol" Karaoke singing competition, \$1000 for grand prize winner, cash prizes for runners-up. At the Shea Theater, Turners Falls (May 18, 19, 26 and June 2). Proceeds benefit the Shea. Auditions **Friday, May 18th**, 6 p.m. for the first 100 applicants only. \$35 registration fee. Must be at least 18 years old. Prepare a 90-second musical selection. First night cut will be to 25 singers. www.theshea.org for info or call 863-2281.

SUNDAY, MAY 20TH

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Nicole Berke with Jessee Caffero* - Singer/songwriter. 7 - 9 p.m.

SATURDAY & SUNDAY, MAY 19TH & 20TH

Turners Falls Open Studio and



Erica Wheeler performs at Echo Lake Coffee House, Leverett on Saturday, May 19th at 7 p.m.

"Erica's songs are composed of interior landscapes as well as open road panoramas. Her keen-edged, almost conversational singing style creates a surprising immediacy to her performance." *Jordi Herold, talent recruiter, The Iron Horse*

Downtown Walking Tour - a tri-annual extravaganza! Tour artists' studios, museums, and scrumptious eateries. For more information call Karen at 863-9576 or Eileen at 863-9499.

SUNDAY MAY 20TH

Concert by political satirist, Tom Neilson, 4 p.m. concert, potluck dessert, 30 Grove St., Contact: tomneilsonmusic@yahoo.com or 367-9742, \$10, Kids \$5.

THURSDAY, MAY 24TH

Film screening and discussion. *Unnatural Selection*, an award-winning film that shows the impact of genetically engineered crops and animals. Held at Equity Trust, 177 Ave A, Turners Falls. Free, 60 min. film, discussion to follow. Guest speakers Ben Grosscup and Jack Kittredge, NOFA/Mass. 7 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Larry Kopp* - Blues, 8 to 10 p.m.

Antiques Appraisal at the First Congregational Church, 148 L. Street, Turners Falls. Doug Kimball will provide appraisal estimate of your heirloom. 5 to 8 p.m. \$3.00 per item. For information call Helen 863-2670.

WEDNESDAY & THURSDAY, MAY 23RD & 24TH

Tuvan Throat-Singing Ensemble, ALASH. Founded by Kongar-ool Ondar, who "stars" in the film, *Genghis Blues*, and who has played with the Chieftains, Bela Fleck and other world musicians, their sound is a musical and sensual treat. At the Roundhouse House, Colrain Wednesday evening, 6:30 - 9:30

HOT SPOT TEEN CENTER

MONDAYS - Drop-in, 3 - 6 p.m.

TUES & WEDS - Ongoing Music Project, 3 - 6 p.m.

THURS - Drop-in, 3 - 6 p.m. & Movie Night, 6 - 8 p.m.

Free (except some trips), open to local teens. Some require permission slips.

Info: Jared at 863-9559.

Hot Spot Teen Center is in The Brick House 24 Third Street, Turners Falls, 01376

p.m. Pot-luck open to the community. Attendees will have the opportunity to meet and mingle with the members of the Ensemble. Bring your own instruments and songs to share as well as whatever questions you may have about the music.

Thursday night, the Ensemble gives a concert at Greenfield Community College in Sloan Theater, 7:30 p.m. \$10 for adults, \$5 for children under ten. Advance tickets at Boswell Books, Shelburne Falls, World Eye Bookstore, Greenfield or (413) 624-5140.

FRIDAY, MAY 25TH

Concert at The Bookmill, Montague Center: *The Lonesome Brothers*, the Valley's favorite brothers rock the mill with danceable alt-country full of swagger and pathos 8 p.m. \$10/\$12.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Mafanti*, World Folk Soul. 9 to 11 p.m.

NMH Presents Music Director's 25th Sacred Concert. 2:30 p.m. at the Auditorium on the Northfield campus. Music from the Concert Choir, Symphony Orchestra, NMH Singers, Select Women's Ensemble, Alumni Choir, and Chamber Orchestra. Heffernon directs the chorus, and Martin Klueh conducts the orchestral music. Free and open to all.

A Bouquet of Music Healing Arts Concert featuring Jerry Noble & Bob Sparkman, jazz for keyboard & clarinet. Baystate Franklin Medical Center's Main Lobby, Greenfield. 12 to 12:45 p.m.

Relay for Life Fundraiser "Baked to Death" Chefs Julia Chives, Day Ja Vu, and Emery Legacy. The hostess of the event is Martha Stupor and the judge, Judge Bacon Whopper Jr. Comical

Mystery Tour is donating all proceeds to American Cancer Society. Pizza dinner and mystery theater, Montague Elks, Turners Falls. 325-1940.

SATURDAY, MAY 26TH

Coffee & Soul concert with *Jim Scott*, at All Souls Church, Greenfield. *Dan Tinen, Ferne Bork and Bruce Kahn* trio will open. Admission \$10 at the door, 7:30 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Blame It On Tina*, folk rock. 9 to 11 p.m.

SUNDAY, MAY 27TH

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Nexus*, rock. 7 to 9 p.m.

Pre-1840 Rendezvous in Northfield. Experience the mountain man life of the 1700 & 1800's by visiting camps from the French & Indian War, Revolutionary War, and Rocky Mountain Fur Trade periods. Sunday (& Tuesday 5/29) Open to the public. Please contact Gary Vigue (508) 248-1163 or NEPR@aol.com for more information. 10 a.m.- 4 p.m.

TUESDAY, MAY 29TH

Common People Concerts on the Gill common. *Metro Sax Quartet*-eclectic class from the Boston area. 7 p.m., free. Sponsored by the Gill Cultural Council. Info: damons_of_gill@yahoo.com. Continue each Tuesday through August.

THURSDAY, MAY 31ST

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Paul Spaterella*-Acoustic, 8 to 10 p.m.

FRIDAY & SATURDAY, JUNE 1ST & 2ND

Pothole Pictures, Memorial Hall Theater, Shelburne Falls presents *Ball of Fire*. 7:30 p.m.

FRIDAY, JUNE 8TH

Concert at The Bookmill, Montague Center: *Homegrown String Band*, Swinging rhythms of old-time string music. 8 p.m. \$10/\$12.

SATURDAY, JUNE 9TH

The Second Annual Goddess Festival at The Art Bridge, Shelburne Falls from noon until 9 p.m. Features many local and regional musicians, belly dancers, fire twirlers, craft vendors, a silent auction and loads of kids activities.

The Changing Face of Turners Falls: A Community In Transition. History, panel discussion begins 10 a.m. at The Shea. Afternoon at the Great Falls Discovery Center, 1:30 to 3 p.m. The Geology, history through architecture and the art scene. Free, everyone welcome.

ON DISPLAY UNTIL JUNE 17TH

Exhibit: John Willis' and Tom Young's

"Recycled Realities and Other Stones". Haunting and surreal series of black and white images at Erving Paper Mill. Also images from "View from the Rez" and "Timeline". Hallmark Museum of Contemporary Photography, Turners Falls. Thursday to Sunday 1-5 p.m. 863-0009.

The Green Trees Gallery, Northfield: "Fruit and Blooms," works by Gillian Haven, Laura Garrison, Robert Markey, Judy Stalus, Nancy Tips, Jennifer Dorgan, Jeanne Sisson and Jean Tandy. (413) 498-0283 www.greentreesgallery.com

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3. **FRACTURE** R
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MATINEE FRI, SAT, SUN 12:30 3:30
4. **HOT FUZZ** R
DAILY 6:45 9:15
MATINEE FRI, SAT, SUN 12:15 3:15
5. **28 WEEKS LATER** R
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MATINEE FRI, SAT, SUN 12:15 3:15
6. **SPIDERMAN 3** PG13
DAILY 6:00 9:00 in DTS sound
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7. **SPIDERMAN 3** PG13
DAILY 6:30 9:30 in DTS sound
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Johnny Cash Covers-*Josh Levangie*

Saturday 5/19
World Music-*Mawwal*

Friday 5/25
World Folk Soul-*Mafanti*

Saturday 5/26
Folk Rock-*Blame It On Tina*
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<p>MAY 19TH - 20TH GREAT FALLS ART FEST Artisans, activities for children. Free and open to the public. Accessible facilities. THROUGH MAY 30TH Nature Photography by JD Keating on display. JD Keating has lived as a musician and artist in Western Massachusetts for over 20 years. WEDNESDAY, MAY 30TH Save the evening! Great Falls Coffee House, 7 p.m. Entertainer TBA.</p>	<p>FRIDAY, JUNE 1ST Burgess Story Time for Young Families. Stories about local wildlife, learn how the power of close observations and imagining how wildlife survives creates life-long connections with wildlife study. "Over 170 books and 15,000 stories by Burgess chronicle the tales of Peter Rabbit and his animal friends, including Jimmy Skunk, Grandfather Frog, Johnny Chuck, Sammy Jay, Reddy Fox, Hooty Owl and many others. Through these engaging stories, generations of young people have learned about the natural world and have developed an understanding of the importance of conservation of our natural resources." from www.thornton-burgess.org 10 to 11 a.m. SATURDAY, JUNE 2ND Annual Family Fish Day! Free fishing day with fly-tying and spin cast demonstrations, and raffle for fishing poles and tackle boxes. 10 to 2 p.m.</p>
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Great Falls Discovery Center - 2 Avenue A, Turners Falls - www.greatfallsma.org

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ILLUSTRATION BY ANJA SCHUTZ

THIS WILD PLACE

Green Pond Chorus

BY KARL MEYER

COLRAIN - There's no stopping May. It's as if New England cracks its winter shell and there's no going back. The shell cracked last Friday when a pounding thunderstorm, the season's first, pummeled Franklin County with a morning downpour. By late afternoon skies had cleared, leaving a sultry, summer humidity hovering over the landscape. That thick New Orleans air filled the upstairs at the Montague Book Mill where friends Santina and Rick King were the opening music for Wildwood. It was charming to see this father and daughter pair playing together - Rick, a gifted blues guitarist, working to sync-in behind his daughter's acoustic phrasings and lyrics, as Santina

nears her first CD release.

The night's music knit together beautifully, including the layered harmonies from Wildwood, backed up by their electric guitar, mandolin, drums and bass. People lingered after the encore, but by 10:30 the crowd had mostly broken up. Still, it seemed there should be more music to this May night. And there was. It rang out just a mile or two north of town, off Route 63, along Green Pond Road. At a dip in the road, across from where two dim lights shine over the north end of Lake Pleasant, another concert was in full swing beneath the stars. The tree frogs and toads were putting on a show.

I hadn't heard this group in maybe five years, since I'd brought some people to the Montague Plains to see the whippoorwills that

nest there. But that chorus, vibrating up through the landscape from along Green Pond's shores, was really the find of that dusky late-May night. I remembered there were several species of frogs calling - and I thought they were green frogs, toads, and spring peepers, and maybe they were, but it doesn't matter - simply because their combined music was so lovely. That's why a stop at Green Pond became necessary on the way home from the Book Mill.

And there, beneath clear May stars, with a few low fog wisps hovering in the distance, the music played. And it's the stuff that makes May, May, around these parts - peepers vibrating the night air, toads trilling through the trees, and grey tree frogs coughing sweet stutters toward the heavens. It all

knit together like a gathered group of friends. Even the low, coarse bursts of the Fowler's toads, piped in beneath the harmonies of the more tuneful Green Pond singers, added a certain spice to the affair. I was disappointed though that no green frog was singing in its namesake pond - but that may clearly be a function of faulty memory on my part.

As it stands, there exists an opportunity for anyone to get out and hear this symphony in the dark, any evening for the next week or two. Here's who's playing: American toad - giving that rich, rising trill that just floats across May's woods and fields, with an underlying hushed-bass added from deep within. Breaking high above that, and vibrating the night air, is the marvelous shrill of spring



Fowler's Toads

peepers, singing from a few feet up in the low shrubs courtesy of their suction-like, padded, climbing toes. And then, opening up in high-range bursts that are oddly lyrical, are grey tree frogs - giving sweet warbles at regular intervals from twenty feet up in the over-hanging branches. Grey tree frogs are also suctioned by the feet, hailing from the same elevated singing family as the peepers, hence, their curious harmony.

Lastly, there is that other toad - the Fowler's toad. The singing these nights is truly among relatives. For most people a toad is a toad, and I might agree, except in the case of the Fowler's toad. Though difficult, you can tell a Fowler's toad from an American toad by the darker color of the spots on its back, and the number of warts in the raised glands on the toad's back (Fowler's have three or more warts in each). The system is not foolproof though.

In the May night the surest way to tell a Fowler's toad from those singing Americans is its absolutely ridiculous, low, bawling. It sounds remarkably like an angry baby breaking into short, grating outbursts - waaaahhh! waaaahh! That incessant cry in a house would make a human parent weep, or pull out some hair. Yet, laid out among the other pieces in this Green Pond spring concert, it doesn't seem out of place. It just adds a little funk into what's already some sweet harmony on a sultry May night.

Cooling thought: Consider the one entertainment appliance rule. Use only one computer, one TV, or one stereo, in the household at a time. The rest remain off. It'll conserve resources, and add a centerpiece quality to the music, game, or show being viewed.



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SPEAKERS:

Karen Hakala, Director of ACT Community Service Center

- The joys and benefits of volunteering.

Jim Leyden, Program Coordinator for Grandparents as Parents Program, the Chicopee Council on Aging & the Chicopee Senior Center

- The importance of networking with other grandparents also raising their grandchildren.

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