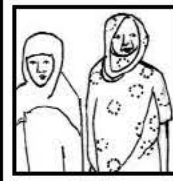




ANTIQUÉ TRUCK SHOW
Eye Witness Report!
see page 3



WORKING AGAINST GENOCIDE
In Darfur
see page 10

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MAY 25, 2006

Montague's Oil Magnate



PHOTO BY JANEL NOCKELBY

Alejandro Levins offers artisan olive oil

BY JANEL NOCKELBY - Even though Montague Center resident Alejandro Levins would frequently ask traveling friends to bring back olive oil from Europe, he needed a little help from his friend Martin to come up with a business idea tailor made for his interests.

Martin, a contractor who was remodeling Levins' Montague Center home, suggested Levins should start an Internet-based artisan olive oil import company. "You're into the Internet and marketing and food. This might be right up your alley," Martin

said. Levins loved the idea, and the company is now called Alejandro & Martin. "Coming back from Europe, I was packing my suitcase full of olive oil bottles. That was a hint, maybe I ought to do this," he said.

After three years in business, Alejandro & Martin olive oils are getting some favorable attention. Martin is still a contractor in the Pioneer Valley and has loaned his first name to the project, but it is Levins and his

see OLIVE OIL pg 11

Smart Growth Planning in Gill



DETMOLD PHOTO

A farm on Main Road in Gill

BY DAVID DETMOLD Smart Growth has been the topic of ongoing public meetings organized by the planning board, with the support of the Franklin Regional Council of Governments. According to Peggy Sloan, FRCOG land use planner, who has helped to facilitate the meetings with the COG's Tracy Zafian, the meetings are

intended to review the town's zoning bylaws with an eye toward encouraging 'smart growth development', specifically by allowing the relaxation of frontage and acreage requirements to permit the clustering of houses on one portion of a parcel in exchange for the permanent protection of open space on the same parcel. "The overall density of con-

struction on the property would not change," under the proposed open space bylaw, Sloan said.

Another measure under consideration, Sloan said, was the creation of village commercial zone to promote mixed use development in a preferred area, which the town may designate. At Monday's public meet-

see GILL pg 10

Combined Sewer Project Overflows with Red Ink

BY DAVID DETMOLD

MONTAGUE CITY - The budget for the combined sewer overflow project and related improvements to the town's wastewater treatment plant has ballooned in the last year from \$5.7 million to \$10.3 million, an 80% increase. Town officials met with project engineers from Camp Dresser & McKee on Monday, May 22nd and

the original cost estimates. CDM project engineer Paul Gilbert did not return repeated phone calls seeking comment.

The town has paid CDM at least \$540,000 for design work since the project's inception.

Abbondanzio said the town asked CDM to reduce the scope of the project to attempt to reduce the flow of untreated sewage into the



PHOTO: MICHAEL MULLER

The Montague Water Pollution Control Facility

demanding an explanation for how a project sold confidently to the town at one price could have escalated without warning by such a large factor in so short a time. According to town administrator Frank Abbondanzio, CDM has been "sent back to the drawing board to find other ways," of bringing the town into compliance with federal and state Clean Water Act requirements, within the scope of the original budget. CDM is due to report back to the town with answers at the selectboard meeting on May 29th.

Abbondanzio said the majority of the project's cost overruns were in upgrades to the treatment plant itself, rather than the sewers. Some plant upgrades, like a new rotary press and septage tank - at \$2 million plus - will likely be deferred.

According to town officials, CDM engineers have been aware of the size of the cost overruns for many months, but have proceeded to solicit grants for the project at

Connecticut River by 85% to 90%, instead of the original target of 97%, preventing 5.6 to 6 million gallons of untreated sewage from flowing into the river annually from the three CSO locations in town, rather than the earlier target of 7 million gallons.

Asked whether these targets would be acceptable to state and federal regulators, Ed Coletta, spokesperson for the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection said, "We understand the town has asked CDM to do a review of what the project will accomplish. We will be working with the town, the engineers, and the EPA to review the technical requirements and the data. We'll see where that leads."

On August 1st, 2005, voters in Montague approved a debt exclusion for \$2.2 million, shifting 40% of the project's estimated \$5.7 million price tag to the taxpayers, leaving sewer users to cover the rest.

Valley Idol AT THE SHEA Got Tix Yet?



DETMOLD PHOTO

MC Nick Danger

Valley Idol Thrills, Horrifies

BY DAVID DETMOLD

TURNERS FALLS - Phil Simon, one of the judges at Valley Idol's weekend debut at the Shea, told 'Melody from Northfield,' singing a tender Trisha Yearwood ballad, "Georgia Rain," to smile more. "Even though it's a sad song, smile more." Another judge, Kim Morin, demanded, "Whatever possessed you to sing about rain?" Melody went down for the count.

Jody-Lynne Boudreau of Warwick revealed, "I sing in my shower," before launching into a Dixie Chicks rocker, "Some Days You've Gotta Dance." By the time she finished, Ken Adams, the third judge, exclaimed, "I hope you don't move like that in the shower!" He also wanted to know, "You don't use the shower head as a microphone, do you? Doesn't that make your mouth fill up with water?"

"I gargle," admitted Boudreau.

"I won't touch that one," responded Adams. The audience groaned. Jody got tapped to head to the semifinals.

It was all part of the fun at Turners' first brush with the instant celebrity phenomenon sweeping the nation, as the Shea adapted *American Idol's* winning formula for a fundraising extravaganza that will continue for the next two Saturdays. If you have never watched *American Idol*, and you think karaoke is one small notch below hip-hop in terms of

see IDOL pg 12

PET OF THE WEEK**Indoor Calico****Hepzebah**

Hepzebah is a 4-year-old cat with unique bi-color green & gold eyes and dilute calico fur. Her family moved and didn't take her along and she's lived as an indoor-only cat, so it would be best that she remain so. She is a friendly and curious girl who would love a permanent home with a caring person.

For more info on adopting Hepzebah, please contact the Dakin Animal Shelter in Leverett at 548-9898 or via email at info@dakinshelter.org.

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CARNEGIE LIBRARY NEWS**Bookmobile Visits Branch Libraries**

BY LINDA HICKMAN

MILLERS FALLS - The Bookmobile brought a new selection of rotating books, movies, and audio books to the Millers Falls Library on Wednesday, May 24th.

The Bookmobile also visited the Montague Center Library on May 9th.

Bookmobiles were once a common sight throughout the state, but are now only to be found in western Massachusetts. The Western Massachusetts Regional Library System has two specially equipped trucks

that serve many of the towns with populations under 10,000. They are driven to public libraries where library staff select materials to borrow. Due to financial constraints and logistics, it is approximately eleven weeks between visits.

The Regional Library System has debated ending the Bookmobile tradition, but this would be a blow to the many small libraries who depend upon the Bookmobile to help stretch their thin resources. For now the Bookmobiles still visit, but their days may be numbered.

WENDELL LIBRARY NEWS**Groundbreaking Ceremony**

BY NINA KELLER - On Sunday, June 11th at 4 p.m., there will be a groundbreaking ceremony for the long awaited construction of Wendell's new library. Plans include a kid's kazoo band, tea and cake cutting at the gazebo, shovel ceremony and more. The library is a main gathering place and hub of social and educational activity in town. Because the current library is

small, this occasion is momentous as it ushers in an era where the new library space will be accessible to more users and uses.

All are welcome to attend and to participate in the joyous event, a realization of years of work and a momentous step towards creating a more useful space for Wendell's well loved and well utilized library collection.

CORRECTIONS

As we worked to revise the masthead in last week's paper, (IV#32), to give more prominence to the towns we cover in addition to Montague -- Gill, Erving and Wendell -- we inadvertently printed the wrong date. The first edition of the paper showed March 18th, 2006 on the front page. The second edition (after volunteers using scissors and tiny sticky labels labored for hours to correct the error) showed

the correct date. For the record, last Thursday was, in fact, May 18th.

In the same paper, an illustration by Rachel Becker for teh community gardening article was inadvertently attributed to the article's author, Ruth Witty. The photo of a jack-in-the-pulpit with David Brule's "Spring Almanac" was taken by Monique Brule.

We regret these errors and omissions.

Brick House Grant Supports RiverCulture Project

The Brick House Community Resource Center has received a \$7,500 grant from the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts. It will be used to support the Turners

Falls RiverCulture Project - promoting Turners Falls and the surrounding community as a great place to live and enjoy the arts, nature and outdoor recreation.

SENIOR CENTER ACTIVITIES May 29th - June 2nd

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

Monday, 29th
10:15 a.m. Aerobics
11:30 a.m. PACE Aerobics
Tuesday, 30th
9:30 a.m. Aerobics

Wednesday, 31st
10:15 a.m. Senior Aerobics
12:45 p.m. Bingo
Thursday, 1st
1 p.m. Pitch
Friday, 2nd
10:15 a.m. Senior Aerobics
11 a.m. PACE Aerobics

ERVING Senior Center, 18 Pleasant St., Erving (Old Center School, 1st Floor), is open Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. for activities and congregate meals. For information and reservations call Polly Kiely, Senior Center director at (413) 423-3308. Lunch daily at 11:30 a.m. with reservations a day in advance by 11:00 a.m. Transportation can be provided for meals, Thursday shopping, or medical necessity by calling Dana Moore at (978) 544-

FACES & PLACES

PHOTO BY KARENSTINCHFIELD

Neither rain nor hail nor thunder...

Scary Skies threatened the fun at the Great Falls Art Fest organized by the Brick House Community Resource last weekend. The crowd certainly would have been larger with better weather, but the people who did attend had a great time May 20th and 21st. Twenty-two artists, two days of live music, food vendors, TeeVee the Clown, Hoopla Hoops with Shenandoah of Alotta Hoopla, Turners Falls Fire Department's antique engine, face painting, and a visit from Cinderella herself made the event special for everyone who dared to brave the weather. It may have been an art festival, but it was all about the community coming together and having a great time!

Watershed Monitoring Training May 30th

ATHOL - On Tuesday, May 30th at 6:30 pm, the Millers River Watershed Council will sponsor a Shoreline and Mid-Stream Survey training session for volunteers who wish to help protect the watershed by recording their observations of a particular stretch of river or stream. The training will be held at the Millers River Environmental Center, 100 Main Street, Athol, and is open to all, including those who did the training last year and want a refresher. The Millers River Watershed includes all or parts of 17 towns in Massachusetts, from Gardner and Ashburnham in the east to Millers Falls and Erving in the west. Please register to attend. To register or for more info call 978-248-9491 or email council@millersriver.net.

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42 YEARS ON AVENUE A
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BY RUTH WITTY

TURNERS FALLS - This year, one lucky family will be able to buy an extremely energy efficient home, located at 33 Turnpike Road in Turners Falls. The home is being built by Franklin County Technical School students under the supervision of their instructors for Rural Development, Inc., a non-profit organization based out of Turners Falls. RDI has built more than 80 homes for low- and moderate-income families in Franklin County over the last few years.

Ann Perkins is the director of RDI's Home Ownership Program. Perkins said the roof on the Turnpike Road house features a three-kilowatt solar electric photovoltaic panel, installed by the electrical students under the direction of William Gallant. A very efficient boiler, the Veissmann Vitodans was donated at cost by Paul Ross Associates, and

installed by the plumbing students, under the watchful eye of Paul Doran. The house has extensive blown-in dry cellulose insulation, made from recycled newspaper, giving the building a very high R-value. As the home is very tight, there is the need for ventilation, provided by ventilating fans. These were also installed by the students in the Tech School's electrician's program.

Perkins said, "As houses get Greener, students are not only learning the skills to build a house, but also to build an environmentally friendly house." For another example, the plumbing students are installing dual flush toilets at Turnpike Road. These units use a lot less water than the traditional toilet.



33 Turnpike Road comes complete with photovoltaic panels, for some lucky family, thanks to students at the Tech School

Even in the yard drought tolerant grass seed will be sown, producing a lawn that tolerates low rainfall and does not need to be watered.

The students feel they have picked up skills that will be of great benefit to them in their future careers. Heidi Haskell said she has learned roofing, dry wall installation and framing at the Turnpike Road project, and also how to install photovoltaic panels. Nick Demers, in the

plumbing program, said he has learned skills he will certainly apply, especially how to adhere to the plumbing code. He is in the eleventh grade. The Turnpike Road house is the first one he has helped to build. Later he plans to work in the co-op program, which entails working for a master plumber. This job provided Demers his first experience with a

Veissmann boiler, which uses low temperature radiant heat. Nick found it interesting to watch how "everything comes together" in building a house.

Jessica Gould is in the carpentry program at the Tech School. She said, "I've learned a lot from building this house." From October to May, the students have been working on the house every other week, while pursuing academic studies on alternate weeks. I asked if this

schedule made it difficult for students in the vocational program to pass the MCAS exams, and Gould agreed this is a challenge. Gould plans to use the experience she has gained at the Tech School to go on to college in Architectural Design.

Jeff Hubbard, another student building the Turnpike Road house, said he learned about photovoltaics, and how they produce electricity from the sun. The sun hits the cells on the roof, and the energy is transformed into electricity for the homeowner to use. However, Hubbard said, the Turnpike Road house does have a regular electrical connection for back-up. Hubbard said he enjoyed building a house from the beginning to the end.

Soon, a family will have a very environmentally friendly home to live in, not far from the school that produced this efficient building. The students have reason to be proud.

Local Mack Expert Presides over Antique Truck Show

BY JOSEPH A. PARZYCH

SUNDERLAND - Fred Chase of Gill, the president of the Western Massachusetts New England Antique Truck Club, was the prime mover and organizer of the Western Massachusetts annual regional show held at Matuszko Trailer Repair in Sunderland on Sunday, May 7th. About 350 people came trucking on down there to admire the 107 trucks exhibited in the show. Twenty-seven of the thirty members of the Western Massachusetts Chapter entered trucks.

Donna and John Black of Northfield showed their 1920 Autocar dump truck, sporting a heavy duty coal body and a gravel hoist. A 1937 flat head Ford V/8 powered 1-1/2 platform truck, owned by C. Parson, operator of Peterson's Welding in Gill, is a working truck as well as a show truck.

Fred Chase showed his 1948 Type 45 Mack fire truck,

an EF Mack and a Mack Superliner. Charlie Clark of Shutesbury displayed a 1925 Mack AB dump truck from his collection of restored Macks.

Other antique truck owners came from far and wide. Carol and Wayne Fisher brought their blue Mack LFT down from Hancock, N. H.

Jeff Mitchell of Barre proudly showed a Mack fire truck. It was the first one off the Allentown, PA assembly line in 1932, a prototype Bulldog BX type 60. It is perhaps the only Mack truck in captivity sporting chrome radiator shutters. It was originally shipped to California via the Panama Canal and thence made its way to Gap, Nevada where



Unidentified spectator stands in front of C. Parson's Peterson Welding 1937 Ford truck.

Mitchell found it and shipped it back east, over land this time, to Barre, MA. The fire truck had been in service for over 50 years, from 1932 until 1983, and it is still running strong despite its worldly wandering.

Steve Puffer of Amherst brought an extensive lineup of heavy duty dump trucks. Puffer, who is still active restoring trucks and heavy

equipment at age 93, drove an antique AC Mack to display at the show.

Over the years, Chase has become involved in the business of buying and selling antique trucks at his Four Wheel Drive Repair Service on the French King Highway in Gill. A former mechanic for Lane Construction, Chase is a well-know expert in the repair and lore of Mack trucks. "We started out in the 1960s repairing four wheel jeeps and such. As that petered out, we shifted over to heavy truck and equipment repair, but we repair most anything."

Chase has been in business for 43 years and does not show any signs of letting up. If you have any questions about Mack trucks, Fred is the guy to

ask. I asked him if Mack ever made four-wheel drive models. He replied, "Yes. I drove one out of here just yesterday."

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Tired of Paying for Schools After All These Years

BY PATRICIA PRUITT

A responsible member of our community reported the above statement as a sentiment expressed by many other (also responsible) citizens of our community. In light of the vote for a \$600,000 override at the May 6th annual town meeting, the fatigue expressed in the above statement is likely to become exhaustion.

Some people see the question of the override as the choice between the schools or whatever other capital projects the town might need. Two that come to mind are the Police/Safety complex and the combined Senior Center/Library/Community Center.

Just yesterday, town department heads brought yet another consequence of not voting for the override vividly into view; this consequence, like those of underfunding the schools, has been there all along. That is, town services will be on the chopping block right along with more cuts to school services if the override doesn't pass.

I am not a lover of doom and gloom scenarios. I do not desire to depress you or alarm you. But as I see it, Montague, (though not alone among towns), is in the unenviable position of a person given three choices: cut off his right leg, or else his left leg, or hack both of them to the point where he can merely crawl along. While passing an override makes no one happy, it will spare both the town and the school district from a very painful hack job.

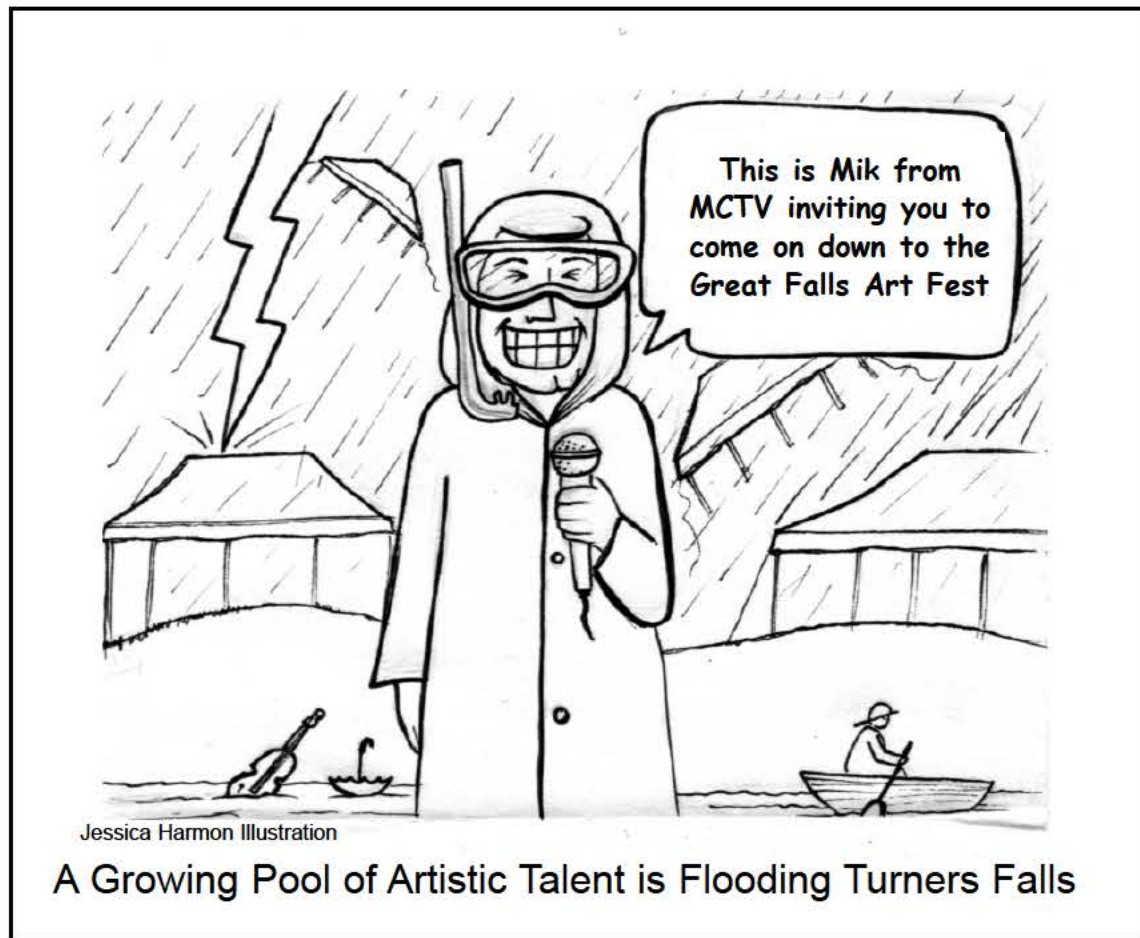
The GMRSD and the town have worked together in a fiscal collaboration for the past three years. In the main what this period of collaboration has done is change our perceptions from an adversarial view of each other, to a view of both town government and school district as the necessary entities of the

Town of Montague. The finance committee and the selectboard felt our contribution to the schools, while significant, could not match their needs this year. Both sides felt pushed to the override as the immediate option for funding.

Each has made drastic cuts or reallocations of funds during the last few years. Each has tried to lower costs wherever possible. We have gotten by with a cut here, a little more cash there. The same kind of juggling that working people have always done when money is too tight is now done on town-wide systems. This year the town does not have the funds to go beyond the amount allocated at town meeting for the schools.

It was inevitable that this day of asking for an override would come. (I myself, and many others, think the big mistake was the vote to cut the state income tax rate. But no one has yet taken on the fight to increase that source of revenue for school costs. Indeed, the state Senate voted unanimously to continue cutting the state income tax just yesterday.) I think one reality the override addresses, one that is verifiably real in all our experience, is the increased costs of fuel and any materials made from petroleum. In so far as this increased cost is not being augmented by funding at the state level, we -- institutions and individuals alike -- have to readjust our spending to cover this rising cost. This is just one area of cost increase. Don't forget health care costs or funding decreases or losses as in the case of funding lost to school choice options and flight to charter schools.

I urge you to vote for the override. If you do, we can get on with figuring out how we'll do it all next year, without the option of asking you for an override. Hopefully, by next



Jessica Harmon Illustration

A Growing Pool of Artistic Talent is Flooding Turners Falls

year the state legislature will have reconfigured upward the amounts allocated for Chapter 70 monies to the schools. Certainly by then the GMRSD will have decided on which and how many schools to close. (O yes, that is one of our options in the lean new future.)

On the townside, new growth anticipated may come about to increase town revenues. The school may further cut its health costs; it may join the Hampshire COG electricity purchasing program to cut the electric bill as the town has done. They may require students to wear coats and heat their classrooms to 62 to save on heat. They may buy just one book, or one computer per two students. They may raise the cost of games and school dances by \$1.50. And of course the town can tap its cash cow -- trash stickers -- for another \$.50 a bag. Or perhaps leave snow plowing to the generosity of private individuals. I'm not suggesting these just mentioned items will be our choices in the coming year, but we will make some difficult ones which will take a lot of careful thinking. Next budget season the schools and the town will be back trying to cover future cost increases with inadequate resources.

To our elderly citizens who have been paying for school and town costs longer than the rest of us; you have been willing to do the hard thing in the past to fund the schools. You have supported town government. I am sorry to be asking you to do so again. I hope the voters of Montague will support the override.

I urge everyone to vote on Tuesday, June 6th, from noon to 7 p.m.

Patricia Pruitt is chair of the Montague selectboard and also a town meeting member from, precinct 5. On Wednesday night, (see adjoining article) the selectboard voted unanimously to support the override request for the school budget.

Finance Committee, Selectboard Vote to Support School Override

BY DAVID DETMOLD

MONTAGUE - Finance committee chair Jeff Singleton seemed to have some support from members of the selectboard for a compromise proposal on the \$600,000 school override at the start of a joint meeting between the two boards Wednesday evening, May 24th. But after two hours of sometimes passionate debate, both boards voted unanimously to actively support the tax hike measure.

"We've put this measure on the ballot for June 6th," Singleton began, "given the information we've received that it is unfair to cut \$600,000 from the schools - or whatever the figure is when the dust settles on state aid - and we can't cut \$600,000 from the townside of the budget. I propose we vote for the override, but it seems a very large amount to raise. I suggest we have the schools come up with an additional \$200,000 in cuts or new revenues; have the town come up with \$200,000, and ask the taxpayers to contribute \$200,000. Vote the override and pledge not to spend it all."

"You could vote it down," said selectboard member Pat Allen.

"If the voters approve the increase of the tax levy, you're not obligated to spend it all," commented town accountant Carolyn Olsen.

Finance committee Marge Levenson said, "I'm against the split" that Singleton proposed. "I'm an unabashed supporter of the override. I don't want to play a gambling game with the children of this community." She upbraided the selectboard, "They may not be taxpayers, but you also represent the children." As for the argument that senior citizens can not afford the estimated \$150 annual hike in the average tax bill, Levenson said, "It's my belief that seniors are grandparents; they have grandchildren in the schools. Town meeting is well represented with senior citizens, and they voted overwhelmingly to support

the override. We should move forward as best we can to support this... rather than singling one group out. The schools are part of the towns." She called for a thorough examination of town and school spending following the June 6th vote, to avoid the need for future tax hikes. But she said with the withdrawal of adequate state and federal support, "People need to realize the buck stops here."

Town administrator Frank Abbondanzio detailed a probable improvement for Montague of \$53,000 in state aid for the schools in the Senate Ways and Means budget proposal, likely to be incorporated in the final state figures in June, along with an increase in \$13,000 in payment in lieu of taxes for the town. Those figures, along with a possible \$40,000 increase in state reimbursement in regional transportation funding for the schools that Superintendent Sue Gee spoke of, are the only improvement the town is likely to see in the budget gap this year.

Selectboard chair Patricia Pruitt voiced support for the override. "We saw what happened three years ago when we lost [24] teachers. We lost students, as parents decided to choose out of the district."

Abbondanzio spoke of the deep
continued on page 9

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Remembrance of Two Soldiers

BY DAVID BRULE

MILLERS FALLS - The three of us were sitting on the roof of the house on Carlisle Avenue one Sunday morning in late May, many years ago. We were up there supposedly to repair roofing shingles, but we were also enjoying the fine view of the neighborhood and the Connecticut River flowing quietly through the Narrows. One of us was my father, the other was my father's school friend and lifelong next-door neighbor, Babe Fritz. And then there was me, fresh from my second year in college and full of my sophomore self (they don't call us "wise fools" for nothing).

I was going on about my coming year in France, sailing on the Queen Mary for Paris in August, and so on. Babe listened. He was the carpenter, and we were sort of his helpers. Mostly we just talked and he worked. He was silent, an enigma. He only spoke in ironic terms, as I recall. Out of the blue he said, "Just watch out when you get to Pig Alley." Then he went on hammering and whistling, and that was all

he said.

I guessed that by "Pig Alley" he meant Pigalle, a well-known red-light district in Paris. I had heard it mentioned in a piece of Hollywood fluff called "Irma La Douce" with Jack Lemmon and Shirley McClaine, but they didn't teach us about Pigalle in French class. Later though, my mother recalled an old WWII article that put Babe and Pigalle in perspective.

After D Day, Babe's unit found itself fighting door to door through the streets of Paris. Right through Pigalle they fought, at the foot of the Basilica of the Sacré-Coeur, just below Montmartre, where Picasso, Renoir and Toulouse-Lautrec used to paint and hang out... It was summer and it was hot, in 1944, with the German occupiers stubbornly resisting the allied troops who were taking back Paris street by street. Babe, our future next-door neighbor, barely a young man of twenty at the time, found himself moving doorway to doorway, stepping out to shoot, ducking back in. At one point in the street fighting, according to the arti-

cle, he found himself in the doorway of a café, and he heard someone say "ahem!" behind him, and when he turned, he saw a French bartender politely handing him a freshly poured glass of draft beer. Babe never drank, but he gulped down that beer without saying a word, kept stepping out and shooting, and was gone up the street.

Somehow it made it into the papers, but I'm sure Babe wouldn't have told it himself. He made it through the battle of Paris, and the Battle of the Bulge, and came home. But I know he paid a price for spending the best years of his youth in the war. Even back then, I could tell that the neighbor spent long restless nights, cigarette after cigarette glowing in the dark until morning when it would be time to go fishing, trying not to think about the enemy coming after him again and again in the dark.

That fall, after the conversation on the roof, freshly arrived in Paris, I went through Pigalle, marveling that just twenty years before, our taciturn neighbor had battled through those same

streets. Back then, some of the buildings still had holes from the fighting and shelling. Now, even in 2006, when I bring my High School students through that Pigalle neighborhood on the way to Montmartre and the Basilica, I tell them the story of a young guy from Turners who helped liberate Paris more than sixty years ago. Kids need to get a sense of how this history all fits together.

There's a quiet suburb in another part of Paris, where we live from time to time when we're not in Millers Falls. Near a park, where well-dressed French children play, scream and romp on the slides and seesaw, there's a plaque on the outside wall of a garden. The street is shady and quiet (except for the screaming kids in the playground), well kept, sparkling in the morning after the nightly washing crews pass through the streets hosing everything down.

The plaque honors a young American from New York, Anthony Palazzo, who died on this spot in 1944 in the fight to drive the Germans out. And every year, without fail, on May

8th (Victory over Germany) and on November 11th, the town holds a simple ceremony on this spot and makes sure there are bouquets of flowers to honor and thank the soldier who died there.

Whenever I've walked down this street, whether it was long ago, taking our son to play in that park, or more recently, just out for a quiet walk in the evening, I always stop to think about this young man honored by the plaque, who in a lot of ways made it possible for me to be there, and who never got to be as old as I am now.

The wars come and go, call them Korea, Viet Nam or Iraq, the nation unites or divides, the wars are just or unjust. But it's mostly the small towns it seems, that provide the common people who pay the price. Sometimes they don't come back, often-times they do, to resume their lives as best they can. Simple stories like those above could be repeated tenfold or a hundredfold in our town. It's just important to remember and reflect, each in your own way, on Memorial Day.

A Memorial for Andy Ducat

BY MARVIN SHEDD

BERNARDSTON - About a quarter of a mile up Martindale Road, on a slight curve, a tall maple tree stands. Its roots are firmly planted in the East Bernardston soil; its branches, old and broken, protrude at awkward angles. Peeling bark litters the ground around a moss covered trunk that bears the scars of age. For years this maple tree stood in relative anonymity, barely noticed by passersby. Early one July morning, two years ago, that changed. A young man, driving home from work, fell asleep, crashed and died on the bend in the road where the tree stands. At that moment, an old tree and a young life became inextricably linked in tragedy.

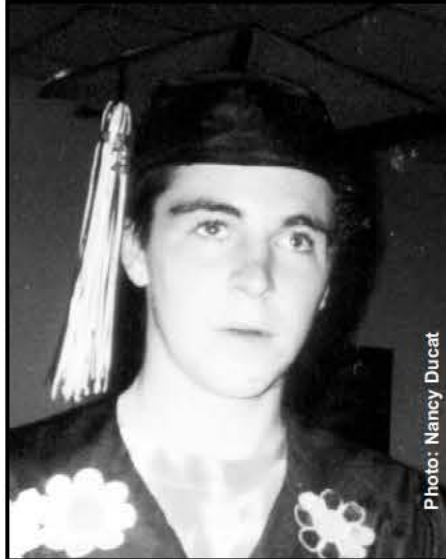
Within days of the funeral, his friends began to congregate at the site of the young man's death. Through grief, they struggled to make sense of their loss. Memories intertwined with laughter, tears, smoke, and wine, to salve their wounds. By conjuring his spirit, they were able to sooth their own. This tall maple tree was gradually transformed into a memorial, each trinket and memento left behind a tribute to that young man. It became a place, not of death, or sadness, but a place of hope; a source of peace and strength for those who loved Andy Ducat.

Andy was born on September 19, 1981, the first born of Nancy Stratford Ducat. As a child he exhibited a pen-

chant for getting into mischief; his mother always worried about what trouble he would get into next. He wasn't a bad kid; it was just that, to Andy, the world was to be explored and enjoyed. He wasn't about to let somebody else's viewpoint keep him from investigating whatever caught his eye. As a child, he loved professional wrestling, and spent hours watching the choreographed action on television. He frequently smuggled his wrestling figures into school to show his 5th grade teacher, Dan Brown. As his teacher listened intently, Andy regaled him with stories of his favorite wrestler, "Iron Man" Ted Dibiase.

School didn't interest Andy much. Sitting in a classroom with his nose in a book interfered with his zest for life. Andy wasn't exactly sure what he wanted to do with life, but he was pretty sure school wasn't going to provide him with the answer. Despite this unconventional attitude, the teachers and staff at Bernardston Elementary and Pioneer Valley High School, loved and admired him. They recognized and respected his ability and understood, even if he didn't, that he would one day find his place in the world.

The worries and concerns of high school behind him, Andy started to branch out. He became a devotee of Jerry Garcia and the Grateful Dead.



Andy Ducat

Photo: Nancy Ducat

His mother remembers the time he traveled to Denver, with a group of friends, to see them. The car was such a broken down junk, she wasn't sure it would survive the trip. He became a regular attendee at the Red Rocks Music Festival and the Rainbow Festival. He also developed a great passion for Karaoke. He was enjoying life, but his restless spirit told him something was missing. His sense of the world around him told him to find out what it was. Influenced by the music, its message and the people he met at these festivals, he became passionate about the injustice faced by so many in our society and wondered what he could do to help.

In 2003 he enrolled at Greenfield Community College. His plan was to get an associates degree in criminal justice. At GCC, he met Stella

Xanthakos, a Northampton attorney and GCC professor. Stella immediately recognized the passion and commitment in Andy, and did what she could to help him. She was so impressed, that she set him up with an internship in the law office of Harry Miles, a colleague of hers in Northampton. Andy fell in love with the work; Miles was equally impressed with him. When the internship was over, he stayed on, working for nominal pay. Andy had found his place and started to make plans for what he would do when he finished school.

It wasn't to be. Andy's hopes and dreams died with him that July morning. It's hard to imagine a greater tribute to Andy than was paid him at his funeral. With his coffin decorated with Dancing Bear dolls, a wide array of people gathered to say goodbye to their friend. Many of them found the courage to speak about how Andy had impacted their lives. Each speaker embraced the same theme - Andy loved and cared about people. Those same friends stayed after the graveside service to bury him. They weren't about to let someone who didn't even know him do it.

Andy wasn't perfect. His proclivity for living on the edge, for taking risks, sometimes put him at odds with authority. His rebellious nature sometimes led him down the

wrong path, and despite his best efforts, trouble seemed to find him. Those not inclined to look beyond the surface, might say it was these rebellious years that defined Andy Ducat. His family and friends, remember an entirely different young man. The people who knew him best remember a young man who remained optimistic about the world and the people in it. They remember a compassionate soul who believed the world could be better.

When Nancy Ducat goes out for her evening walk, she stops at the tree. As the sun sets, she straightens the peace flag she placed there. She thinks about her son, not with sadness or tears, although sometimes they come. She remembers the good times, like the time Andy surprised her with tickets to a Tom Petty concert for her birthday. On Mothers Day, he surprised her again with tickets to a Bob Dylan concert. She recalls the night he knocked on her bedroom door to tell her he'd brought a friend home. The friend had fallen on hard times and had no place to sleep, so Andy brought him home to sleep on the couch. That was Andy, always ready to lend a hand, to help someone out.

Nancy misses her son but is comforted by thoughts of him; she still feels his spirit near her. He comes to her in her dreams. He doesn't speak but she knows he is at peace and that is the greatest comfort of all.

NOTES FROM THE GILL-MONTAGUE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Hail and Farewell

BY DAVID DETMOLD - Tuesday's school committee meeting began with a bittersweet leave-taking of a number of veteran teachers, who together held a total of 267 years of service to the district. They were given heartfelt encomiums by their principals and roses from the superintendent of schools Sue Gee.

Chris Jutres, principal of Hillcrest School, said of Geri Burnham, physical education teacher for nearly two decades, "P.E. is a difficult thing to teach in elementary school. Keeping the kids enthusiastic, interested, focused is a big challenge, but not for Geri. She does yoga with them, she gets them oriented, they take turns and play fairly with one another. Their lives have been made better with their experience with you."

Jeff Kenney, Middle School principal, praised departing band and music director Steve Ciechomski for his 33 years of service to his students, and all the parades, concerts and contests he has led them through. "It's not about how long you teach, or what you teach," said Kenney. "It's about how you touch the hearts and minds of your stu-

dents. And you have done that."

"We had a lot of fun and did a lot of great things over the years," said Ciechomski. "I hope whoever succeeds me will continue with that energy. We've always had great kids."

Other departing educators honored included Carol Gloski, of whom Chip Wood, Sheffield principal said, "Parents will come up on graduation day and seek out Carol, who now is teaching their children (or grandchildren), after 32 years of service... What a difference she has made to them." And Wood recalled meeting Sue Hastings on their first year of service to the district, 35 years ago, at Central Street School. "She inspired me then, and she inspires me now with the same enthusiasm, nurturing love of children, and wisdom."

Jutres spoke of Carol Holubecki's importance to the district schools after 35 years of service. "For 27 years she taught 1st grade," before switching to the reading recovery program. "What an impact that has made for our school. She is a champion for the struggling reader. She has fought with her whole soul to help these children be successful

in school."

Bob Mahler lauded the contributions of Rebecca Hurwitz (36 years) and Maureen Keating (33 years) at Montague Center and Kathleen O'Shea (25 years) at Gill Elementary. "I owe a lot to Becky for keeping Montague Center a viable and vibrant space." Keating he called "the energy source of Montague Center. She did a wonderful job of creating a warm and inviting classroom." O'Shea he called "the foundation, the rock," of Gill. "You're going to miss me," Keating told him, and Mahler told the assembled teachers and school committee members, "She's right. She's a mentor to us all. I looked to Kathy for advice and common sense."

In addition to the departing teachers, Gee spoke of principal Rob Morrill's contribution to the district in the three short years he has been at the helm of Turners Falls High, capping a 35-year career in public education. "I put him right down in the epicenter of a \$32 million reconstruction project, where the walls moved semester to semester, and he embraced that project in a calm, cheerful way."

Speaking for the entire committee, chair Mary Kociela told the departing educators, "We wish you well. Thank you for all the years you have given to the district."

Good Fiscal News

GMRSD business manager Lynn Bassett said new figures from the Senate Ways and Means budget show slight improvement over the Governor's budget, which the school committee used to shape the '07 operating budget. Increases in Chapter 70 school aid of about \$54,000, coupled with an increase of about \$8,000 in the way Charter School charges may be calculated led to optimism over a net gain of about \$62,000, if these changes are included in the final state budget, due sometime in June.

Kociela cautioned, "Our funding gap is well over \$700,000. I just want people to understand."

The GMRSD is also awaiting final figures on regional school transportation reimbursement from the state.

Bassett had more good news for district towns, regarding the \$32 million school renovation project at the high school and middle schools. Bond anticipation notes (premiums from the financial institution from which the school district has arranged short term borrowing for the building project for '06) in the amount of \$240,716.50 have been issued to the district, which by law will be returned to the district towns in proportion to their district enrollment for '07. Consequently, the school committee approved writing checks to disburse the BAN premiums to Gill for \$31,774.55 and Montague for \$208,941.95.

Montague town accountant Carolyn Olsen said, "When Montague receives that money, it is not treated as a general revenue. It has to be segregated and used to pay down the principal or interest on the debt," for the

school building project. Olsen said it would likely be applied to offset the impact of the debt exclusion for the school building project in fiscal year '08, since the '07 tax bill for the school building debt has already been reduced to zero due to an excess in the school debt reserve account. That reduction will result in a savings of \$63 to the average tax bill (on a property of \$175,000) in fiscal '07, said Olsen. She estimated a similar savings could result for the average tax bill in fiscal '08, due to the \$208,941.95 BAN premium disbursement to the town.

However, Olsen said the taxpayers would likely see an increase of roughly equal proportion in fiscal '09, once the town's 10% portion of the building project is sent out for long-term borrowing.

Bassett made it clear the day was fast approaching when the GMRSD would close the books on the building project. A final audit has been scheduled for the middle of June, in an attempt to close the books by the end of this fiscal year, and expedite the state's payment of 90% of the costs of construction. Bassett said, "If we get our audit completed in June, the state will give us our 90% right away, and we will go to permanent bonding," for the remainder. "It's time to wrap it up."

She had further good news for the district towns. "At this point we are \$1 million under budget," on the high school - middle school renovation.

Kociela said, "It's been a very successful building project. We were able to use the building the entire time."

Earlier in the evening, Bassett noted the GMRSD was on track to wind up the current fiscal year with \$100,000 to spare, to be placed in the excess and deficiency fund. Gee said a budget freeze was in effect for the remainder of

see SCHOOL pg 7

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Moose Reappeared

Friday 5-19

6:55 p.m. Caller from Lake Grove School, Wendell, reported a runaway.

Saturday 5-20

1:08 a.m. Report of an assault at the 2nd Street Sports Bar.

[REDACTED], was arrested and charged with assault and battery.

Sunday 5-21

1:07 a.m. After a motor vehicle stop on Millers Falls Road at E. Mineral Road, Amber [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] was arrested and

charged with operating under the influence of liquor, speeding, and marked lanes violation.

7:41 a.m. Report of a missing dog from a Montague Ave address. Reported party called back later to say the dog had returned.

6:39 p.m. Report of a hit and run accident on Unity Street. Driver was issued a summons.

Monday 5-22

8:52 a.m. A 16-year-old female juvenile was arrested on a straight warrant.

1:40 p.m. [REDACTED] A [REDACTED] was arrested on a straight war-

rant.

Tuesday 5-23

7:35 a.m. Several calls received report a moose by Scottie's. Also seen on Park Street, Davis Street, Dell Street. It disappeared into the woods by the golf course.

8:08 p.m. Caller reports moose reappeared on Montague City Road.

Wednesday 5-24

12:22 p.m. [REDACTED] was arrested on Highland Street in Millers Falls on two default warrants and a straight warrant.

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NOTES FROM THE ERVING SELECTBOARD

Diesel Fuel Spills In Car-Truck Wreck

BY CYD SCOTT - On Monday, May 22nd, the Erving selectboard met briefly with firechief Mick LaClaire to discuss the cleanup of a toxic spill on Route 2, right next to the Millers River, just west of Erving Center. The spill of diesel fuel, which resulted from a car - truck wreck, is now contained in two 55-gallon drums on the side of the Route 2, waiting for Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection personnel to remove it. Board chair Andy Tessier said, "We have to do what the DEP says with this stuff; we

don't want to mess with it. We had the spill and now it's their problem."

Board member Linda Downs-Bembury commented, "It looks bad sitting there. The plastic looks like something buried on the side of the highway."

The board met with Jeff Thelan, a representative of the engineering firm Tighe and Bond, working with the town on capping the Farley landfill at the end of Maple Avenue. The DEP wants one more well test site on the property, and the addition of 3,000 cubic yards of dirt to pro-

vide additional protective cover at least two feet deep on the old landfill.

Downs-Bembury asked a sensible question. "How do we do that over the trees?"

Thelan said, "We can not pull them up. We will bring up trash in their roots."

Andy Tessier said, "We'll use a chainsaw to cut the trees to ground level and then cover the site with dirt."

Thelan said, "Any fill that will grow grass will be acceptable."

DEP will also require the town to change the filing of the

landfill property at the registry of deeds, stating the landfill is there, and outlining what can be done with the land in the future.

The board also met with Jay Rasku from the Mount Grace Land Trust on the possibility of obtaining grant money for two appraisals required for state Self Help grant funding to assist with the town's proposed purchase of 185 acres of land for permanent conservation protection on Old State Road.

Money for the appraisal would come from the North Quabbin Partnership, from a fund available for acquiring and

conserving land.

The board reviewed the cost of the "Anything Goes Day" and found an increase of \$5000 for mattresses. Consequently, the town will not accept mattresses next year without prior approval, and some extra cost to town residents.

In other news, the board authorized a business license for McRae home improvement. They reviewed the town's free cash account, which totals nearly \$800,000 following town meeting expenditures. The cleanout of the Church Street sewer system was approved.

SCHOOL

continued from pg 6

the year, with administrators embargoing a certain amount for each school's graduation ceremonies.

Paris Field Trip

Turners Falls High School French teacher Yanik Nichols received a tentative go-ahead from the school committee to prepare plans for a field trip to Paris, France during February break, 2007. The trip would be open only to students who were taking or had completed French 3. Nichols would be working with a reputable company to arrange the educational tour, she said, and would make certain the students were properly insured.

She said up to 15 students may be eligible, and she would operate the trip on a "rules and consequences" basis, with parents fully informed as to the guidelines beforehand. She said the trip

would be a reward for students "suffering through a year of language study with me," as well as part of the "cultural experience of studying a foreign language."

Picking up on Nichols' distinctive accent, which resembled something you might hear in a Jane Campion film, committee member Mike Langknecht asked the first-year teacher to tell the committee where she hailed from. "Vanuatu, a French colony in the South Pacific." Perhaps thinking of the all-expenses paid junkets state legislators are commonly afforded, Langknecht made a tongue-in-cheek offer to assist with chaperoning the Paris trip.

In other news

With TFHS principal Rob Morrill retiring at the end of the school year, Gee announced the hiring committee had decided to keep the two

remaining administrators at the high school/middle school complex - dean of students Earl MacGraw and middle school principal Jeff Kenney - working together in September. Kenney will become the new principal of secondary education, and MacGraw will be the assistant principal at the high school/middle school.

The committee gave a first reading to an anti-bullying policy (originally known as a bullying policy, until members objected to that title), and suggested amendments. The policy will prohibit all forms of harassment, discrimination, and hate crimes based on race,

color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, or ability.

The committee accepted, with regret, the resignation of Sally Shaw, and invited residents of Gill who might be interested in accepting an appointment to the school committee until the next town election to submit a letter of interest to the superintendent. Gee also noted the resignation of three educators: Merrilee Ironside, Montague Center kindergarten teacher; Elizabeth Ritchie, TFHS history teacher; and Sarah Sayko, reading first coordinator; "all fairly new teachers to our district."

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE GILL POLICE LOG

Vehicle Stuck in Field

Wednesday 5-17

11:30 a.m. Responded with fire department to fire alarm on Saco Lane, all checked o.k.

12:20 p.m. Report of lost money near the Gill-Montague Bridge.

5:40 p.m. Responded to the area of Factory Hollow for a reported youth running from a vehicle. Assisted Greenfield Police with incident that occurred in their town.

6:10 p.m. Officers responded to the French King Bridge to investigate suspicious motor vehicle. Incident under investigation, referred to state police detective unit.

Thursday 5-18

11:30 p.m. Alarm sounding at Main Road business, checked all secure.

Friday 5-19

12:10 a.m. Assisted Erving

Police with motor vehicle stop on French King Hwy.

4:40 p.m Report of two youths shooting at passing vehicle near the French King Bridge. No problem found, was young children playing with toys.

Saturday 5-20

1:40 a.m. Report of a vehicle stuck in a field off of Boyle Road. Responded and investigated same.

1:15 p.m. Received report from Main Road business of a larceny of money from a safe. Under investigation.

Sunday 5-21

5:20 p.m. Responded to assist with medical emergency on West Gill Road.

Monday 5-22

8:01 a.m. Two vehicle accident at Main Road and French King Highway. Report taken.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE ERVING POLICE LOG

Toy Air Rifles

Wednesday 5-17

4:46 p.m. Report of a suspicious vehicle on French King Bridge. Assisted Gill Police and Massachusetts State Police with possible jumper. Assisted Montague Police and MSP K-9 with search of area. Vehicle towed to Gill Police station. Subject involved not located.

Friday 5-19

3:00 p.m. Report of a loose dog on River Street.

Owner located on Pratt Street. Dog picked up.

4:45 p.m. Report of two male youths shooting (toy) air rifles at cars on French King Bridge. Subjects gone on arrival.

Monday 5-22

6:00 a.m. Report of a car vs deer accident on Route 2 by the Smokin' Hippo. No injuries. Minor damage. Deer dead.

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NOTES FROM THE MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Override and Salvage

BY JOHN HANOLD - Monday's meeting of the Montague selectboard illustrated the contrasts in how quickly changes occur in matters of public concern. The expected centerpiece of the meeting, a report on the status of the sewer facility's Combined Sewer Overflow project, was deferred until the June 5th meeting, so the majority of time was devoted to the status of the Railroad Salvage building and signing the warrant for a special election on an override of Proposition 2½.

The board quickly agreed to defer the CSO discussion to their next scheduled meeting (June 5th), in view of the fact they had met earlier in the day with engineers from Camp, Dresser & McKee. CDM has been engaged to do the design work for the project, and at the afternoon meeting the board asked them to return to the board at the later date with a revised approach to the project.

Turning to the school override, the board approved the following text for the June 6th special election warrant:

"Shall the Town of Montague be allowed to assess an additional \$600,000 in real estate and personal property taxes for the purpose of supplementing the Gill-Montague Regional School District assessment for the fiscal year beginning July 1st, 2006?"

In the course of approving the text, the board and audience discussed how the town had wound up going to an override. From the audience, finance committee chair Jeff Singleton asserted this method of addressing a funding shortfall was unfair to all parties -- the town, the district and the taxpayers -- and that more of an effort should have been exerted to reduce the estimated shortfall before setting the requested override figure. A review of

some possible results of "Yes" and "No" votes followed; there seemed to be a general understanding that the worst-case consequence of a negative vote could be a \$600,000 budget cut falling entirely on either the town or the district.

The consensus seemed to be that the preferred outcome was an override of some level, accompanied by reduced spending by both town and district. Since the figure was established by vote at the annual town meeting May 6th, taxpayers will have to rely on the good faith of town and school district officials to reduce their forecasted spending if less money is needed. Singleton used an example of splitting the \$600,000 in thirds, with a \$200,000 override and \$200,000 in budget cuts by both the town and the district, though he did not describe this as a formal recommendation.

Town administrator Frank Abbondanzio recalled the difficulty he and town accountant Carolyn Olsen had in suggesting even \$80,000 in cuts earlier in the budget cycle, and doubted that a reduction of \$200,000 could be achieved without eliminating entire departments and their services to residents. Similarly, borne by the district, a \$200,000 to \$600,000 cut would result in a reversal of much of the recent recovery from the severe cuts three years ago. Each side recognizes the concerns of the other, but both assert the need for the full amount requested.

Residents Peter Fisher and Eric Peterson, of the "South End" or Patch neighborhood between the canal and the river, spoke to the board to urge a speedy resolution of the future of the Railroad Salvage building. After the Sixth Street bridge and Power Street was closed due to fear the building's exterior walls may collapse at

any time, the Eleventh Street access to the Patch has become more congested, and illegal dumping and vandalism at the Railroad Salvage building site has continued. Board chair Patricia Pruitt sympathized with the neighborhood's concerns, and said although re-opening the Sixth Street bridge depended on structural stabilization of the building, the dumping and vandalism could be addressed more quickly.

The owner's plans to secure the building, repair the roof, and design future changes are under close monitoring by building inspector David Jensen and Gina McNeely for the board of health. Jensen does not expect the building to survive the next winter without at least a new roof. Both the current owner, Gary Kosuda, and prospective new owners are trying to secure financing for developing the building, but slow progress to date in meeting safety needs does not bode well for a prompt conclusion to this matter.

In other business the board endorsed two requests for transfers from the town's reserve fund to the accountant and public works department budgets. Both departments have incurred unanticipated costs, for software and fuel respectively, which could not be fully offset by economies elsewhere. The requests go next to the finance committee at their Wednesday meeting for final approval.

Sitting as the town's personnel board, the board also approved a policy for the granting and use of compensatory time off for employees not covered by the Fair Labor Standards Act - primarily department heads - whose workdays frequently are extended by evening meetings where attendance is mandatory or strongly recommended.

Other employees are covered by the provisions of the act, which prescribes overtime pay.

The policy, effective July 1st, sets a maximum balance of 75 hours of accumulated "comp time" approved by the employee's supervisor (usually the town administrator), and allows no more than one week's continuous time off at a time. Employees are expected to use the banked time in a manner that does not impair staff effectiveness, and member Allen Ross suggested the forecasted time be noted in advance to board secretary Wendy Bogusz. Member Pat Allan commended the staff for constructive input in the creation of the policy and its implementation. The open

portion of the meeting ended with a vote to go into executive session for collective bargaining matters.

Montague Override Steering Committee Meeting

The next meeting of the Montague Override Steering Committee will be held at the Montague Elks in Turners Falls on Thursday, May 25th at 7:30 p.m.. The committee has been dubbed "Citizens for Public Education."

For more info: Sue Lapan, committee chair, at 863-2559, or to make donations call Ann Ambo, treasurer at 863-9024.

Athol Passes Prop 21/2 Override for Schools

Athol Royalston Regional Schools superintendent Anthony Polito credited the strong showing of Yes voters who turned out in Athol, Monday (5/22) to pass a \$1.122 million override for the schools by 52% (1074 to 984) to parent organizing. "Athol has never passed an override before, for the schools or the town," said Polito. "The difference this time is the parents organized themselves into a political force. They got other parents involved in the issues, got them registered to vote, and bird-dogged them on election day to make sure the Yes vote was up to where it should be." Working in favor of passage, Polito said, was the willingness of school administration to admit past problems in accountability, and develop a collaborative approach with town officials on school programs and finances.

He said the A-R schools received help in the form of a \$1 million bailout from the state legislature, after coming up short by more than \$900,000 on the current fiscal year's operating budget. The bail-out bill, filed by Rep. Chris Donelan and Senator Steve Brewer, passed in March of this year, in the form of a 10-year loan to the district, allowing them to start Fiscal '07 with a zero balance. "Even then, with a level service budget, we needed the override just to keep the schools from falling back." Polito said his district is under close scrutiny from the DOE for not meeting MCAS goals, and the townspeople realized the money was needed. "In the past, the town and the schools were adversarial," he said. "We are working together now."

Polito credited Chet Hall in Royalston and Donna LaJoy, in Athol, for spearheading the parent mobilization in support of the Proposition 2½ override. Royalston will vote on the measure on June 12th.

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THE NEIGHBORHOOD TOXICOLOGIST

Is Sunscreen Safe?

BY EMILY MONOSSON

MONTAGUE CENTER - Slip, slop, slap. Sunscreens are a summer staple. When the kids were young, I slathered the stuff all over them. As a toxicologist, I knew better. As a mother, I just wanted the convenience of allowing them a day at the beach, free to play in surf and sand without fear of sunburn.

From my own work, I know that any additional chemicals we add to our bodies and our environment come with some risk. As a mother and a consumer, I want to believe that all those federal protections really work. I want to believe that something that comes in pink bottles with pictures of beach balls and kids splashed across the front is safe.

My kids are now nine and twelve. Roughly ten years and countless pink bottles later, I read that those UVA- and UVB-chemical blockers, the active ingredients we look for in our sunblock, can now be categorized as endocrine disruptors, a group of chemicals which includes pesticides, plasticizers, and natural and synthetic hormones. These are chemicals that interfere with normal human development and reproduction.

Ever since the Federal Food and Drug Administration first approved of sunscreen products for protection against skin cancer in the 1970s, the sunscreen industry has thrived, growing into a nearly billion dollar business. During the summer months, young and old alike entrust their skin to the protective qualities of an array of sunblock crèmes and lotions, applying the stuff liberally, several times a day.

The sun's ultraviolet rays can damage skin in at least two ways. The longer UVA rays - which con-

stitute the majority of earthbound ultraviolet sunlight - are responsible for 'tanning' and penetrate deep into the skin, while the shorter UVB rays penetrate fewer layers, causing 'sunburn.' While the UVA rays are blamed for premature aging of the skin, both rays are capable of causing skin cancers.

Sunscreen filters work by absorbing the sun's high energy rays and chemically converting their potentially harmful energy into heat and less energetic, less harmful rays. But, it may just be that the chemical structures necessary for absorbing and converting UVA and UVB rays are also capable of combining with chemical receptors in the body that normally combine only with our natural chemical messengers like estrogens (female hormones) and androgens (male hormones.)

"I first became interested in UV-filters after a colleague reported their presence in human breast milk," said Margret Schlumpf, from the University of Zurich, who discovered the majority of sunscreen filters tested are endocrine active, with some acting as estrogens in mammals.

Estrogen has many different roles in the body, from maintaining normal brain function to essential roles in breast development, puberty and pregnancy. In mammals, estrogen stimulates growth of the uterus, and over the years, scientists have employed uterine growth as a sensitive marker of estrogenic activity in living animals. Using this assay, Schlumpf and her colleagues reported in the journal *Toxicology* that six out of nine sunscreen filters tested positive for uterine growth in rats. The researchers noted however, that effective

concentrations of sunscreens were well above those we - or our kids - are likely to encounter after a weekend in the sun.

As a mother, I was satisfied by this news, and felt assured that over the years I hadn't caused inadvertent sex-reversal in either of my children (although sometimes I think delayed puberty might not be such a bad thing), but I wondered about those federal protections.

Haven't these products passed a battery of tests before reaching our skin? Why, if these chemicals have been in use for decades, are we just finding out about these endocrine disrupting properties now? Turns out they are tested, but as 'over-the-counter' drugs, not as rigorously as prescription drugs. Not even as rigorously as some pesticides and industrial chemicals.

Although I couldn't get a straight answer from the FDA when I asked if the chemicals in sun block had been tested specifically for endocrine disrupting activity, they did tell me it is suggested, though not required, that chemicals such as sunscreen filters be tested for adverse effects on endpoints like fertility and embryo or fetal toxicity.

When I asked Dr. Schlumpf if any one sunscreen is likely to have more than one endocrine disrupting or estrogenic chemical (increasing the total amounts of these chemicals to which one might be exposed,) she replied, "Many have more than one UV-filter. Then there are some synthetic perfumes, and other chemicals like phthalates, those chemicals commonly found in cosmetics and plastics (that can also serve as endocrine disruptors.)" That's just in one lotion.

Schlumpf isn't the only researcher concerned about the impacts of sunscreen filters. Karl Fent's laboratory at the University of Applied Sciences Basil, Switzerland, recently reported in the journal *Toxicological Sciences* that three out of five UV-filters tested in fish acted as estrogens. When asked why test fish, he responded, "We did an earlier study with UV-filters in frogs and wondered about other important aquatic species. Residues of UV-filters are found in fish," but added that "profound effects occurred at concentrations higher than in the environment, so the question of impact on wild fish populations is

open."

This is especially true when one considers that for each complex mixture of endocrine disrupting chemicals in any one brand of sunscreen that washes off our skin while swimming or later, in the shower, there are hundreds if not thousands of other endocrine disrupting chemicals that make their way from our homes and our bodies into the aquatic environment.

According to Marianne Balmer, another Swiss researcher from the Swiss Federal Research Station, who measured quantities of UV-filters in both Swiss lakes and in fish tissues, "For small rivers, wastewater treatment plants were the main source of UV-filters. But, in lakes used for recreational activities, direct inputs, washing off from the skin during bathing, may contribute significantly to the UV-filter load."

Closer to home, some UV-filters have turned up in coastal waters receiving sewage treatment effluents in New York and in California where researchers reported finding male fish carrying not only sperm but eggs as well, (although they cannot at this time point to any one environmental chemical as the cause). The United States Geological Survey has added sunscreen-filters to their growing list of chemicals detected in our nation's waters, and they are currently developing methods for detecting UV-filters in sediments.

When asked for thoughts on the application of UV-filters to infants, young children, and pregnant women, those considered most sensitive to the impacts of endocrine disrupting chemicals, Dr. Schlumpf replied, "I wouldn't advise pregnant women and small kids to put on tons of sunscreen, but I would recommend they protect their skin. Not being in the sun all the time will reduce the amounts of sunscreen used greatly."

My kids aren't so small anymore, but now, besides the tube of sunblock, I've got a couple of SPF-30 t-shirts tucked away in the beach-bag.

Note: this work refers only to those sunscreens that contain what are called "organic" or chemical sunscreens, not to those that contain "physical" blockers such as titanium dioxide or zinc oxide.

OVERRIDE from pg. 4

cuts in the townsides of the budget three years ago, and the hope that some of those cuts to personnel and services could be restored when the lottery tax cap was finally lifted. Three years later, with lottery money returning, the impact of rising fixed costs has prevented restoration of those cuts, he said.

Allen said, "This has been going on for four or five years, and it's not just in Montague. We need to try to get to Boston and Washington and say, "This is killing us all." She warned, "Next year, I see another million dollar increase unless we all unite."

Selectboard member Allen Ross said, "If I were able to slash the budget, where would it come from? I could hear the screams of those receiving services." He spoke of the need to look at consolidating schools and public libraries, and the offsetting revenue development of the landfill on Turnpike Road could provide.

School budget subcommittee chair Valeria Smith spoke of the collaborative process the GMRSD has adopted with the towns over the past three years, seeking savings wherever possible. "This is a bare bones budget." She cited the line item for fuel as a particular concern. "It is very low." She spoke of some cost savings the schools have afforded by combining administrators at the secondary level, and through the retirement of senior educators, to be replaced by new teachers at lower salary figures.

Planning committee chair Doug Dziadzio said after considering the impact of further cuts, he reversed his initial opposition to the tax increase. "You talk about leadership. It comes down to the finance committee and the selectboard to support the override."

Art Gilmore, of Precinct 2, voiced support for the measure, but called for the formation of a committee to examine the structure of town government to see where future cuts could be made. He called on the school committee to take a hard look, as well, at the number of aides they have hired, and classes like high school Latin that are underenrolled.

Gee said the schools would set up a task force to examine next year's budget, and the possibility of consolidating schools. But she spoke of low math MCAS scores in the Middle School, and the "needs improvement" rating for the GMRSD in all categories of a recent state audit. "We just don't have the resources to support the professional development of our teachers and the curriculum for our students."

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Local Activist Works to Stop Violence in Darfur

BY RUTH WITTY

SOUTH HADLEY - In a recent talk at Yale University, New York Times Columnist Nicholas Kristof described his visit to Darfur in the Western Sudan. According to the Yale Bulletin, Kristof spoke of encountering a group of some 30,000 African Sudanese refugees sheltering beneath some trees. Kristof approached several families and asked for their stories. Under one tree were two brothers, one of whom had been shot in the neck and jaw and left for dead. The other brother, shot in the foot, nevertheless managed to carry his brother on his back to relative safety. Under another tree was a woman whose parents had been shot and thrown down a well to poison the water for the whole village. He encountered a woman who had been raped and mutilated. Kristof said those were just a few of the people he spoke to; all had similar stories.

The acts of violence, Kristof

said, were carried out by the Janjaweed, militias made up of tribes who, with the backing of the Sudanese government, have attacked and murdered hundreds of thousands of tribal African Darfurians since 2003. While the exact death toll is unknown, it is estimated at 100,000 to 400,000 people. The violence in the Sudan has created over one million refugees.

Local activist Nathan Abraham is based in South Hadley and runs two organizations: www.StudentsToSaveSudan.org and www.FreeSudanFromSlaveryandGenocide.org. Abraham said he has not actually been to the Sudan. It is extremely difficult to get a visa, as the Sudanese government discourages reporting on the internal situation. It is also very dangerous to travel there.

Asked about the history of the conflict, Abraham replied it has a long and complex history. However, he said, the people being murdered now are no



ILLUSTRATION BY RACHEL BECKER

threat to anyone. They are poor, basically subsistence farmers. They have been driven out of their homes at the rate of two million over the last two and a half years. Abraham said in the fifteen minutes we would spend on our interview, approximately two to ten people would be murdered in Darfur. Even in camps for refugees, people are raped or murdered when they venture out for firewood.

The Sudanese government is acquiring jets and bombers from China. There have been reports of these planes being used to strafe the villages before the Janjaweed go in on horseback or camel to kill the survivors. Asked to speculate about a possible motive for this, Abraham replied there is oil in Sudan and China wants it. China uses its veto power in the U.N. to prevent the U.N. taking any effective action to halt the genocide in Darfur. There is also a traditional hatred of black Africans by the Arab Janjaweed militia, who are reportedly supported by the Sudanese government.

Abraham's group has been active in trying to pressure the U.S. government to take action and also to raise consciousness about the issue. One of their successes was when 600 Sudanese refugees were arrested in Egypt, and the Egyptian government wanted to send them back to the Sudan, probably to their deaths, this past January. Calls to Congress from

Students to Save Sudan working closely with Congressman James McGovern (D-MA) led to pressure being put on the Egyptian government, which backed down and declined to send the refugees back.

Many members of Congress have been very active and involved with the growing international effort to halt the slaughter in Darfur. On April 28th, Congressmen John Olver (D-Amherst) and McGovern were arrested along with three other members of Congress in a peaceful protest in front of the Sudanese embassy in Washington. Activists have been frustrated by inaction from the United Nations, supposedly formed to prevent just this type of violence. Abraham feels a bill is needed to get NATO troops into the region.

Anyone interested in helping stop the genocide in Darfur should contact Abraham at 413-552-3530, or look at the website for www.StudentsToSaveSudan.org.

GILL

continued from pg 1

ing, which drew about 18 residents and planning board members, the proposed village commercial zone was delineated as extending along the Route 2 corridor in Riverside and up Main Road as far as the Kuzmeskus Bus company. The COG planners emphasized this area was envisioned as a part of town where residential and commercial development would both be permitted, with many uses allowed by right, and others by special permit or site plan review. A look at a large scale map showed a number of lots along the west side of Mountain Road with the potential for development, as well as the back lots of numerous properties on the north side of Route 2.

Discussion grew lively on the subject of so-called flag lots (which would allow for driveways on 50 feet or more of frontage adjoining a regular 200 foot lot, with at least 4 acres of land, to allow for back lot development), accessory apartments (meant to provide for 'in-law' apartments within the existing shell of a primary dwelling), and the definition of the word family ("not more than four persons not [legally] related living and cooking together in a single dwelling unit") as it pertains to single-

family homes, and other uses of the word family in the bylaws.

Lawyer and former ZBA member Tupper Brown said, "It seems to me the flag lot proposal is a proposal that we loosen and abandon some of the existing planning bylaws. That's what set the character of the countryside. It's a step back so there can be more development than we have now, on an uncontrolled basis. More housing in the countryside will follow. To my mind, abandoning 200 feet and 2 acres is a major change. We're suggesting the whole town gets opened up."

Builder Stephen Greenwald said, "I think you should have flag lots townwide. There are still a lot of families with kids that want to live here. The only way you're going to be able to afford to live here is flag lots. Are we going to become a town of haves and have nots?"

Planning board member Tim Storow, who favored limiting flag lots to the proposed village commercial district, said, "You can still have subdivisions," elsewhere in town.

Greenwald replied, "I'm not talking about subdivisions. I'm talking about someone who wants to give some land to their children."

Walnut Street resident Bev Demers said, "I don't see how you could get any flag lots in

Riverside. There's no room at all."

Sloan said, "We had proposed flag lots as an infilling technique where water and sewer already exists" (i.e. from Riverside up Main Road to Mountain Road). By this criteria, if the existing Riverside district to the south of Route 2 is eliminated due to lack of space, that would leave only the proposed Village Commercial district under consideration for flag lots.

Talk turned to trophy homes on hillsides with 1000-foot driveways, prime views to those who could afford them, and whether cluster homes are more or less appealing than 'McMansions' on a ridgeline.

Seeking consensus, planning board chair Suzanne Smiley said, "People who have owned their land a long time have the right to use their land. But perhaps it's wisest to take an incremental approach. We should start with flag lots in the Village Commercial district."

That is what the group decided to recommend. After weighing a few more pros and cons, they also decided to allow flag lots in that district for both residential and commercial uses.

This part of the discussion ended when Mountain Road resident John Duda asked if flag lots were approved townwide, whether everyone who owned

enough frontage and acreage for backlot development would automatically be taxed for extra building lots. There was not a clear answer to this question.

On the subject of accessory apartments, intended to house no more than two people in no more than 800 feet of the existing shell of the primary building, with either the main dwelling or the accessory apartment to be permanently occupied by the property owner, Greenwald posed a number of problem scenarios. "They're going to take out a building permit one year, build an 800-square-foot garage; next year they'll be in for an accessory apartment on the second story. If you have two-family homes (duplexes) permitted by right throughout town, why are you doing this?"

Sloan said, "This is envisioning an in-law apartment, without walls or separate entrances."

Greenwald said the building code would require separate entrances or egresses.

Zafian said the state would give points to the town for adopting a bylaw specifically for accessory apartments, making Gill more competitive for certain state grants.

Brown asked, "Are you allowed to rent a room in this town?"

This question prompted

some amusement. The general reply was, "Don't ask, don't tell."

On the subject of what is considered a family for purposes of the bylaws, Greenwald, (a member of the former Renaissance Community), said he was offended by the thought that no more than four non-related people would be allowed to occupy a single-family home. If the state is favoring smart growth development, in part, to spur affordable housing in rural communities, why limit the definition of a family in this way, some wondered. "Why should the government get involved in defining a family at all?" demanded Greenwald.

Sloan said in Sunderland, and other towns near college campuses, experience with parties, parking, and traffic at some group homes occupied by college students led to the inclusion of the definition of family in the bylaws.

Town meeting will have to approve all changes to the town's zoning bylaws. The Smart Growth planning meetings will continue on Tuesday, June 20th at town hall at 7 p.m. FRCOG's participation is being paid for by a \$12,400 grant from the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs.

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NOTES FROM THE WENDELL SELECTBOARD

Landowner Seeks to Conserve Montague Road Acreage

BY JOSH HEINEMANN
WENDELL - Kate Neilson and Dan LaRoche from the Mount Grace Land Trust met the Wendell selectboard at its May 17th meeting and started the process of putting a conservation restriction on approximately 48 of the 62 acres Neilson owns that front on Montague Road. The piece she wants to protect is in back, behind the town salt shed, and extends down to the pond and wetland at the bottom of the hill that drains into Fiske Brook. The land has been under Chapter 61, but the conservation restriction, which will be held by the Mount Grace, would make the protection permanent. The conservation restriction would exclude farming, but allow timber harvest, and exclude motorized vehicles

except for logging. Fourteen acres, which include a house, are outside the CR.

Neilson admitted she was accepting a financial loss by putting this restriction on the sale of her land, but said the parcel she owns is special, even in Wendell, because of its large trees, open feeling, and the location which connects an active wetland with other protected land. She wants to avoid the kind of development she has seen impacting beautiful land elsewhere in the country. Four other Wendell residents came with her and all spoke in favor of her choice.

LaRoche said there will be no impact on taxes because the land is already under Chapter 61. He and Neilson came before the selectboard because the state

legal process will require town approval, and they need assurance of that. The selectboard gave their assurance that when the process came back to them, they would approve it.

Selectboard member Christine Heard handed out the proposed strategic plan for Mahar Regional High School. She said school committee member Jean Forward went to a two-day workshop that developed that plan.

Board members Dan Keller and Ted Lewis traveled with highway commissioner Harry Williston to the former central post office in Boston on Friday, May 19th, to pick up used furniture for the new town offices at surplus prices, (for example file cabinets for \$25 instead of \$350). Town highway workers repaired

a leak in the storage trailer.

Regarding the new town library and office building, a pre-construction meeting was held with architect Margo Jones and project manager Mark Sullivan on Wednesday May 24th. Details on the projects are still being worked out; change orders on the septic system will save \$12,000, but the system will require more fill than was originally calculated, and the pumped storage unit will need a hatch rather than a man-hole cover so the opening is big enough to allow service or replacement of the pump. The cost of the septic system is still in the range budgeted.

Lab results from the test of the Cooleyville Road well water for the town's public water supply are not back yet.

The Class III license hearing for John Germaine, who wants to buy and continue to run a Stone Road auto repair business from Robin Pierce, was continued to June 14th. Closing on the sale is scheduled for May 31st. Lewis asked town administrative assistant Nancy Aldrich to inform abutter Keith Washburn of the date, and Heard said she would notify other abutters.

Aldrich said about half the articles on the annual town meeting warrant are the same as last year's. June 21st was set for the meeting date, 7:00 p.m. for the special town meeting, and 7:30 p.m. for the annual town meeting. Moderator Kathy Becker will be out of town then, and has appointed Jonathan von Ranson as a substitute.

OLIVE OIL continued from pg 1

business partner Michelle Dixon of Canton, Ohio, who run the business. They can now boast about reviews in *Bon Appetit* and *Real Simple* magazines, and sometime soon, a mention in *Oprah* magazine's favorite things list.

Levins runs Alejandro & Martin from his home on Center Street. He founded an Internet-marketing agency in San Francisco, but needed to find something new, something he could be more passionate about.

Olive oil is most certainly it. Levins can describe every nuance of each of the four olive oil flavor profiles he features in his gift box sets. The vocabulary Levins uses is similar to that used by the wine industry, so he can illustrate the many characteristics of the oil and educate his customers.

Generations of expertise and passion go into the production of the four olive oil flavor profiles imported by Alejandro & Martin. For the "mild and delicate" profile, Levins said, "this is from a Spanish family that's been making olive oil for five or six generations, since the mid 1800s. Their farm has been in continuous olive oil production since the 1400s." The family from Greece, providers of the "fragrant and fruity" profile, has also been making olive oil since the mid 1800s.

The Tuscan "olivey and peppery" oil has a unique flavor signature. It is

not blended for smoothness and stability, but instead it is overflowing with character, much like how a single malt scotch is strong in character. The oil comes from a single type of olive, the frantoio, from a single estate in Tuscany, and from a single harvesting.

So much care is taken in the harvesting and processing of the "green and grassy" Californian olive oil that the olive fruit goes from tree to the press in two hours or less. It is hand harvested so it is very low in acid (an indicator of quality in extra virgin olive oils). It has an eye-watering kick to it, a bold taste that is a new experience for most people who are used to stale and damaged oils from grocery store shelves. Heat and light damage oil quickly, so Levins takes every precaution in importing the oil.

Levins notes that olive oil is also a very healthy food choice due to polyphenol compounds in the oil. "Polyphenols are said to act as an anti-inflammatory in the body," Levins explained. "I have freakishly low cholesterol, given my indulgences in other things."

"I think if people learn to pay more attention to olive oil, they'll pay more attention to food in general. And, if they pay more attention to the food they're eating while they eat it, they'll pay attention to life and they'll be more present. And enjoy the ride more," said Levins.

Levins' customers have described

the flavors of his olive oils in many different ways, suggesting they are indeed paying attention and enjoying the ride. "I've heard amazing things: chocolate, mango, papaya, wheat grass, almond, asparagus, artichoke, hay, buttercups, radicchio, and fresh cut grass."

Levins has many food suggestions and recipes for the different olive oils that are on his website www.alejandroadmartin.com. According to Levins, the main idea to remember is to "pair like with like." A fruity olive oil should go with sweeter foods whereas the more bitter "green and grassy" oil should go with bitter or strongly flavored foods like a bitter greens salad or fresh rosemary bread.

The oil is bottled and labeled at the Western Mass Food Processing Center in Greenfield, a project of the Franklin County Development

Corporation. Levins called the Processing Center "an incubator for food entrepreneurship. It's a great, great thing that we have here. If you become a member, you can use their commercial kitchen, so I didn't have to

build a commercial kitchen and get it permitted."

Levins is offering 20% off for Montague residents (not combinable with other offers) if they call him to place an order at (413) 367-9780.

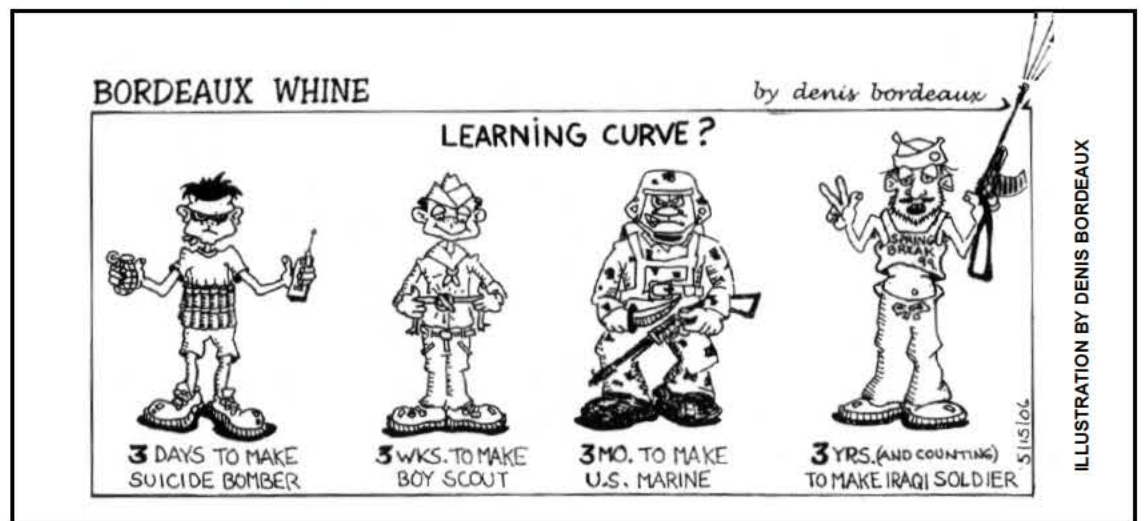
Students' Poetry Submissions Sought

The Editors of the Poetry Page of The Montague Reporter are seeking submissions for a special June Issue featuring work by students in the Gill-Montague Schools and neighboring districts. All ages and grades are invited to submit their best original poetry and/or artwork for this special poetry page.

The deadline for submissions is June 10th, 2006. Please indicate school, name and age with each contribution.

For electronic submissions:
reporter-poems@montaguema.net

For snail mail submissions: Poetry Page, The Montague Reporter, 24 Third Street, Turners Falls, MA 01376.



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IDOL

continued from pg 1

musical creativity, you might not be prepared for the agony and the ecstasy of a show like this.

But do yourself a favor. Try it. By now, most of the chaff has been knocked off the wheat, with 42 of the original 52 contestants already gonged. And there were some doozies. Like the flannel-shirted lawyer with the seeing eye dog who sang a falsetto version of Harry Chapin's "Taxi". And the spike-haired, black-clad 'Adriana from Northampton'

who sang a punk song so quietly the words were practically inaudible.

But there were some diamonds in the rough among the company, and some polished gems as well. Perennial hometown darlin' Alana Martineau advanced easily to the semifinals with her accomplished rendering of Tiffany's "Could've Been". John Waynelovich worked the audience from the stage and from the floor, coming on strong with Gavin DeGraw's "Chariot." He made the cut, as did the

redoubtable Dave Peck, weighing in with a fearsome rendering of Wild Cherry's "Play That Funky Music, White Boy." Peck had some of the best stage banter of the weekend, threatening to take off his tight black t-shirt so the crowd could "Know me for who I am," and declaring, "Funky is more than just a smell!"

The weekend had its share of pleasant surprises, too, including the slow burn of Greenfield's Jocelyn Roberge, who spit out her gum, doffed her cowboy hat

and sunglasses to wow the judges with a country western ballad about "interfering with my drinking," a natural hit for a Turners crowd. And Brandee Simone, the little dynamo from Colrain who caused Simon to scream, "Call 911, there's a fire in the house!" as she burned through a torrid version of Etta James' "At Last".

Here's a tip to the handicappers who take the last remaining seats at the semifinals on Saturday, May 27th, or crowd the hall to see which of the last three contestants goes on to win the

\$1000 prize on June 3rd: keep your eyes on Abraham Oyola from Charlemont (he's got Morin, and most of the women in the audience, eating out of his hand).

One thing's for sure. The Shea has a hit on their hands with Valley Idol. For more information on how the contest works, read on, with Christopher Holmes' review below. For tickets call: 863-2281.



Karaoke Is a Battlefield



Jocelyn Roberge is a contender

BY CHRIS HOLMES

TURNERS FALLS - All the advertising for the Valley Idol contest at the Shea sure paid off this weekend. Friday, the first night of tryouts - free and open to the public - drew a standing room only crowd.

The contest allowed for 100 contestants but drew 52. From the level of excitement in the theater, that wasn't much of a concern. Besides, if the event had drawn 100 contestants, the

tryout nights would have had to be extended to two nights instead of one.

Still, with 52 contestants, judges Ken Adams of the Comical Mystery Tour Dinner Theater Troupe, Kimberly Morin, Professor of Speech and Theater at Greenfield Community College, and Phil Simon, national booking agent of Simon Says Booking opted to give critiques on Saturday, when the official contest would begin in earnest, after the roster had been drawn down to only 25 contestants.

The order in which the contestants would perform 90 seconds of their song of choice was drawn by random lottery, from names in a bucket. Contestants had the choice of singing to the accompaniment of a karaoke disc or a cappella.

MC Nick Danger of WHAI worked the stage with smooth professionalism, peppering the introductions with dry wit, ("I've been to Leyden. It's nice there...") after explaining how the evening's votes would be tallied. Each of the 52 performers would be given a yes or no vote from the three judges, along with a numerical score from one to ten, in case more than 25 received enough yeses to advance. Through a combination of yeses, and numerical totals, those with the highest scores

would go on to the next round.

Also, each night the audience would be allowed an 'audience favorite' ballot. These would be totaled from all four nights of the contest to determine which contestant would be awarded an audience favorite cash prize.

With that explained, DJ Tom Mayo of Bear Country and Shining Star Productions was ready to spin the discs while his wife and business partner, Dawn Mayo, helped backstage with

the order of contestants.

The crowd eagerly awaited the opening number. This was no anniversary party, wedding, or some night at a bar you would never remember. It was more like Showtime at the Apollo, Turners Falls style.

Appropriately enough, the first song of the night was a punked-up version of Pat Benatar's "Love is a Battlefield." The contestant,



DETMOLD AND DAVOL PHOTOS

Adriana from Northampton found passion on the chorus of Pat Benatar's "Love is a Battlefield."



Our pick for local hero went to Steve Crowningshield, of Ground Zero fame, for his muscular version of White Room

Later, a silver-haired crooner from Erving, Denny Brunelle, changed the pace and showed his command of the material with a performance of Ben E. King's "Stand By Me." Knock-offs of the Bee Gees' "You Don't Know What It's Like," Elton John's "Don't Let the Sun Go Down on Me," and Peggy Lee's "Fever," followed. I could have stayed all night, but finally the Top 40 tunes and country western standards began to wear me down.

Overall, the sponsors and the Shea couldn't have asked for a greater turnout. Next year, (because you know there'll be a follow-up next year) maybe some brave contestant can confuse everyone with a Muddy Waters classic.

Good luck to all the contestants for making history in a competition that promises to be with us for a long time. And tune in next week for the final countdown to this year's Valley Idol!



Abraham Oyola of Charlemont Could he be the one? Or at least, could he be single?

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FINDING BALANCE: HEALTH TIPS FOR A HAPPY LIFE

For the Women Folk



BY JENNY CHAPIN

MONTAGUE CENTER - Do you approach your period with annoyance or dismay because of the accompanying problems? Menstrual and premenstrual symptoms include: bloating, cramps, temporary weight gain, breast tenderness, low back pain, acne, headaches, changes in energy level, difficulty staying on task, prone to accidents, mood swings, increased emotional reactivity, depression, and irritability. Some women experience mild symptoms with short duration, while others have symptoms severe enough that it's hard to function.

When I was in acupuncture school, I was surprised to hear - for the first time in my then nearly 25 years of getting my period (that's over 275 monthly cycles!) - that none of those symptoms are "normal". They aren't something we have to resign ourselves to, or bear with

stoicism. Rather, they're an indication of imbalance in our system, and they can be reduced through various means other than pain relievers or antidepressants.

A combination of physiological, genetic, nutritional, and behavioral factors are likely involved. Unbalanced hormonal fluctuations are one cause, but exercise, diet, and stress level are just as significant.

Half an hour of aerobic exercise (where you raise your heartbeat and build up a sweat) at least three times a week improves blood circulation and can significantly reduce symptoms. Yoga not only keeps things moving smoothly, but also calms and stabilizes our emotional state, and balances the endocrine system (the hormone-producing glands).

Decrease your alcohol, caffeine, and sugar consumption to help with irritability, depres-

sion, and mood swings. (Yes, chocolate contains caffeine; its role as comfort food before your period starts may be less appealing if it gives you headaches.) Use less salt to help minimize bloating and fluid retention. Cold-temperature foods should be avoided, as cold contracts tissues, congeals blood, and creates obstruction, making cramps worse. (When I crave ice cream several days before my period, I just take a deep breath and promise myself some later.)

Better to eat lots of vegetables, small amounts of fruits, whole grains, beans, seaweed and fish (especially salmon, tuna, and trout). Smaller, more frequent meals or snacks may be better than two or three larger meals.

There are some good herbal tea formulas on the market for PMS and women's support (please read the labels for cau-

tions and contraindications). Ginger, cayenne, and cinnamon stimulate blood circulation, break up obstructions, and warm the body. Chasteberry regulates hormone balance and the menstrual cycle. Lavender, rose, and chamomile calm the mind, relax muscles, and ease cramps.

Hormonal changes can create something akin to an altered state. If you notice feeling "zoned out" at the beginning of your period, try using it to access a deeper emotional state, your creativity, your dreams. Rather than keeping up your usual pace, honor your need for quiet, reflective time. Meditate, rest, get plenty of sleep. Figure out what kind self-care is best for you at this time. Belly rubs and hot water bottles can be really soothing.

Our periods connect us with the cycles of nature - the rhythmic ocean tide coming to shore

and going back to the depths, the ebb and flow of day and night, the change of the seasons, and of course the monthly lunar phases. Having this regular reminder keeps us connected with all of nature and prevents us veering too far off from knowing that we are part of something bigger.

Distress in your menstrual cycle may be related to disharmony in the rest of the month. Consistently eating well, exercising, getting enough sleep, and dealing with stress should have a positive impact on your PMS symptoms. For help creating balance, try acupuncture, herbs, massage, or yoga. Why suffer if you don't have to?

Jenny Chapin is an acupuncturist, bodyworker, and yoga teacher in Greenfield. Suggest a topic or question for her column at jgchapin@crocker.com

THE HEALTHY GEEZER

Lou Gehrig's Disease

BY FRED CICETTI

LEONIA, NJ - Q. *Is ALS an old person's disease, or does it affect every age group?*

Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) usually strikes between the ages of 40 and 70, but there have been cases of it in young adults, children and older people. The average age for getting ALS is 55.

ALS is known as Lou Gehrig's disease in the USA. Gehrig, who played baseball for the New York Yankees, died of the disease in 1941. In other countries, ALS is often called motor neuron disease. It is not contagious.

ALS destroys nerve cells - motor neurons - that control muscle cells. In most cases, the cause is unknown. As the motor neurons are lost, the muscles

they control weaken. Eventually, people with ALS are paralyzed.

Amyotrophic means "no muscle nourishment." Lateral identifies the affected areas in the spinal cord. Sclerosis refers to the scarring or hardening in the region.

ALS doesn't directly affect involuntary muscles, so the heart, digestive tract, bladder and sexual organs continue to work. Hearing, vision, touch and intellectual ability generally remain normal. Pain is not a major component of ALS.

The most common form of the disease in the United States is "sporadic" ALS. It may affect anyone, anywhere. "Familial" ALS is inherited. Only about 5 to 10 percent of all ALS patients appear to have the inherited form of ALS. In those families,



ILLUSTRATION JESSICA HARMON

there is a 50 percent chance each offspring will inherit the gene mutation and may develop the disease.

Respiratory problems usually kill those with ALS in three to five years after diagnosis. About ten percent of those with ALS live more than ten years. Some survive for many years. For example, the famed British physicist Stephen Hawking has had ALS since the 1960s. In a small number of people, ALS

mysteriously stops.

The usual early symptoms of ALS are weakness or spasms in a limb, and trouble speaking or swallowing. After the initial symptoms, the disease may progress in the following way: cramping of muscles, demitted use of the limbs; thick speech and difficulty projecting the voice; difficulty breathing.

Doctors begin testing for ALS by checking muscle and nerve function. The next step is usually an electromyogram (EMG). This test measures the signals that run between nerves and muscles and the electrical activity inside muscles. Additional tests may include a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scan, a spinal tap between two lower vertebrae, blood tests and muscle biopsies.

Rilutek (riluzole), which is

approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, is the only drug found so far that helps prolong life in people with ALS. Several other medications are now in clinical trials.

However, there are non-pharmaceutical treatments to help people with ALS. These include physical and occupational therapy, respiratory therapy and assisted ventilation, speech therapy, nutritional and emotional support. There are devices, too, such as special grips for writing implements and eating utensils, canes, supportive braces, walkers, wheelchairs and scooters.

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

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MCTV Schedule

Channel 17

Friday, May 26
Eagle All Day From 6:00 AM
7:00 PM Finance Meeting
9:00 PM Montague Update
10:00 PM GaiaVision
11:30 PM From the MCTV Archives

Saturday, May 27
Eagle All Day From 6:00 AM
7:00 PM GMRSD Meeting 5/23
9:30 PM Sammy's Video Archives
10:00 PM Montague Update
11:00 PM Mother's Day Peace March

Sunday, May 28
Eagle All Day From 6:00 AM
7:00 PM Montague Select board 5/22
9:30 PM There and Back
10:30 PM Seven Times A Man Fall
11:00 PM Brick House Poetry Reading

Monday, May 29
Eagle All Day From 6:00 AM
7:00 PM Finance Meeting
9:00 PM Montague Update
10:00 PM Sammy's Video Collages
10:30 PM GaiaVision

Tuesday, May 30
Eagle All Day From 6:00 AM
7:00 PM GMRSD Committee Meeting 5/23
9:30 PM Montague Update
10:30 PM Women in Science
11:00 PM From the MCTV Archives

Wednesday, May 31
Eagle All Day from 6:00 AM
7:00 PM Montague Select board 5/22
9:30 PM There and Back
10:30 PM It's Dan Seiden's Show
11:00 PM From the Discovery Center

Thursday, June 1
Eagle All Day from 6:00 AM
7:00 PM GMRSD Meeting 5/23
9:30 PM Montague Update
10:30 PM Let's Learn About Astrology

MCTV offers Studio Tours and Orientations on the Second Wednesday of each month at 6 PM. The Public is welcome and encouraged to come down to the studio at 34 Second Street in Turners Falls to see the MCTV studio and learn about the exciting opportunities MCTV has to offer Montague residents. Call 863-9200 for more information.

Montague Community TV (MCTV) - a small public access TV station serving Montague, Gill and Erving, is seeking two candidates with excellent organizational, technical and people skills. (1) **Administrative Director**, 15 hrs: outreach and community liaison; fundraising; general office management; oversee volunteers. (2) **Technical Director**, 25 hrs: program channel(s) and community board; liaison with Comcast; maintain/inventory equipment; tape public meetings; implement training sessions. Submit cover letter, resume and references by June 5th to Michael Bosworth, MCCI Business Support, 24 3rd Street, Turners Falls, MA 01376. Please see www.MontagueTV.org for more info.

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JACK COUGHLIN ILLUSTRATION

FRIDAY, MAY 26TH

Franklin Medical Center's A Bouquet of Music Concert Series featuring Moonlight and Morning Star, of Whately, from noon - 1 p.m. in the hospital's main lobby. The concert is sponsored by the FMC Healing Environment Committee. The public is invited to join patients, their visitors, and hospital staff for this mid-day concert. Refreshments will be served.

Rt. 63 Road House, Millers Falls
ROCK 201 High energy rock. Come to dance! 9:30 pm (413) 659-3384

The Heidi Chronicles at Northfield Mount Hermon, Gill. The Theatre Program presents Wendy Wasserstein's Pulitzer Prize winning comedy/drama. May 26, and June 2 and 3. Wasserstein's play is described as, funny, touching, and written with rare grace and sensitivity ... a moving examination of the progress of a generation, from the socially and political activist sixties to the success-oriented eighties—a time when the status of American women underwent profound and sometimes unsettling change. Held in the Silverthorne Theatre, second floor of Stone Hall, Northfield campus. 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$5 for the general public. Reservations by e-mail: drowland@nmhschool.org. Sorry, no telephone reservations are available.

FRIDAY & SATURDAY MAY 26 & 27TH

Media Arts Cinema shows "Free to Fly" by Northfield filmmaker Mike Schena One show each evening at 8pm in the Green Trees Gallery, 105 Main St., Nfld. Tickets still available at Mim's Market or the Green Trees Gallery in Nfld. or by phone reservation at 498-2100.

SATURDAY, MAY 27TH

"Valley Idol" competition at The Shea. Continues June 3rd. For information or tickets call (413) 863-2281 or www.theshea.org. All proceeds benefit the Shea Theater in Turners Falls, a non-profit organization.

Rt. 63 Road House, Millers Falls

LOVE BOMB! Come to Dance. 9:30 pm (413) 659-3384.

Garden Classes at the Grange 10:00 a.m.- Weed Walk w/ Leela

Workshop. Learn about gardening, Native plantings and English kitchen gardens of early Deerfield. Help prepare and plant children's demonstration gardens. Plant a



LOVE BOMB at the Rt. 63 Road House on Saturday, May 27th, 9:30 p.m. This six-piece ensemble features hot guitar, keyboards bass and drums, and three different vocalists performing rock and R&B hits.

Whitcomb-Hewitt. A joyful walk amongst the abundant world of wild plants in our Montague neighborhood. Learn about the wild plants that surround you and how to use them in your daily life. Free but donations to the Montague Grange accepted. Questions please call 413-250-3405. Meet at the Montague Grange, Main Street, Montague Center.

The National Spiritual Alliance: Psychic Fair. at Thompson Temple across from the Post Office in Lake Pleasant. Divination methods include Astrology, I-Ching, aura and vibrational readings, and Tarot cards. Readings are \$20 for 20 minutes with a medium of choice. 11:00 - 4 p.m.

SATURDAY & SUNDAY MAY 27 & 28TH

Annual Gas Engine & Tractor Show & Flea Market Held on Route 10 in Bernardston.

Historic Deerfield Summer Programs: Hands-on History

seed and take it home. Historic Deerfield is located in Deerfield. Noon to 4 p.m. (413) 775-7214.

TUESDAY, MAY 30TH

Art Talk at the Leverett Library Bob Hepner, performance artist, sculptor: You may have enjoyed Bob's wild sculptures, costumes and music performed on and around his specially designed curved-bed truck, now here's your chance to hear about his process and enjoy his artwork in action at the Library. Bob will set up his sculptures in the library's parking lot and start them moving at 7pm. This series is sponsored by Leverett Crafts & Arts in cooperation with the Leverett Library and is free to the public.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 31ST

Reel World Film Series *The Reach of Chernobyl* & *Three Mile Island Revisited*, Arms Library, Shelburne Falls, 7-9 p.m. *The Reach of Chernobyl* documents the full consequences of the Chernobyl disaster and provides a clear analysis of the intimate connection between civilian and military nuclear technology throughout the world. Dr. Vladimir Chernousenko, the physicist in charge of the clean-up estimates that more than 15,000 people died in the former Soviet Union after the explosion and that up to a million more will perish there in the next five years from Chernobyl-caused maladies. Addresses concern for people in other parts of the

Upcoming Events at the Discovery Center

FRIDAY, MAY 26TH

Introducing the Turners Falls Fish Quest. Students from Jessica Greene's class at the Middle School will present their Quest project to everyone this evening. Join us in finding out about this treasure hunt and thank the students for their work. 6:30 - 7:30 pm

SATURDAY, MAY 27TH

Birds of the Boreal Forest Silvio O. Conte National Fish & Wildlife Refuge staff will lead a

tour of the exhibits highlighting the birds that migrate through the Connecticut River watershed on their way to nesting sites in the boreal forest. Materials on these birds will be available. 1:00 to 2:00 p.m. Tour will be at the Great Falls Discovery Center

JUNE 3RD- 1st ANNUAL FISHING EVENT

Great Falls Discovery Center
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world who have also been affected by this first "truly international disaster." 29 minutes *Three Mile Island Revisited* is a riveting exposé chronicling the medical consequences of the near core meltdown of the Three Mile Island Nuclear Plant in 1979. Since this worst nuclear disaster in the U.S., the utility that owns the nuclear plant has been quietly awarding damages to hundreds of local residents who have brought suits, despite its insistence that no one was harmed. 29 minutes Information: (413) 625-9543

Dorothy Porada Hayden, local Poet, Educator, Performer, and Author of LAKE MATTAWA ODES in Orange, MA will present POETIC REFRAINS a unique and enchanting visual, musical, and poetic journey at 7 p.m. at the Athol Public Library. This program is definitely a celebration of life's passions, joys, and a blissful existence!! Free to the general public.

FRIDAY, JUNE 2ND

CD release party/open mic Avenue A Music Project at the Teen Center 6-9 p.m. CDs will be available for sale and featured bands performing. For more information about purchasing copies of the CD or the Avenue A Music Project in general, contact Jared Libby, Brick House Youth Programs Coordinator at (413) 863-9559.

SUNDAY, JUNE 4TH

"Dinner with Deborah" at The Night Kitchen, Montague Center. The Night Kitchen's chef Max Brody and his crew will prepare a sumptuous four-course meal based on recipes from Deborah Madison, award-winning chef and author, host of the evening. Book signing too. Benefit for CISA, \$50/person. Limited seating. Order tickets online www.buylocalfood.org or call (413) 665-7100

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Some require permission slips. Info: Jared at 863-9559.

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Parents With Babies Show:

Wed, 5/31 - Over The Hedge at 12:30 pm

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2. THE DA VINCI CODE PG 13
 DAILY 6:30 9:30 DTS sound
 MAT SAT-SUN, WED 12:30 3:30
3. MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3
 DAILY 6:30 9:00 PG13
 MAT SAT-SUN, WED 12:30 3:30
4. POSEIDON PG13
 DAILY 6:45 9:20
 MAT SAT, SUN, WED 12:15 3:15
5. R.V. PG
 DAILY 6:45 9:20
 MAT SAT, SUN, WED 12:15 3:15
6. X-MEN: THE LAST STAND
 DAILY 7:00 9:15 PG13 DTS sound
 SAT, SUN, WED 12:00 2:15 4:30
7. FREE SPIRITS: BIRTH, LIFE, LOSS OF A NEW AGE DREAM
 DAILY 7:00 9:15
 SAT, SUN, WED 12:00 2:15 4:30

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The South Wind Blows Migrants Back Our Way

BY FRAN HEMOND
MONTAGUE CENTER - After days of gloom and rain, the south wind blew in some of my favorite birds. Just in time for breakfast, a little Maryland yellowthroat warbler came by. He perched on an old weed stalk on the banks of North Pond and was silhouetted against the water. His black face mask and yellow throat made him easy to identify. He likes low bushy thickets so that it wasn't a neck-breaking job to focus on his activities. His lady was not with him; she looks like him but does not have the

mask. This gives him status, which one cocky little yellowthroat exhibited enthusiastically with his "witchety-witchety-witchety" call each spring at a cottage in the Vermont hills off Route 100. He is now called "common yellowthroat" in Peterson's fourth Field Guide to Birds, but will always be "Maryland yellowthroat" to me, as I first identified him from Cruikshank's Pocket



Guide, 1973, \$1.25, a truly little pocket book, which gives him this moniker.

That evening twelve Canada geese took a flight break in the little pond. They seemed to

have posted one as a sentinel on the far shore, while the others enjoyed a sheltered haven for a few hours. By morning they were gone.

A Baltimore oriole brightened the weeping willow the next noontime. The tree's branches are now covered with green leaves that almost reach the ground, but his bright orange body and black head gave him away, even in the thick drooping cover. In earlier years, Baltimore orioles nested regularly in an elm tree here.

The pendant nests woven by the birds hung from near the ends of the branches. Little orioles must have had a rock-a-bye baby experience. In the 1930s, Dutch elm disease wiped out these magnificent trees.

Perhaps this visitor, passing through, will find our maples acceptable.

The south wind and warmer days have brought many of the migrants back. Unidentified birds along the roadsides scold the gardeners working in their space. It is the season to enjoy the green and active world.

Wells Rejoins Rotation

BY LEE CARIGNAN
TURNERS FALLS - After Lenny DiNardo got lit up again last Sunday against the Phillies, the Red Sox will be

making another move in the fifth spot of their starting rotation with the addition of David Wells.

With the off-season trade of

Bronson Arroyo, a knee injury to David Wells, and DiNardo not working out with a 7.11 ERA, the Red Sox have not been able to find a reliable fifth pitcher to fill out their starting rotation. The amount of off days during the early part of the season has allowed the Sox to skip over their weak spot in the rotation at times. But with their schedule filling out during the upcoming months, the Red Sox fifth spot has become one of the biggest weaknesses on the team.

Help is on the way. David Wells has finished his rehabilitation stint at Pawtucket. If there were any doubts that Wells was physically fit enough to rejoin the Sox, there aren't anymore. Last Sunday, the day after he turned 43, Wells pronounced himself ready for prime time, following his successful five-inning rehab start in the Paw Sox 9-3 romp over the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre Red Barons.

Wells, who underwent off-season surgery on his right knee, was making his first mound appearance since an ill-fated outing for the Sox against Toronto on April 12th.



In that appearance, Wells was slapped around for seven runs on 10 hits. That came on the heels of a dismal start for the Paw Sox against Indianapolis on the second day of the season, all of which landed Wells on the disabled list.

He certainly looked sharp during his 65-pitch outing against the Barons Sunday. More importantly, he said his gimpy knee came through it without even a twinge. Wells was making his pitches and seemed to be in command of his pitching repertoire, topping out at 88 m.p.h. on the gun and flashing his breaking ball when the occasion called for one. He threw strikes, spotted his fastball, and found his curveball toward the end of his impressive performance. In all, Wells was touched for just two runs on four hits and a walk, while striking out three.

He retired eight of the last nine Barons he faced, including Greenfield native Peter Bergeron.

After the minor league game Wells immediately left to rejoin the Red Sox. Looking to shore up the end of the rotation, the Sox have penciled in Wells as their starter for Friday night against the Tampa Bay Devil Rays. If Wells can't get the job done the Sox may need to start considering other options. They may try to bring up a young prospect from the minor leagues in John Lester, or start looking at some trade options.

Another remote option could be Roger Clemens. The aging right-hander may still have enough in the tank to be effective another season. He is still available and has limited the teams he would play for down to the Red Sox, Yankees, Rangers, and his hometown Houston Astros. Clemens wants to go to a team that gives him the best chance to win another championship. It could be a Hollywood ending if he chooses the Red Sox. In the meantime left-hander David Wells will try stabilizing the end of the rotation.

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