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# The Montague Reporter

YEAR 7 - NO. 8

also serving Gill, Erving and Wendell

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THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

NOVEMBER 20, 2008

## Montague Reporter Receives Federal Non-Profit Status

BY CHRISTOPHER SAWYER-LAUCANNO

**TURNERS FALLS** - A year ago, the Montague Reporter put on a fundraiser at the Night Kitchen to raise the \$750 needed for the paper to apply for federal non-profit 501(c)(3) status.

In the middle of an ice storm, the community came out in droves to support the paper, and generously contributed over and above the needed amount. Montague Reporter board members Patricia Crosby, Lyn Clark and Nan Riebschlaeger had already spent countless hours preparing the complicated application; all we needed was the money for the filing fee.

Before the cash from our fundraiser even had a chance to cool down in our bank account, it made its way to the IRS along with our application.

see 501c4 pg 12

## GMRSD's Budget Fails



DETMOLD PHOTO

Gill and Montague residents line up to cast their ballots at Tuesday's district meeting.

## DISTRICT APPROVES 1.5% BUDGET INCREASE

BY ELLEN BLANCHETTE

**GILL-MONTAGUE** - When moderator Ray Godin announced, "We have a budget," at the two-town district meeting in Turners Falls Tuesday night, after some three hours of presentations, discussion, and rehashing of issues many residents had patiently listened to for months, there was no applause or celebration. People simply got up and went home with the same courteous manner that had marked the evening. Perhaps it was about being tired after so long a meeting, or perhaps they knew, having dealt with this budget for so long, that this might not be the end of it.

Do we really have a budget for the Gill-Montague schools? That remains to be seen.

Mary Kociela, Gill-Montague school committee chair, and interim superintendent Ken Rocke spoke in support of a 3.0% budget increase for the current school year - in the amount of \$16,666,328 - and warned that the Commissioner of the Department of see **BUDGET** pg 9

## The Mysterious Stones of Leverett



WINTERS PHOTO

Stone formation in Leverett: a "turtle mound" or a pile of farmer's rocks?

**BY STEVE WINTERS** - To a geologist, rocks and stones mean different things. Rocks are pieces of nature you can hold in your hand; stones are human implements, tools, and building materials. Geologists, as scientists, relish the information that can be decoded from rocks - sometimes that information is profound and profoundly ancient. Stones, on the other hand, present different information or serve humans in different ways.

Ever wonder why we say stone tools or stone monuments but rarely ever rock tools or rock monuments? Who ever heard of rock carver or mill rock? Rocks and stones move in different universes.

Geologists joke about semantic distinctions between rock and stone. Sometimes geologists even dismiss the important role of stones in our lives, and think instead "It's the rock that's important!" That is wrong. Precisely why I could not say, until my visit to the mysterious Stones of Leverett.

### VISITING A STONE TURTLE

On Sunday, November 9th, I attended a field trip led by Eva Gibavic of the Rattlesnake Gutter Trust of Leverett, to view some apparent stone ruins. I was anxious to learn more about these mysterious stone structures that dot our landscape. Much has been written about them. Are they possibly colonial cellar holes, pre-colonial dwellings, caves built by Celtic monks, or ceremonial monuments constructed by Native Americans? I wanted to see for myself.

So on a beautiful and sunny November afternoon, I joined about 30 adults and children and trekked our way up a hillside — 500 million year old metamorphic rock of the Pelham dome, but that's another story — along a ridge and past a serene vernal pool to several mysterious stone sites.

Our first feature (perhaps the most spectacular of all) was an elliptical pile of rocks about 30 feet long and 10 feet

see **STONES** pg 8

## — Postcard from Breizh — Dark November: (ar miz Du)

BY DAVID BRULE

**UZEL, BRITTANY** - The train that brought us to the center of Brittany streaked across the countryside from Paris, heading west. Fresh plowed autumn fields already had spikes of green new growth piercing the furrows, the winter grass starting a new cycle. The sky was low and grey.

Bare trees lined the hedgerows, their limbs hung with mistletoe, which grows wild in these parts. The ancient Druids collected the perfect spheres of holy mistletoe in early winter. To them, it represented the roundness of the sun, and staying green even as the darkness of the season deepened.

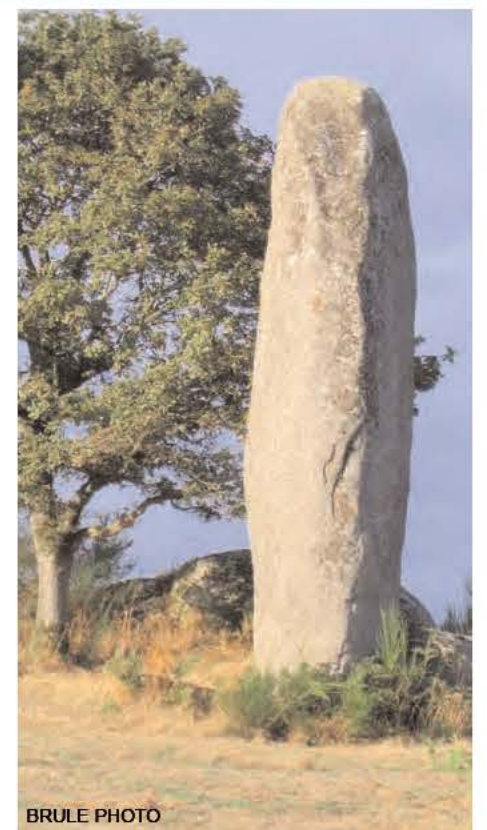
We traveled in comfort as the super-fast train - the *TGV* - rocketed along at close to 200 m.p.h. The train from Paris to St. Brieuc follows the same route Jack Kerouac describes in *Sartori in Paris*.

He was on a mission from Lowell to Brittany to trace his Breton routes. In the 50s, his trip took seven hours. Our modern trip took only three.

Our destination was the little family farm way out into the country. St. Brieuc station was the end of the line for us; the rest of the trip was by car, in a miniscule Peugeot.

In this part of France, Breton is the native language. Breton is a Celtic language, a close cousin to Gaelic and Welsh. Many still speak the language or are learning it, but French, imposed by the central government in Paris, became the *lingua franca* centuries ago.

November in the Breton language is called *ar miz Du*, the Dark Month. The first of November coincides with



BRULE PHOTO

Menhir, central Brittany

Samhain, the beginning of the Celtic winter. December, by the way, is *ar miz Kerzu* — the Really Dark Month!

Out here, in the farthest western reaches of Europe, where the continent ends, the Dark Month begins with the Day of the Dead: *La Toussaint*.

All Saints Day and All Souls Day is the time for remembering departed family members. At this time of year, the skies are traditionally dark, with swirling clouds driven across the landscape by the damp northwest wind — the *Gwalar ne* — blowing in from the north Atlantic and the

see **BREIZH** pg 16

**PET OF THE WEEK**

**Ms. Personality**



**Sweetie**

I'm Sweetie, a two-year-old female domestic medium hair in need of a good home. I think my name should give you a clue about my personality. Just ask the people who found me as a stray, or my friends at the shelter who will tell you about my good-natured ways. Maybe you will want me to be yours? For more information on adopting me please contact the Dakin Pioneer Valley Humane Society at 413-548-9898 or via email: leverett@dpvhs.org.

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**ERVING LIBRARY NEWS**

**Native American Storytelling**

**BY BARBARA FRIEDMAN**  
ERVING - Meet Jim "Hee Shee" Eagle, a Native American storyteller, during the Day After Thanksgiving Program for school-aged children on Friday, November 28th from 11 a.m. to noon.

The storyteller will share his

understanding of tribal heritage and show Native American artifacts.

Best for children in grades 2 to 5. Younger children should be accompanied by a parent.

The Erving Library hours are Monday 9-3, 5-8; Tuesday 3-6; Wednesday 1-4; Thursday 5-8.

**Flu Clinic at Turners Falls High School**

Free flu shots will be available this Saturday, November 22nd at the Turners Falls High School from 10 a.m. to noon for residents of Gill, Wendell, Erving and Montague who are 18 years and older. No appointment is necessary, however supplies are limited. Since this is the first test of the four-town emergency dispensing plan, a large turnout will help the emergency planning committee see how well the plan works.

For those who live in downtown Turners Falls without a car and for those who will be enjoying the Annual Christmas Bazaar at the Council on Aging at 62 Fifth Street, there will be transportation available. The Montague police department has volunteered to shuttle its van between the senior center and the high school from 10 a.m. until noon, on the half hour. Chief Ray Zukowski stated, "The flu clinic will help our residents stay healthy, so we are happy to help out."

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**SENIOR CENTER ACTIVITIES -- Nov. 22nd to Nov. 28th**

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

For trips: Call the Senior Center 413-863-9357 or 863-4500.

- Monday, 24th**  
10 a.m. Senior Aerobics  
10:50 a.m. Easy Aerobics
- Tuesday, 25th**  
9 a.m. Walking Group, the weather is cooler and there is much to see around the town.
- Wednesday, 26th**

- 10 a.m. Senior Aerobics  
12:45 Bingo
- Thursday, 27th**  
Center closed for Thanksgiving
- Friday, 28th**  
10 a.m. Senior Aerobics  
11 a.m. Easy Aerobics  
Chair Yoga resumes Nov. 18th and 25th at 10:30 a.m.
- Christmas Bazaar and Flu Clinic** on Saturday, Nov. 22nd.
- Christmas Party** at the Tech School, Monday Dec. 8th. Make reservations now \$10.00 per person.

**ERVING Senior Center**, 18 Pleasant St., Erving (Old Center School, 1st Floor), is open Monday through Friday 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



HYRUM HUSKEY PHOTO

BORED at the POLLS

**BACKYARD COMPOST BINS AVAILABLE**

**BY AMY DONOVAN**  
**GREENFIELD** - Composting is easy and can be even easier with an effective compost bin. Composting food waste from your kitchen can help you save on town trash bags and on soil enhancers for your spring yard and garden. Attractive, durable bins for backyard composting are available through the Franklin County Solid Waste Management District for district residents at several locations. The "Earth Machine," which sells for a reduced price of \$35, is made of a tough recycled

polyethylene plastic and has a twist-on locking lid. The bin stakes to the ground and is easy to assemble, rodent resistant, and designed for good aeration. The Earth Machine is available at these four locations: Colrain Transfer Station, Saturday, 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.; Wendell Transfer Station, Tuesday, 12 noon - 6:00 p.m., Saturday, 7:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.; Orange Transfer Station: Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, 8 a.m. - 2:45 p.m.; and the district office, 50 Miles Street, Greenfield (call 413-772-

2438). Cash and checks only. Greenfield residents can purchase bins from the Greenfield Transfer Station; for more information Greenfield residents should call 413-772-1528. The Solid Waste District office also sells kitchen compost collection containers and two sizes of blue recycling bins. For more information on composting or waste management programs, call the Solid Waste District at 413-772-2438 or visit the district website at www.franklincountywastedistrict.org.

**CARNEGIE LIBRARY NEWS**

**Saturday Children's Program**

On Saturday, November 22nd, at 10:30 a.m., make your own seasonal mini-world at the Carnegie Library. We will look at books with colorful harvest scenes to get inspired. This is a great opportunity for adults and children to work together on a creative project with Ruth O'Mara. Children of all ages can

make a harvest world from their imaginations. This world will be in a shoebox, and might feature a farmer's field, pumpkins, and fall trees made out of materials from nature and colorful clay. Please bring your own shoebox, if possible. For more info, contact the Carnegie Library, 201 Ave. A, Turners Falls, 863-3214

**GREAT FALLS MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS OF THE WEEK**  
**Grade 6:**  
Ken Leng  
**Grade 7:**  
Marcel Ortiz  
**Grade 8:**  
Kayla Drumgool  
Breanna Breault

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# Open Studios Galore!

## Arts & Icicles • December 6th and 7th

The "Arts and Icicles Turners Falls Open Studio & Downtown Walking Tour," featuring 13 downtown Turners Falls studios, galleries, gift shops, cultural centers, events, and eateries, will be taking place December 6th and 7th along Avenue A and the adjoining streets. Come early and stay late!

This season's tour offers opportunities to purchase locally created art, crafts, music, books, and food for holiday gifts. Studio walk favorites will include Jack Nelson at Carriage House Designs, Peterman's Baskets and Bowls, Great Lighting, Hallmark Museums of Contemporary Photography, Great Falls Discovery Center, Suzee's Third Street Laundry, the Peaceful Palm Studio, and the Brick House.

For the first-time, Montague Catholic Social Ministries (MCSM) and the Turners Falls Women's Center will offer the

"WinterFest Gift Shop," featuring handcrafted items created by participants in MCSM's programs.

Suzee's Third Street Laundry will host its 4th Annual Leftover Laundry Fashion Gala on Saturday, December 6th. The event will feature the work of five designers who have re-purposed clothing into high art, along with music by Flaming Dragons of Middle Earth, Rust Knuckle Raptor, and Hnatow. The fashion items will be auctioned off at the Rendezvous on December 7th at 3 p.m.; proceeds will support the Brick House.

The 2nd Street Baking Co. offers a wide variety of sweet treats, breads, and soups. They will be taking holiday orders and displaying the work of local artists and craftspeople. The Turners Falls Pizza House, using fresh ingredients from local suppliers, will be serving up deli-

cious pizza, grinders, salads, and more. The Rendezvous, in addition to hosting a dance party and simulcast of the Fashion Gala, will offer paninis, salads, and a few offbeat options, like the sugar cereal of the day.

Arts & Icicles brochures are available throughout the Valley, and at each stop. Brochures can be downloaded at [www.thebrickhouseinc.org](http://www.thebrickhouseinc.org). For more info, call Karen at the Brick House (863-9576) or Eileen at Carriage House Designs (863-9499).

## Wendell Subscription Drive Raffle Winners

The results are in, and the winners have been drawn for another great Wendell subscription drive and raffle! Thanks to the generosity of anonymous supporters in Wendell, prize money was donated to purchase gift certificates for seven lucky winners, all of whom purchased new subscriptions to the *Montague Reporter* in recent weeks.

Names of the winners were drawn from a paper bag by an innocent bystander on Wednesday night.

There is no need to keep you in suspense. The winners are: Beth Jacobs and Adam Porter,

who won the first prize: a \$50 gift certificate from the Diemand Egg Farm, just in time for Thanksgiving. Emily Maiella will enjoy the second prize: a \$40 gift certificate at the Copper Angel. Five third prize winners - Charles and Theo Bennett, Tom and Sylvia Wetherby, Nan Riebschlaeger, Nini Melvin, and Sharen and William Clough - will all receive \$20 gift certificates for the Deja Brew Pub. Congratulations! Enjoy! and thank you all for becoming new subscribers. Special thanks to the sponsors of the raffle, whoever you may be!

## Brick House Consignment Art Gallery

The Brick House Community Resource Center is seeking local artists, craftspeople, musicians, authors, and cooks to contribute to the fifth annual Brick House Gallery, a consignment art sale featuring quality art and crafts from local artisans, music CDs from local musicians, books from local authors, and locally-produced non-perishable food items. All these will be hosted at the Brick House Gallery from December 6th through 14th.

The gallery will kick off as a stop on the Arts & Icicles Turners Falls Open Studio & Downtown Walking Tour on December 6th and 7th. The emphasis of this gallery is on items that are priced \$5 to \$50, but all price points are welcomed.

The Brick House will retain 35 percent of all sales, which will be used in support of its community-based programs, and artists will receive 65 percent. The sale will be overseen by the Brick House staff and board, and members of the Third Street Village Arts Advisory Group. Participating artists and craftspeople are asked to drop off their marked inventory on Thursday, December 4th, or at a pre-arranged time.

If you would like to participate in this event, further information and the application form are available on [www.thebrickhouseinc.org](http://www.thebrickhouseinc.org), or you can call 413-863-9576 to have an application mailed or e-mailed to you. If you have any questions about this event or Arts & Icicles, please call Karen Stinchfield at the Brick House at 413-863-9576.

## Big Band to Swing into Holiday Season for GMEF

The Gill-Montague Education Fund, in partnership with WIZZ Radio - AM 1520, will be wishing you a "Merry Christmas" on Sunday, Dec. 7th, at 2 p.m. with a "Classic Christmas".

Nationally recognized drummer Gregory Caputo and his acclaimed 18-piece big band will perform for all ages. The performance pays tribute to "White Christmas," celebrates Glenn Miller with a "Christmas Mood," Fred Astaire & Ginger Rogers will be honored by a renowned NYC dance team; a great Louis Armstrong impersonator will perform "Zat You Santa" and you will enjoy

music from Polar Express. There is something for everyone of every age, a wonderful holiday show that will warm your heart.

The concert will be held in the Turners Falls High School Theater, 222 Turnpike Road, Turners Falls. Advance tickets - \$15 - are available at these locations: Scotty's Convenience Store, World Eye Bookshop, by calling Sandy at TFHS: 863-7218, or at the GMEF Website - [www.thegmef.org](http://www.thegmef.org)

Tickets at the door will be \$20.

Start your holidays off with a Swing! Come join us and feel the holiday spirit.




The Montague Community Band rehearses for the upcoming Holiday Concert, which will be performed at the First Congregational Church of Turners Falls, 148 L Street, on Saturday, December 6th at 7:30 p.m. Front row: Elaine Guertin, Sue Sbarbaugh, Lauren Clough, Georgia Owen. Second row: Melissa Willis, Marc Longueil, Steve Babineau, Ed Simms. Third row: Jo-Ann Gerde, Tim Morgan, Mark Hoover, Kevin Smith, Missy Minor

**BY MAUREEN RIENDEAU** - The Montague Community Band, under the direction of Dave Rousseau, will present a free Holiday Concert on Saturday, December 6th at 7:30 p.m. in the First Congregational Church of Turners Falls on 148 L Street.

The concert will feature a variety of traditional and modern holiday music, from Leroy Anderson's Christmas Festival to a Hannukkah medley. The band has been rehearsing for several weeks for this, its annual holiday gift to the community.

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<b>Editor</b> David Detmold	<b>Layout &amp; Design</b> Claudia Wells Boysen Hodgson Katren Hoyden Karen Wilkinson Suzette Snow Cobb	<b>Photography</b> Joe Parzych Shawn Woolsey
<b>Assistant Editor</b> Kathleen Lichfield	<i>"The Voice of the Villages"</i>	<b>Technical Administrators</b> Michael Muller Michael Farick
<b>Editorial Assistants</b> Hugh Corr David Brule	<b>Founded by</b> Harry Brandt David Detmold August, 2002	
<b>Circulation</b> Suzette Snow Cobb Don Clegg	Arthur Evans	

# Where Can We Sk8?

Ten years ago, on a hot summer day, two teenagers from Turners Falls - Chris Gallagher and Winter Orion Clark - drowned while swimming in the dangerous currents downstream of Northfield Mountain, at the unsupervised swimming hole known as the Rock Dam.

In the wake of that tragedy, their friends organized a benefit concert at the Shea Theater, and raised \$2,000 to help construct a downtown skate park in their memory. Chris and Winter were avid skaters, and had been among the group of teens that had gone before the selectboard earlier to gain the town's approval for the skate park.

Chick's Garage on 3rd Street donated use of their back lot for the park, with the understanding they would no longer have to pay \$1,000 a year in taxes on the land. The town signed a ten year lease, and agreed to maintain the skate park in good condition.

It took more than a year for the teens and their supporters to raise enough in donations of time, money and materials to get the park up and running. By the grand opening ceremony on Sunday, October 24th, 1999, more than two dozen local businesses, organizations and individuals (including the Turners Falls Firemen's Relief Fund, the Montague Elks, the Holbek Group, Martin Machine, Hassay Savage, Rugg Lumber, Pioneer Aviation, Heat-Fab, Lightlife Foods, Yankee Environmental Systems, Hallmark, Hillside Plastics, New England Extrusion, Yankee Candle, Robin Sherman, Pat Allen, David Jensen, Dennis Superczynski and many more) had contributed in cash or kind to a fund totaling more than \$3,700 to build the park.

Building inspector David Jensen and his son Enoch supervised ramp construction. The Montague selectboard chipped in \$3,000 for paving, and an

additional \$1,000 for construction.

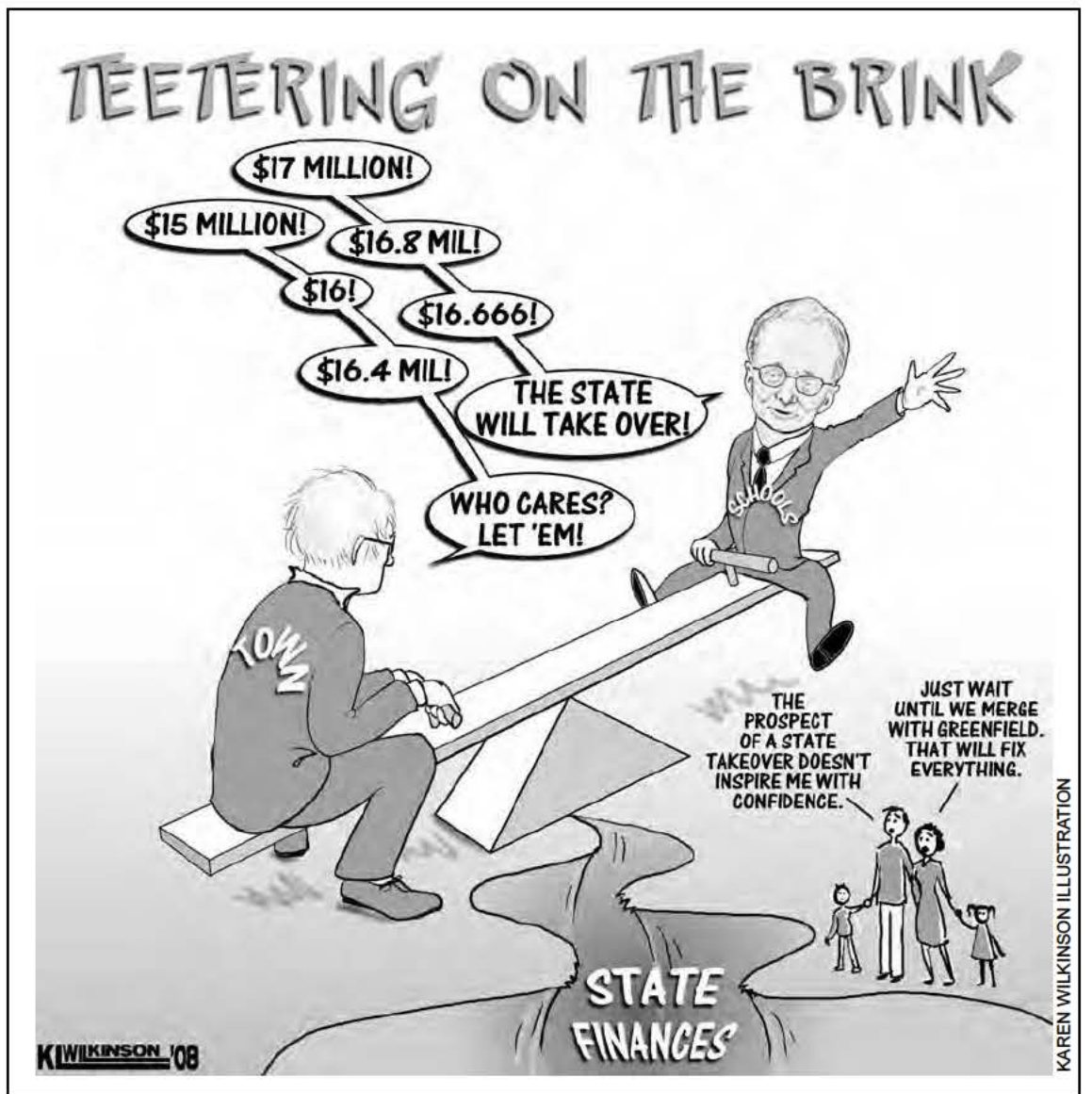
Since then, more businesses have donated to raffles, and the sale of magnets and mugs at the town clerk's office have also gone to support the park. When deteriorating ramp conditions and some vandalism contributed to the park's closure in June of 2003, a succeeding group of teens continued to raise money through numberless benefit concerts to repair the ramps, and for the next four years organized repeated work days to clean up and improve the park conditions.

An anonymous local donor provided a gift of \$5,000 in 2007 to put up a new fence, and the park finally reopened in November of that year, on the day the first snow fell.

This year, the final year of the lease, the skate park was a popular spot for teens and young people from third grade on up. A recent survey of high school students in Turners Falls found 61 reporting they used the skate park regularly - even though it had been closed for the previous four years.

Now, after all the fundraising, concerts, and community support, the park is closed. The new landlord is no longer able to maintain the generous terms under which the lease had originally been struck, and the rent he is asking for the park is more than teens can be expected to raise on their own. Instead, they are seeking the donation of a plot of town owned land to move the fence and ramps to, so they can continue to enjoy their favored form of outdoor recreation in a space of their own.

Ruth Nervig, the latest in a valiant line of skate park coordinators associated with the Brick House's Hot Spot Teen Center, (who assumed the town's responsibility for maintaining the park during the tenure of the lease) has been wearing out her shoes making



the rounds of town offices lately, seeking suggestions for an appropriate place for the park to move to. With the storefronts of most of the Avenue A businesses sporting new No Loitering signs in their windows, and the newly reorganized Montague Business Association working in conjunction with RiverCulture to bring more tourist trade and shoppers to a revitalized downtown, you would think the teens would find a warm response in their quest for a permanent home for the skate park.

The selectboard has been sympathetic. A meeting will soon be scheduled to consider the problem of where to locate the skate park for next year.

Everyone in town who cares about safe recreational activities for our teenagers should make it a point to come to that meeting, once it is scheduled.

**We Welcome Your Letters!**  
**Montague Reporter**  
58 4th St Turners Falls, MA 01376  
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reporter@montaguema.net

**American Dead in Iraq and Afghanistan as of 11/20/08**

US FORCES Casualties in Iraq as of this date	4201
Afghanistan	627
Wounded in Action	30,802

(Casualty sign temporarily located next to Wagon Wheel Restaurant on Rte. 2 in Gill)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Why No Veterans Day Observance?

In response to the numerous telephone calls that I received as to why Veterans Day was not observed at the new veterans memorial in the village of Turners Falls this year: all questions should be referred to the Trustees of the Soldiers Memorial. My tenure was up as a member of the trustees this past May, and with the comple-

tion of the renovation to our memorial I did not seek re-election. However, I do thank all of you who supported me by participating in the past, with the hope you will continue to participate in the future.

- Art Gilmore  
SMS USAF Retired,  
Millers Falls

### A Gift that Keeps Giving

Kudos to everyone involved in the production of our fine local newspaper. As I read the November 13th edition, I was completely impressed with the quality of the paper, from the visual appeal with the great photos, layout and color printing to the impressive range of topics covered.

I was particularly interested in the articles about the possible use of the old Indeck site for repatriation of native burial remains, preservation tourism, and the farewell to Duke Ducharme (I loved the description of how Duke would ceremoniously introduce little boys to their first

barbershop haircut).

What impressed me the most, though, was the in-depth and lengthy article about the bans on gay marriage that were passed in the November 4th election. I really appreciate that during this post-election time when the majority of voters (including myself) are elated by the presidential election results, our paper made it a point to report on the alarming trend of denying a portion of our citizenry a civil right taken for granted by most people. Not only did the paper report on this issue, they made sure to feature it as a headline article, and the author, David Detmold, obviously spent a lot of time interviewing the many gay and lesbian residents to include in the story, which resulted in a very insightful piece.

Thank you, David. For anyone wondering what to give friends and family members for the upcoming holiday season, I suggest that a subscription to the Montague Reporter is a wonderful gift that keeps giving throughout the year.

- Anne Jemas  
Turners Falls

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**GUEST EDITORIALS**

**Horrific Abuse a Literary Device?**

Week after week in *Jep's Place*, Joseph Parzych's memoir of growing up in Depression-era Gill serialized in the *Montague Reporter*, "Little Joe" suffers horrific abuse from his father. The most recent episode has his father wringing the necks of Joe's pet chicks. The week before, he forced his sister with a ruptured appendix to pick blueberries.

Thus far there have been about 100 equally abusive incidents foisted on Joe by his father.

Oddly, except for one time, (when he stood up

to his father in the recent "tractor-pulley" episode) Joe never passes any judgment on his father. Is this a contrived literary device? Charles Dicken's *Nicholas Nickleby* is the only literary equal of such a hardscrabble childhood I can think of.

Anyway, since Joseph Parzych is a writer for the newspaper, maybe he'd like to comment.

- Peter Monroe  
Turners Falls

**Joe Responds**

My father was proud that he was able to provide food for the family, especially during hard times, by creating foodstuffs where none had previously existed. He showed me how he could work this magic by placing eggs under a "setting" hen. In three weeks, baby chicks hatched out.

When partly grown, the roosters were culled to eat or sell as fryers. The young hens would soon begin laying eggs for the family to eat, or to sell for needed money. As their laying days ended, the hens went to market as stewing hens, after they were killed, of course.

Farmers raise all manner of animals to sell for food. Ranchers raise cattle for beef. Even Four H kids raise market lambs. That's what farming is all about. It was my foolishness to try to make pets out of farm animals we were raising, animals destined to be butchered. My sister tried to warn me, to dissuade me, but I would not listen.

Farming is a business. Aside from the rare example E.B. White provided with Wilbur in *Charlotte's Web*, a farmer really can't afford to keep runts. They will never amount to anything, and are just a waste of feed, time and money. A good farm manager gets rid of runts as my father did. Granted, he could have been a little gentler in the process, but he was right in eliminating them.

My father may have been insensitive, at times, but he didn't kill my pets just to be mean.

He was just doing what farmers do. I created problems for myself by not drawing a line between animals as farm animals and animals as pets.

A working farm is not as depicted in "Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm," where sunshine and happiness followed her all the days of her life, with the countryside ablaze with flowers, while Rebecca scampered about dressed in frilly clothes. And lamb chops came from the store.

My father raised us in an era when "Spare the rod and spoil the child" was conventional wisdom, especially with a willful child like me. Even school teachers cracked knuckles with metal edged rulers in those days.

The Army gives basic training to new recruits. The drill sergeant's job is to make the trainees' life a living hell, to make them obedient and toughen them up for battle. Pa didn't know it, but he ran a Basic Training course. When he got done with us, the "Cruel World" out there looked pretty damned good. We learned to work hard from an early age, to get along with what we had, to endure the bad and to appreciate the good life brought us.

While my father believed in harsh discipline, he could have been worse.

I will never forget the day that a boy, Eddy, came to our playground at the noon-hour recess. He had a hurt look in his eyes as he beckoned to the older boys. I

followed them down over a hill out of sight of the school. Eddy stood on a big rock, facing us. We watched as he removed his shirt. When he turned around, his back was crisscrossed with black snakes that had no heads. There was a collective gasp. I didn't understand how the black snakes could be on his back until he spoke. Eddy told us how his father had tied his arms up to a post and had beaten him with a horsewhip.

"I'm going to take the old man's car, tonight, and run away from home," Eddy said, trying to hold back tears. "You won't see me again."

And we never did.

That night, Eddy sped off. He got as far as New York State when he rear-ended a lumber truck. Lumber, sticking out of the truck bed, sheared off the top of the car, and took Eddy's head with it.

I felt very fortunate that my father was not as mean as Eddy's. And he wasn't. He could be kind, at times. But my father was in poor health, did not trust doctors, and was hard pressed to feed our large family during those difficult years. He tried, the best that he knew how, to teach me to put emotion aside to raise, butcher and skin animals. He tried to toughen me up, to make me face the harsh realities of life, but I was a very poor student.

- Joe Parzych  
Gill

**Parents Rally to Save Popular Library Program**

BY LINDA HICKMAN  
TURNERS FALLS - The Governor's midyear state budget cuts are impacting many popular programs, including the Montague Public Libraries' very successful Music and Movement program.

For eight years the Franklin County Family Network has funded the performers for this weekly series that rotates between the Carnegie, Millers Falls and Montague Center Libraries. Last year, the Family Network provided \$5,000 for the series, which was offered 51 times, with a total attendance of 2,714.

The Franklin County's Family Network's budget for this fiscal year is being cut 21%. Family Network runs many programs, including playgroups throughout the county. They also run the Greenfield Family Center and help support the Montague Catholic Social Ministries' Gill-Montague Family Center.

As of this writing, they have decided to reduce the Music and Movement's funding to \$3,500, and have cut MCSM's Gill-Montague Playgroup from \$5,000 to \$3,000. Most of the other playgroups' hours are being cut; all Family Network funded library story hours for other libraries have been eliminated, and other reductions are also being made across the county.

This will leave tremendous gaps in program options for children ages 0 - 4 and their families throughout Franklin County. The budget cut means that Family Network funding for the Music and Movement program will run out in February. The Music and Movement program currently meets at the Montague Center Library on Thursday mornings. Tom Carroll and Laurie Davidson of Montague are the performers, playing a wide range of music in English and Spanish for babies,

preschoolers and their families. The audience currently averages around 70 people each week.

The parents who attend do not want the program to end, and have offered to fundraise to keep it going. The Friends of the Montague Public Libraries have offered to match one to one each dollar donated, up to \$850. In two weeks, the parents have already raised over \$100.

To raise matching funds, the Friends will hold several fundraising events. They are currently selling raffle tickets for two beautiful quilts, which are available at all three Montague Libraries. The drawing will be held on December 10th at the Montague Center Library at 6:30 p.m. That evening the Friends will hold a Cookies and Quilts party at the Montague Center library. All are invited.

On February 11th at 6 p.m., the Friends will host an Ice Cream Social at the Montague Center Library, which will be dedicated solely to funding the Music and Movement program.

Donations to help keep the Music and Movement program can be dropped off at any of the Montague Libraries.

The Carnegie Library is open on Mondays - Wednesdays from 1 - 8 p.m., Thursdays 1 - 5 p.m., Fridays 10 a.m. - 5 p.m., and Saturdays 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. The Montague Center Library is open from 2 - 5 and 6 - 8 p.m. on Mondays and Wednesdays. The Millers Falls Library is open from 2 - 5 and 6 - 8 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Checks made out to "The Friends of the Montague Public Libraries" can be sent to the Carnegie Library at 201 Ave. A, Turners Falls, MA 01376. For more information, call the Carnegie Library, 863-3214.

Linda Hickman is the children's librarian for the Montague Public Libraries

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## NOTES FROM THE MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

# Bar Owners to Selectboard: Ease Up!

**BY DAVID DETMOLD** - More than a dozen Montague bar owners and managers came to an informational meeting with the Montague selectboard on Monday, November 17th to discuss new regulations about closing hours, which the board had imposed on November 3rd. The owners and managers had criticisms of a number of the new regulations, which stipulated that 'last call' should be fifteen minutes before closing, closing for most drinking establishments should be at 1:00 a.m. (unless they close earlier) except on New Year's Eve, when closing hour can be extended to 2:00 a.m., all patrons need to be out of the bar fifteen minutes later, and employees need to complete their clean-up tasks and be out of the bar by one hour past closing time.

Bar owners particularly objected to this last requirement. Even though the selectboard made it clear that a courtesy phone call to the police department would be all that was needed in the event a bar employee needed to stay later, the owners felt that the requirement was unreasonable.

"I own my business, and if I can't sleep and want to go down there at three in the morning and do some paper work, I have every right to. I don't have to call anybody," said Bill Holbrook, of Jake's Tavern.

Lew Collins of Between the Uprights on 2nd Street said his workers routinely carried 36 cases of beer up from the cellar, cashed out, and performed numerous other closing tasks that would be likely to keep them at work at least an hour and a half past closing time.

He asked the selectboard to imagine they had just had 100 friends over for a cocktail party, and then had less than one hour after the last guest left to make their home look the same as it did before the first guest arrived.

Chris Janke, co-owner of the Rendezvous, said efforts were being made to make Montague a destination for people from other communities to travel to. He pointed out that Northampton, Springfield and North Adams allowed 2:00 a.m. closing hours, and so Montague establishments were already operating at a competitive disadvantage with clientele trying to decide where to go for an evening out. He objected to the 12:45 last call stipulation for this reason, and because he thought it gave the message to clientele to order another drink and drink it fast.

The board eventually agreed to stipulate merely that alcohol sales should end by 1:00 a.m., and that all patrons should be out of the bars by 1:30 a.m. No stipulation was made for an hour by which employees should leave the premises.

### Parks and Rec Programs

Jon Dobosz, director of the Montague parks and recreation, gave the selectboard an update on his department's winter program schedule, which includes popular programs like Open Swim at the Turners Falls High School and new entries like Tae Kwon Do for kids and parents. The parks and recreation department will team up with the Knights of Columbus for the annual basketball free throw contest at the Sheffield School gym, on Saturday, January 17th, at 1 p.m. For a complete program listing, pick up a copy of the parks and recreation department's brochure at any of the branch libraries, town hall, or the field house in Unity Park, or go to their website at [www.montague.net](http://www.montague.net) and click on the parks and recreation department. For more information, call: 863-3216.

Dobosz said volunteer parent coaches were still needed for a number of activities.

He also announced that the parks and recreation department was resuming the popular Sawmill River 10-kilometer run on New Year's Day, 10 a.m., in Montague Center, which will now become a fundraiser for the department. Selectboard chair Allen Ross, who formerly organized the Sawmill River Run, congratulated Dobosz for picking up the reins on this annual event.

Ruth Nervig, the Americorps worker at the Brick House who has been coordinating the Turners Falls skate park during the course of the last year, asked whether there was some part of Unity Park where the popular skate park could be relocated, since the lease is up on the current lot. She said a recent survey at the Turners Falls High School elicited responses from 61 students who said they have been using the skate park regularly.

Dobosz said that his department was planning a redesign of Unity Park, with more parking areas, and perhaps the addition of volleyball courts. "There's really no space for the skate park," Dobosz told her.

Dobosz said the parks and recreation department may turn a 1200 square foot plot of land near the Masonic Lodge in Montague City into a play area, and move the play structure from the former Montague Center School to that location.

### Fashion Show

Chris Janke, owner of Suzee's 3rd Street Laundry, asked for and received permission to hold the fourth annual leftover laundry fashion show, with a one day liquor license, on Saturday, December 6th, as part of the upcoming Arts and Icicles open studio walking tour of downtown Turners. Janke said the garments crafted for the show would be auctioned off on Sunday, December 7th at 3 p.m. at the Rendezvous, with a

question and answer session with the designers. The proceeds from the auction will go toward the Brick House.

Pam Kostanski, president of the Montague Business Association, asked for and received permission to hold a holiday tree lighting at Peskeomskut Park on Saturday, December 13th, from 4:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. She said the event will include lighted luminaries on the walkways, cookies and hot chocolate, and performers.

The board granted permission for the Montague Center Fire Department Relief Association to put up the crèche scene on the common in Montague Center from December 7th to the 28th, as they do every year.

The board approved a request from the capital improvements committee to spend \$20,000 from the program income fund to pay for a feasibility study of the possible reuse of the Montague Center School building. This follows town meeting action of earlier this year allocating \$30,000 for heating and maintenance of the building through the winter.

The board held a dog hearing in a matter of a complaint against a pitbull owned by Maria Lonergan, of 63 5th Street. Lonergan's dog is alleged to have bitten a dog owned by Laura Callahan, a neighbor of Lonergan's. The board ordered Lonergan to secure her front door, and only to allow the dog to be walked by an adult, with a leash and muzzle.

The board signed an annual monitoring agreement with Tighe and Bond for \$11,900 to monitor leachate from the capped landfill on Turnpike Road. Town administrator Frank Abbondanzio said the reported levels are low. "All we are seeing is iron and manganese and other chemicals in not too toxic quantities." Ross read from the most recent monitoring

report, saying, "Little water quality impact to Randall Brook," was detected.

The board gave Abbondanzio the go-ahead, and considerable leeway, to write a grant application this week for a \$25,000 regional planning grant "to enlarge the Gill Montague Regional School District to include at least one other town." Or perhaps, one other city, since the Greenfield city council, under some pressure from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, has also agreed to seek such a grant.

The board approved the outlines of a spending freeze prepared by Abbondanzio, limiting all departments to essential spending for the duration of the budget year, without selectboard approval.

A special town meeting to deal with remaining budget items, pending resolution of the Gill-Montague school budget impasse, for Thursday, December 4th. The location is to be determined, since the high school auditorium is not available that week.

## Turners Falls High Dodgeball Tournament

**BY SAM COLTON** - Crowds gathered at the TFHS gym this past Thursday to view a magnificent spectacle, the Dodgeball tourney. Put on by Mr. Pluta's government class, all proceeds - which amounted to over \$400 - went to the Make-A-Wish Foundation.

"It was pretty fun," said sophomore Daniel Skarzynski, a member of Team Domination. Skarzynski and other brave participants captivated audiences with their speed and intensity during the two-hour competition. The tourney was not limited to students: teachers and even members of the community participated.



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**NOTES FROM THE WENDELL SELECTBOARD**

# Back to the Trenches

**BY JOSH HEINEMANN** - The state is requiring Wendell (and every other municipality in the Commonwealth) to appoint a trench permitting authority by the end of 2008. The selectboard tentatively set December 17th as the date for a special town meeting, with at least one article that would make the selectboard responsible for appointing a trench permitting authority.

Harry Williston, chair of the highway commission, also chair of the board of health, took up the question of trench permitting with the selectboard. He said that outside of highway work, where trenches are usually covered the day they are started, most trenches in town are dug for water lines or septic systems. He said it makes sense for the board of health or the health agent to be the trench permitting authority, keeping the permits in the same office as the septic system and water line papers.

Williston said he would like the special town meeting to allocate money to the highway department to pay a clerk for up to six hours every pay period until a new highway superintendent is hired, and a third article to buy a laptop computer with printer for the highway department.

The highway commission has already hired Joy Gorzocoski as clerk, and the department has money that could pay her salary, but making that payroll might squeeze the budget elsewhere.

A laptop computer would serve the highway department better than a desktop because it could be carried to the library or the town office building when an internet connection is needed, and with the proper software it could be used to locate and map every culvert and maintenance project in town. Traveling with a laptop with proper software in a town vehicle, an employee could locate and highlight those culverts and projects.

Town coordinator Nancy Aldrich said there is probably free cash that should be certified at a special town meeting.

Williston suggested a

committee of three should be formed to write a job description and hire a new highway superintendent; the committee should consist of one selectboard member, one highway commission member, and a third person from the community. The committee chosen was Bill Clough from the highway commission, selectboard chair Ted Lewis, and Phil Delorey, who has done a good bit of hiring and interviewing. The selectboard is the actual hiring authority, but generally accepts the choice of a hiring committee.

Phil Delorey was in the room, and said that choosing the new road boss is not urgent, but the committee should meet soon and not waste time coming up with a job description and placing an ad.

Williston said two volunteers have emptied the highway superintendent's office, cleaned the shelves, painted the walls and begun the process of sorting things and putting them back in order.

Selectboard member Christine Heard said the Union 28 budget meeting will be held some time after the selectboard's December 10th meeting, when the school committees and finance committees meet.

Aldrich said the von Ransons have asked to postpone their hearing for a special guest cabin permit until March 30th 2009. The von Ransons hope to create an apartment for themselves in their new barn, and they hope to live there without electricity, using a composting toilet, in order to minimize their

ecological impact by reducing their use of water, fossil fuels or nuclear generated electricity. And they hope to use their apartment as a test case to pave the way for others who wish to reduce their impact on the environment.

Johanna Fitzgerald is resigning from the position of barn inspector. Linda Hickman is willing to take over.

Lewis and selectboard member Dan Keller said the Veterans Day memorial, held on November 10th in the Mahar High School auditorium, was very moving. It featured poetry, and reading from letters of several wars.

Treasurer Carolyn Manley came into the office and said the town needs to make a decision soon on the health care insurance for the spouse of a deceased town employee, because she has to inform the insurance company. Town personnel policy created in the 1980s did not anticipate this problem.

The state Department of Conservation and Recreation is interested in acquiring a landlocked property near Perry Farm Road, and needs the selectboard to sign a waiver so the purchase can take place expeditiously. The selectboard signed the waiver. Now Senator Rosenberg must agree, for the sale to be completed.

The Franklin County Solid Waste District inspected the WRATS (Wendell Recycling and Transfer Station) for the Department of Environmental Protection on October 23rd, and found everything acceptable.

**HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ERVING POLICE LOG**

## Impaired Drivers

**Friday, 11/14**  
6:00 p.m. Report of tractor trailer blocking Forest Street driveway. Spoke to same, vehicle moved.

7:21 p.m. Report of erratic operation of motor vehicle. Stopped same, driver not wearing corrective lenses.

8:38 p.m. Officer wanted regarding family issues. Spoke to same, contacted parties. All okay.

**Saturday, 11/15**  
9:30 a.m. Report of gunshots near a residence on River Road. Found subject duck hunting in the area.

9:40 a.m. Spoke to resident on River Road regarding ongoing loose dog complaint.

6:40 p.m. Citation issued to [redacted] for operating a motor vehicle with a revoked registration and no insurance.

**Monday, 11/17**  
4:14 p.m. Arrested [redacted] for operating a motor vehicle under the influence of alcohol and intoxicated licensee carrying a firearm.

**HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE LOG POLICE LOG**

## Assault and Battery, Domestic

**Tuesday, 11/11**  
6:55 p.m. Report of domestic disturbance on the streets of Turners Falls. Arrested [redacted]

Charged with assault and battery domestic.

**Saturday, 11/15**  
12:33 a.m. Following a traffic stop, arrested [redacted] on a default warrant.

2:31 p.m. Report of motor vehicle accident with property damage. Arrested [redacted]

Charged with operating a motor vehicle under the influence of liquor and failure to use care stopping, turning or backing a motor vehicle.

9:43 p.m. Following a traffic stop, arrested [redacted] on a default

warrant. Charged with red light violation, unlighted license plate, unlicensed operation of a motor vehicle, speeding, possession of class D drug, second offense and a minor transporting alcoholic beverages.

10:45 p.m. Report of burglary / breaking and entering at a Chestnut Street address, Turners Falls.

**Sunday, 11/16**  
6:05 p.m. Report of domestic disturbance at a Chestnut Hill Road address, Montague. Investigated.

10:08 p.m. Report of burglary / breaking and entering at an X Street address, Turners Falls. Investigated.

**Monday, 11/17**  
5:16 p.m. Officer initiated arrest of [redacted] on a default

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### STONES from page 1

across. Some of the rocks were rather large; say two feet across.

Gibavic offered several explanations about what we were looking at. To my eye, the pile was obviously not a natural piling of rock, such as you'd see in the aftermath of a glacier's retreat. More likely, it seemed to me the pile was intentionally constructed. But what was the builder or builders' intention?

Gibavic said some observers believe this was a farmer's stone pile: a dumping ground for boulders from a cleared farm field. The pile, however, was very large and some of the individual stones also quite large — too large to haul from a field and gather into a single mound. A farmer would more likely build smaller mounds of the larger stones around the field, rather than consolidating all the stones into one big mound.

One of the many mysterious stone formations of Leverett: A "turtle mound" or a pile of farmer's rocks?

But there is more. We could clearly see apparent structure in the arrangement of the stones. Stones within the sides of the mound were different, more elongated, than the stones on top, which were flatter. And, if you looked closely, you could see several curiously large stones at the base of the pile, which gave the structure an overall appearance of a flat-topped four-legged animal.

Gibavic suggested, "Could this be a constructed stone

turtle, a creature regarded as sacred to many Native Americans?"

I confess I too could see the pile as a primitive turtle sculpture. The representation was not overwhelming, yet it was clearly there.

Our next stop was a relatively small horseshoe-shaped enclosure (about four feet across and completely above ground) that, according to Gibavic, was aligned with the equinox — either of the two times each year (about March 21st and September 23rd) when the sun crosses the equator and day and night are everywhere on Earth of approximately equal length. I don't doubt that. The structure was also obviously intentionally assembled, given the distinct shape and careful arrangement of the stones. It looked like a stone barbecue but without mortar and no place to set a grill. I wonder, though. Could such a small, exposed, and unmortared structure survive a century, not to mention a millennium?

#### TALES FROM THE CRYPT

Our final structure of the day was rather disturbing. Set in a hillside next to two pick-up trucks was an apparent stone tomb. One could easily crawl inside, and in fact the owners had sealed the interior spaces between the stones with mortar. They were using the structure to store garden equipment.

Standing near gopher wire

and seedling trays, Gibavic told us a creepy story that in colonial times the chamber may have been used by an eccentric Leverett resident who was afraid of being buried alive. As legend has it, she instructed her family, when the time came, not to bury her immediately but to place her seemingly lifeless body first in the stone tomb. If,

theory.

#### REFLECTIONS IN STONE

What is a geologist to make of all this? Like anyone else, I was amazed to encounter these curious and mysterious stone objects — amazed not by the rocks that constitute them but by the human ingenuity (recent, colonial, or ancient) that built



On the equinox, light floods the interior of this stone structure in Leverett

after a fair amount of time, she was still "dead," she instructed her relatives to assume she had indeed passed away and to arrange then (and only then) for her proper burial.

As with the horseshoe structure, Eva pointed out that the doorway to the stone tomb also aligned with the cycles of the sun, and that light would flood the interior of the cellar at the equinox. She speculated that the structure was of ancient origin, here long before the eccentric Leverett colonist. The equinox alignment supports her

them.

A rock is a thing of nature, not unlike the flight of a bird, the bank of river, or the edge of a cloud. Things of nature are formed by nature and tell us about the world we live in. We make stones (and stone structures) and they tell us about ourselves.

Although geologists are trained to decode the information in rocks, we are not trained to decipher human culture or history in stone. A stone is a completely different object from a rock, and it tells a completely

different kind of story. I'm always struck by the sentiment of my stone carver friends who tell me they do not know (or really much care about) the rock they work in. The rock is only a medium for what they want to express. What matters to them is the art, the finished stone.

In the hands of the artist or artisan, rock becomes stone — no longer in the realm of nature or science (although the science of archeology can help us unravel a stone's winding history). Stones tell us not so much about the world (that's a rock's job) as about us as humans, builders, artists, and makers of culture. Sometimes that information is as profound and profoundly ancient as any rock on Earth. That, as a geologist, is what I think the Stones of Leverett are telling us.

To learn more about the Rattlesnake Gutter Trust, the mysterious Stones of Leverett and how they can be protected, or to join the Trust on their spring 2009 events, please contact Jean Bergstrom at 413-367-2842 or Joan Godsey at 413-548-9354.

Steve Winters is a hydrogeologist and environmental science educator. Through Boston University's Prisoner Education Project, he teaches environmental geology and math at Framingham women's prison and astronomy at Norfolk men's prison. He lives in Turners Falls. Reach him at science\_matters@yahoo.com.



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### BUDGET from 1

Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) had notified the district in writing of the DESE's intent to impose a 3.5% budget increase as of December 1st, if a budget agreement to fund the schools was not arrived at before that date. At this point, to avert a state takeover of the district budget and finances for the remainder of the fiscal year, the school committee would have to adopt the budget number passed by the voters of the district.

Much of the discussion on Tuesday reflected town residents' concerns over what the increase in local assessments would mean for town budgets going forward, if the school committee's budget 3% budget were adopted. The town of Gill is facing a current fiscal year budget deficit in excess of \$100,000 even without a further increase in the school assessment, whereas Montague is concerned that excessive use of town reserves to fund operating budgets will lead to an untenable fiscal situation in the immediate future.

To summarize what a great number of speakers said in a great many more words: town finances are stretched, money is tight in the overall economy, and people are worried about the future.

Kociela emphasized the importance of providing a safe, healthy school environment and a well rounded education for the students of Gill and Montague. She pointed out the school committee has taken a number of major cost saving steps in the past year, including joining the state Group Insurance Commission and thereby generating significant savings by holding down future health care costs. The GMRSD also closed the Montague Center School this year, along with half of Hillcrest School, and have entered into discussions with Greenfield on ways to collaborate for cost savings on educational services.

Rocke talked about the school committee's effort to strike the right balance between the needs of the schools and the towns.

"We all want good schools, and we all want the tax burden on the townspeople to be fair and reasonable." He stated the schools had cut their budget by \$400,000 since the beginning of March because, "We did listen to the towns."

Rocke also said the DESE had promised an additional 'Pothole'



BLANCHETTE PHOTO

Steve Ellis, Precinct 4

grant would be forthcoming for the town of Gill, in the amount of \$28,000, to reduce the impact of the increase in the school assessment on that financially strapped town.

Rocke said the GMRSD currently maintained an excess and deficiency cash reserve of \$819,000, which he termed a "healthy balance." Between a quarter and a third of this amount would go toward reducing town assessments this year, Rocke said.

He said the schools had also shifted \$250,000 to a revolving special education account, to cushion the blow of any unexpected increases in this volatile line item.

He said the GMRSD expects to receive a rebate of over \$300,000 from their former health insurance group. He said the district may put this rebate in a revolving account to deal with future health insurance unknowns.

In the run-up to the district meeting, the school committee met on November 12th, to go over the details of district expenses and consider a variety of budget plans. Committee member Linda Kuklewicz of Turners Falls said she felt the committee needed to make budgetary concessions to the towns. The school committee

approved a budget of \$16,666,328 - a reduction of \$153,000 from their previously budget number - and worked it out to have both the local assessment and the overall operating budget reflect a 3% budget increase from '08.

This figure did not prove to be a sufficient reduction for Kuklewicz; she and Gill committee member Sandra Brown voted against it. Montague Center's Michael Langknecht also voted against the committee's budget, but his reasoning was different. He said he felt it would be better to let the state take over the budget process on December 1st, because that would truly "bring them to the table."

The frustration over what many regard as inadequate levels of state aid for the district was echoed by a number of speakers at the district meeting, who highlighted underfunded state mandates and a Chapter 90 education fund increase of less than 1% as a major source of the district's financial woes.

Residents clearly had mixed feelings about the prospect of a state takeover, with Precinct 1 town meeting member Les Cromack saying he had heard a great deal of speculation about the likely impact of such a move, "with maybe a few facts mixed in." Turners resident Gary Earles asked whether the state proposed to take upon itself the power to raise local taxes to fund a higher budget amount than town meetings had agreed to. Mike Naughton responded that the state would, by statute, be able to reduce from local aid to fund assessments. But he noted that the total amount of state aid to the towns was around two million dollars, a figure dwarfed by the

local assessments under discussion. He spoke of the possibility of a state lawsuit against the towns should a state mandated school budget not be matched by local appropriations, a comment that may have fallen into the category of speculation.

Montague selectboard member Pat Allen got the loudest applause of the evening when she recalled that Montague had put an extra \$300,000 from their cash reserves toward the schools last year, when the district meeting approved a budget higher than the finance board or selectboard had originally supported. At the end of the year, the schools reported an excess and deficiency balance of more than \$800,000. "Three hundred thousand dollars of our reserves are sitting in the school side now. I'd rather they used that, instead of asking us for more."

On the other hand, several people spoke in strong support of fully funding necessary school programs. Steve Ellis of Precinct 4 said he has seen great improvement in the math curriculum in the elementary school, which he attributed in part to the purchases of new textbooks, in part to the hiring of a curriculum coordinator at the behest of the DESE. He reminded those in attendance that the school budget had been cut so deeply in the past the state had taken action demanding such improvements. The turnaround plan that has been implemented has shown good results, and promises to raise test scores and educational outcomes, Ellis said. By continuing to strengthen school programs, parents would be less likely to have their students choice-out to other districts, which would result in a gain in state aid to the district,

Ellis said.

Nevertheless, at the end of the day, the G-M school committee budget plan failed by a vote of 46 for and 171 against.

The 1.5% budget increase supported by a majority of the selectboard and finance committee members of Gill and Montague — \$16,416,328, or \$250,000 less than the school committee's most recent budget — won the support of the district meeting by a vote of 120 for, 94 against.

A third option - a 2.3% budget increase, or \$16,553,062 - was presented as a compromise but never got to a vote, once the lower budget figure was agreed upon.

The next step in the budget making process for the fiscal year fast approaching the halfway mark is for the school committee to vote at their next meeting to either agree to or vote down the budget approved by district voters. If they approve it, then, indeed, "We have a budget." If the school committee votes the district budget down, then the state will step in and take over the district finances on December 1st.

The next meeting of the school committee will be held on Tuesday, November 25th at the Turners Falls High School TV studio at 7 p.m.



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## the poetry page

It is difficult  
to get the news from poems  
yet men die miserably every day  
for lack  
of what is found there.

- William Carlos Williams

Poetry Page edited by  
Christopher Sawyer-Laucanno,  
Janel Nockleby and Jamie Berger

Readers are invited to send poems to the  
Montague Reporter at 24 3rd Street,  
Turners Falls, MA 01376;  
or email us your poetry at  
reporter-poems@montaguema.net

design by Boysen Hodgson

### Azalea

An azalea maneuvers beside the porch.  
I sit on a rockwall below the azalea and its eyebent petals.  
I burn between my azaleas.  
Backpedaling, the azalea surrenders its arms.  
My hair's the most beautiful azalea.  
I don't speak until spoken to,  
until an azalea's strapped to my back. Where I coalesce  
I butcher the Spanish azaleas of tongues.  
I take pictures of barns and rockformations  
along the azalea.  
The azalea up the block sells cheap whiskey, perfume.  
Candles hold azaleas and their lyric improvisations.  
Call me azalea. I'm azalea on both sides, dawg,  
inheriting a southerncross.  
Nothing exists I can't azalea with a glass of water.  
Should there be a threemonth grace azalea for sex?  
The azalea blushes, wipes its face, which stings the sidewalk.  
I blow smoke at the azalea and write  
letters to imaginary lovers, azaleas.  
The azalea comes unfluorinated.  
In its white church are the snarls of red timberwolves.

--C.S. Carrier  
Northampton

### The Heaven-Sent Leaf

The speculation of contemporary life.  
The teeming green of utterance.

To feel this clean,  
This dream-éclat.

There is, in the heart, the hard-rendering profit.  
As if we were plucking the leaves from the trees.

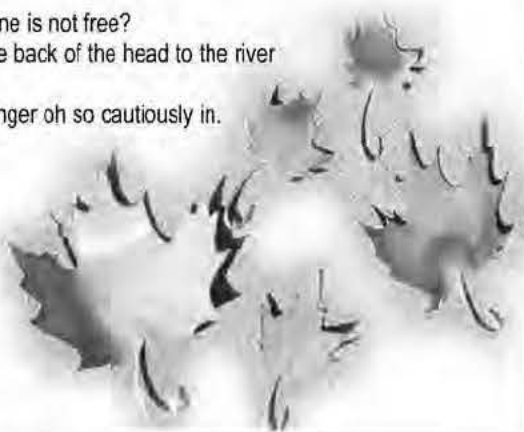
Let us think of the soft verdure of the spirit of this age  
as now inside of us and swollen by spring rain.  
To imagine oneself as a river.

To imagine oneself as a stretch of cool water,  
Pouring into a basin or brain.

And if one knows one is not free?  
One crawls from the back of the head to the river

And places one's finger oh so cautiously in.

--Katy Lederer  
New York City



The editors would like to thank the  
following for their generous financial  
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**Anonymous, Klondike Sound,  
Carlin Barton, Montague Dental  
Arts, Dr. Robert Koolkin, Michael  
Farrick, Green Fields Market,  
Michael Farrick, and Michael Muller.**

### Five Days after Diagnosis

I am watching this green screen and  
the silver background is showing  
through.  
We are sitting here, waiting for  
the picture to begin. I am tired  
of the previews and commercials.  
I can run, jump, cry and fly,  
but the seat is too soft to stand  
upon.  
The fabric too slick for security.  
I'd like to take my big body and toss  
it  
into the air, then SPLASH and  
create a big frothy mess,  
and have that seen as beautiful.

--Sue Blauner  
Turners Falls

### Holiday Lines

The line extended all the way to the apples  
I couldn't see a cashier  
She was invisible behind shelves with  
Berries from Chile and the clutter of signage

It's the day before Thanksgiving  
Produce must be purchased then  
It must be fresh for this meal of the year

The next in line  
Was looking fresh  
Compared to me  
We shared our roasting fears  
I mused aloud how I might avoid  
Long lines next year  
Thinking I was in a hurry  
She offered me her place  
I declined  
Slowed down  
And took another look around  
One minute the line wasn't moving the  
Next we were checking out  
And parting ways

The tendrils of Thanksgiving  
Stretched past the aisles  
Leaving me with leftover  
Conversations in my head  
And bounty in my fridge

--Gini Brown  
Berkeley, CA



### Me, A Brainworker

Me, a brainworker toiling in pristine white hallways.  
Abnormal, aboriginal, endemic to this site.  
Some people sell their wares outside.  
In the pulsating light of Times Square they are singing.  
In their noses and nipples, the glinting of rings.  
Let us call them unoriginal.  
Let us call them all these awful things.  
The busy unoriginals are throwing out their trash, But on this  
lovely parchment they are writing priceless poems.  
They suppose that by such rendering they'll be remembered  
after death.  
They suppose that by such influence their souls will sing  
eternally.  
In the hallways, we are killing time,  
Its blood now thick and lurid on the freshly painted walls.

--Katy Lederer  
New York City

### She's So Lucky

Her husband leans  
Into a circle of friends  
And declares  
With his hand on her arm  
She's so lucky  
I get this stuff for free....  
I could only fit two in the truck  
.....It's the neighbor's truck  
And the backhoe too.....  
What a lively, interesting guy  
She's so lucky  
All through dinner  
Each episode  
Unwrapped and retold  
Comes raining down  
Never dampening her smile  
His creativity and wit overflows  
And the bounty keeps coming  
She's so lucky  
Multiple acquisitions  
Land with a soft thud  
At her feet  
He brings home scores of boxes  
With lids  
Drainage pipe  
All sizes  
Recalcitrant bamboo  
Of all kinds  
All bequeathed to him freely  
She's so lucky  
And with a certainty  
It all comes to roost  
Artistically arranged  
And generously placed  
At their door  
In the yard, in the garage, in the attic  
and basement too

She is so lucky  
Because there could have been  
Even more.

--Gini Brown  
Berkeley, CA

### CONTRIBUTOR'S NOTES:

C. S. Carrier was born in Dayton, Ohio, and grew up in North Carolina. He holds degrees from Western Carolina University and from the Program for Poets, and Writers at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. He lives and works in Northampton, Massachusetts.

On Aug. 30, Susan Blauner received a breast cancer diagnosis at the age of 42.

She wrote these poems in the days following that diagnosis and prior to surgery on Sept. 24. They can be read on her blog [www.suesblb.blogspot.com](http://www.suesblb.blogspot.com). Blauner hosted a fundraiser on Nov. 2 called "Keeping Abreast at The Rendezvous." For more information, visit [www.keeping-a-breast.blogspot.com](http://www.keeping-a-breast.blogspot.com)

Gini Brown is a Berkeley mom watching

life go by and kids grow up. Some moments feel like poetry.

Don Clegg, of Turners Falls, says: "This poem was written and rewritten over one year ago. I just now have the guts to share it."

Kristin Beck lives in Montague Center and her book *Cloisters* has just been published

by Tupelo Press this fall. She teaches writing for the School of Management at UMASS.

Katy Lederer is the author of *Winter Sex* (2002), *Poker Face: A Girlhood Among Gamblers* (2003), and most recently *Heaven-Sent Leaf* (2008).

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the poetry page

Lyric

A mother perms her hair, highlights it red.  
Teeth are molded from silicon, transistors.  
She swells with hydrogen bromide. Her sickness broadcast  
on TV with news of shark attacks, troops ordered to shave.

There's rubble where there used to be cars, oak trees  
on fire, solar calculators, bowl of caramels by the phone.  
She wears scrubs, her shoulder erodes as it ushers red skin  
to glass incubators. Trafficjammed on the bypass.

Sleeps, cries, forgetting to smile, living by the river.  
Prosthetic, torn socks, a mother is life but not  
what it's about, carried by her son. Of sunlight, buses that degrade  
blood, a vanity of ceramic brides, the belief in white

dresses, warring families that build fountains  
on lyed graves, jewelcups, basket collecting, the American  
flag. Embers, haloes, no more mountains, clean dishes,  
electrons, glass etchings, her son laughed at,

her son in oil, an heirloom condiment tray, poinsettia,  
the idea for civilization, bacilli, the smoke billows, tired,  
the spine compacted under water, knotted ropes, failures  
in time, the other side of fruit, in words floating

--C.S. Carrier  
Northampton

Oracle

I see grave-clothes unfurling inside a flooded coffin,  
I see the box loosening in the mud, struggling to surface,  
the hand-carved mahogany, the pleated velvet pillow,  
the soaking grave-clothes, and of course, the body,  
the body fresh inside the box, the hand still soft, falling open  
like a lily, the hair ribboning the cheek, the head listing  
in the direction of the muddy hole, riding swells down  
Harkness Road, the body blushing in the box, the body's  
pink earlobes, fingerpads, the body's bracelet of bells  
ringing under water, sailing faster now, faster than you think,  
the water filling the mouth, black, overflowing, the body itself  
stirring, dancing to a bracelet of bells, over tracks stitching  
the land, past the goldfish still in its bowl, I see the coffin  
rolling, lifting in the current, the cold water rushing in, the body  
spinning faster inside the box, the eyelids opening, closing,  
the grave-clothes twisting, rising over the poppy and plough,  
I see it hovering over this valley.

--Kristin Bock  
Montague Center



In the Room of the Lovelorn

We are not unlike Cezanne  
obsessed with a mountain,  
painting it over and over  
until it is no longer a mountain,  
a mountain attached  
to foreground or background,  
snowcapped or cornflowered,  
weatherworn, or born  
of quaking earth, no longer  
a mountain adorned  
with mist and mourning doves,  
or careless gleaners  
who leave their sickles  
in the earth like thorns.

--Kristin Bock  
Montague Center

Surgery

dolphin dreaming, swim  
rolling smooth skin, sharp  
gentle mouth songs.  
float safe between their  
slippery flippers, waiting rolling  
laughing and healing.  
blue sea to soak in, bright  
yellow flowers for my hair.  
feel beautiful and free.  
dolphin dreaming, please heal.  
swim below and above,  
carry and cradle this soft body.

--Sue Blauner  
Turners Falls



The Montague Reporter warmly welcomes submissions of poetry from our readers, accompanied by a short, 25 word or less biographical note. Send poems via email to [reporter-poems@montague-ma.net](mailto:reporter-poems@montague-ma.net); or mail to Montague Reporter, 58 4th Street, Turners Falls, MA 01376. No experience is necessary (as a poet) in order to submit.

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**NOTES FROM THE ERVING SELECTBOARD**

**Conservation Land Purchase Hits a Snag**

**BY DAVID DETMOLD** - The state's purchase of 21.3 acres of land on Dorsey Road — intended for conservation and recreational purposes — appears to have hit a rather large snag.

Jen Soper, land protection specialist for the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) had made a proposal to the selectboard last month that the town of Erving chip in \$45,000 toward the purchase of land owned by the Carroll family near the French King Bridge. The purchase price for the acreage is \$195,000; the land contains five buildable lots. Soper has said the state is willing to put up \$150,000 toward the purchase. DCR would hold title to the land, and manage it, and set conditions for its public use.

The selectboard sought legal counsel on the proposed purchase. Town attorney Donna MacNicol advised that it would not be legal for the town to give money for the state to purchase the land, and a subsequent call to the attorney general's office confirmed that opinion. Had the town of Erving passed the local option Community Preservation Act bylaw, then it would have been legal for the town to assist in

the state's purchase of conservation land, but Erving has never acted on the local option CPA bylaw.

At a joint meeting of the selectboard and the finance committee on Monday, November 17th, board chair Andy Tessier said, "It's up to the state to preserve the land. I hope they do. It is a great opportunity to preserve that land."

Tessier made a back of the envelope calculation about how many tens of thousands of dollars it would cost the town to educate children that might be born into households that could be built on Dorsey Road if the land is sold as building lots instead of as conservation land.

"I think it was a good deal for the town to chip in \$45,000," added Tessier, "and still get some money back each year (in payments in lieu of taxes from the state). 'If we bought it, we'd get no taxes at all if we preserved it.'"

Linda Downs-Bembury said the town planning board had been eyeing that parcel of land for "at least seven years," with a view toward permanently preserving it.

The selectboard had scheduled a vote on the \$45,000 appropriation to help the state

purchase the land as part of a seven article special town meeting

on Monday, November 24th at 7:00 p.m. For now, the selectboard would call for that warrant article to be passed over.

The board met with newly appointed fire chief Almon 'Bud' Meatley, who will assume his duties at the head of the fire department on January 1st, when outgoing fire chief Mick LaClaire's resignation from the chief's post, and from the department, takes effect.

Meatley said the transition had not been going smoothly.

Selectboard member Andrew Goodwin, appointed by the board to mediate between the outgoing and incoming fire chiefs, said he had tried to set up a meeting last week between them, but, "That didn't work out either."

Meatley said there are grants that need to be completed for the department by November 30th, and state matching funds that are available only until December 15th to assist the department in purchasing hose and units of fire retardant foam. Meatley said he was unable to access the computer at Fire Station #1 (in Erving's side), because, "Someone's got his access code on it," and he pointed out that some departmental mail appears to be

going to LaClaire's home, rather than to the department's mailing address.

Meatley also said that \$6500 had been approved at town meeting in May of 2008 to purchase structural firefighting hose and accessories, but "It hasn't been ordered yet."

Tessier said all computers codes should be on file at town hall, and all departmental mail should be routed through town hall. He said he would call LaClaire to urge cooperation in the department's transition. He said purchases like new

firefighting hose were often routinely put off until the end of a budget year, in case unforeseen expenses cropped up.

Tessier also advised Meatley that the town would only be able to equip 30 firefighters, maximum, and could only maintain four trucks in the long run. "Those are our front line trucks. We're just not going to be able to afford eight trucks at \$350,000 a pop."

At present, there are about two dozen call firefighters on the Erving department.



Anton 'Bud' Meatley will become Erving's new fire chief on January 1st

**501c4 from page 1**

In February, I called to inquire how the process was coming along. A disembodied spokesman for the IRS said only that it was coming along.

In March, I called again. This time I got directed to a very pleasant and helpful tax official named Beckey McMurrey. It was clear to me by the end of the conversation that she had some fairly serious reservations about our application. Her main problem was that since the newspaper accepted advertising

dollars, she didn't see how we qualified for non-profit status. I made the case that the advertisers were supporting the community in its effort to establish a community-owned newspaper.

On April Fool's Day an official letter arrived at the newspaper office, asking the board of directors to make our case again. McMurrey suggested we stress our role as an educational and community service organization. I called her and asked for guidance.

She gave me some further advice, but said the IRS lawyers

who examined our application told her they thought it very unlikely we would qualify. I conveyed this news to the newspaper's board and to the editor. At the same time, I prepared a four-page single spaced response to the IRS.

In late April, McMurrey called me again. She told me our case was with the IRS lawyers and asked for one further point of clarification. Finally, in June, she called to say that though the lawyers had found our case impressive, they didn't feel we could qualify as a 501(c)(3).

Before I could even gulp, she added, "Would the paper consider becoming a 501(c)(4)?" I told her the board of directors would have to make that decision, but asked her to explain the distinction between those two non-profit designations. She read to me from the official IRS description: "A 501(c)(4) organization must not be organized for profit and must be operated exclusively to promote social welfare." She added that unlike 501(c)(3)s, a 501(c)(4) could "seek legislation germane to the organization's programs.... A 501(c)(4) social welfare organization may further its exempt

purposes through lobbying as its primary activity without jeopardizing its exempt status."

I said all of that sounded great.

But what about donor donations?

"Ah," she said. "Unlike donations to 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations, donations to a section 501(c)(4) organization are not deductible by the donor." We talked further, and she informed me that while individual donors could not take a deduction on their taxes for making a contribution to the paper, the newspaper would still be able to receive grants from supportive foundations or charitable organizations.

Fast forward to August. I received another phone call from the IRS. But this time it was not from Beckey (we were now on a first name basis). Instead, another woman had taken over our case and was now reviewing it. She was quick to let me know that she did not intend to undo any of McMurrey's work, but more information was needed.

A few weeks later, we got our application back. We needed to fill in a few more blanks so we could officially become a 501(c)(4). Lyn Clark, the clerk of the *Montague Reporter* board,

and I conferred about the details, and she promptly returned our amended form. At last, on Thursday of last week, we received the letter informing us that the *Montague Reporter* is now officially a 501(c)(4) non profit corporation.

It took eleven months for the approval, but the approval came against some mighty big odds. And while we did not achieve our desired goal of becoming a 501(c)(3), in the end I came away feeling our community newspaper had scored a major victory. We were now officially acknowledged as a non-profit organization. The lobbying capability had never been a mission of the paper's, but as anyone knows who reads the *Montague Reporter*, we do have a few ideas about politics, and we need not be shy about stating them editorially. And finally, now that we are a bona fide non-profit in the eyes of the IRS, we are now able to apply for grants to support our work. We are in a stronger, more stable position to continue serving you, our readers, and our community as steadfastly as before.

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JESSICA HARMON ILLUSTRATION

**BY FRED CICETTI**  
**LEONIA, NJ** - (This is the final part of a three-part series on the PSA test for prostate cancer.)

Cancer of the prostate is one of the most common types of cancer among American men. More than six in ten cases of prostate cancer cases occur in men 65 and older. Treatment for prostate cancer works best when the disease is found early.

Prostate-specific antigen (PSA) is a protein produced by the cells of the prostate gland. The PSA test measures the level of this protein in the blood. It can be detected at a low level in the blood of all adult men.

A fundamental problem with the PSA test is that, while elevated levels can indicate the

presence of cancer, they can also be caused by other problems such as benign enlargement of the prostate that comes with age, infection, inflammation and seemingly trivial events such as ejaculation and a bowel movement.

PSA test results are horribly confusing and often terrifying. In the first parts of this series, we discussed the sources of much of the confusion. In this column, we'll address the primary question about PSA: Does it save lives?

The answer is: We don't know. What's worse is that we don't know if PSA screening outweighs the risks of follow-up diagnostic tests and cancer treatments.

For example, prostate surgery can cause incontinence and erectile dysfunction. Even a prostate biopsy has risks because it can cause bleeding and infection.

The PSA test can detect small

tumors. However, finding a small tumor does not necessarily reduce a man's chance of dying from prostate cancer. PSA testing may identify very slow-growing tumors that are unlikely to threaten a man's life. Also, PSA testing may not help a man with a fast-growing or aggressive cancer that has already spread to other parts of his body before being detected.

So, what should a man do to protect himself from prostate cancer?

Some doctors encourage annual screenings for men older than age 50; others recommend against routine screening. However, most doctors and medical organizations agree that men should learn all they can about prostate cancer, so they can reach informed decisions.

My personal history with PSA tests is illustrative of many of the problems men face with this type of screening. I hope that sharing it will help.

I'm 67 years old. I've been having physical exams almost every year since I hit my 50s. These physicals included a PSA blood test and a digital rectal exam (DRE). Until recently, all tests produced normal results.

My PSA was always around 1.5. Most doctors want your PSA to be under 4. (The numbers stand for nanograms of PSA per milliliter of blood.) And, my DREs found no irregularities, just some benign enlargement.

About three years ago, my family physician gave me a DRE and found nothing, but my PSA test came in at 2.97. My doctor told me to see a urologist for a follow-up exam because my PSA, while under 4, had increased.

The urologist did another DRE and ordered another PSA test. The test came in at 2.96. The urologist said that he thought 2.96 was my new PSA and that I should not worry

about it.

Two years later, my PSA was still 2.96. Then, this year, it came in at 4.1. My family physician sent me to a urologist.

Before I went to the urologist, I did some research and learned that something as seemingly insignificant as a bowel movement could affect a PSA test. I told the urologist that I recalled going to the bathroom just before having blood drawn. He thought that this could have affected the test.

Another DRE. Okay. Another blood test. The PSA was 3.3. The urologist said no biopsy was required. The increase from 2.96 to 3.3 was not a cause for concern.

What now? I'm tempted to forget about PSA tests, but I'll probably have another in a year.

*If you have a question, please write to fred@healthygeezer.com.*

## Interfaith Thanksgiving Service to be Held

**BY DAVID JAMES**

**GREENFIELD** - Throughout human history at all times and in all places a fundamental feature of faith traditions has been offering thanks to some form of higher power for the gift of life and the blessings of creation.

A primary purpose of the Interfaith Council of Franklin County since its formation in 1986 has been to "create an opportunity for common public

celebrations and remembrances."

In keeping with those intentions, the Interfaith Council annually sponsors a Shared Thanksgiving Service. This year, the Thanksgiving Service — entitled "Honoring the Earth" — is scheduled for 7 p.m. Sunday, November 23rd, at the Second Congregational Church, 16 Court Square, in Greenfield.

According to Jennifer Bennett of Turners Falls, IFC vice-presi-

dent, the organization's Sacred Earth Committee has asked voices from many faith traditions in the Pioneer Valley "to come together to honor and celebrate, in thanksgiving, our sacred Earth."

The event will include musical offerings by Native American flautist Barry Higgins, Jeff Martell, and Molly Scott, along with readings and prayers offered by Rabbi Efraim Eisen, Temple Israel, Rev. Jeanne Lloyd, All

Souls Unitarian Universalist Church and Sr. Madeline Joy, Sisters of Providence, Farren Care Center, as well as representatives of other area faith traditions. "There are many ways we are constantly gifted by the planet on which we all live," Bennett said. "May we be ever mindful of responsible stewardship of the sacred trust of our only home and may our impact on the resources of the Earth be always thoughtful

and responsible."

A collection taken during the service will be used to buy energy efficient light bulbs to be donated to the Greenfield Survival Center and the Center for Self Reliance. The IFC will conduct its monthly meeting prior to the service, also at Second Congregational Church. That event will begin with a potluck dinner at 5:30 p.m., followed by a business meeting at 6 p.m.

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# JEP'S PLACE: Part XCIX

## Ma Can't Take It



BY JOSEPH PARZYCH

**GILL** - One night, apparently rabid foxes got into the fenced area where we kept our chickens and went on a killing spree. They maimed more than they killed. Chickens lay scattered over the ground, dead or dying from bites to their body.

Pa told us to gather up the dead chickens while he put water on to boil. Without refrigeration, the meat would soon be sure to spoil.

We scalded the feathers and plucked the chickens clean, cut them up, cooked, and canned them. When the dead ones were all canned, Pa killed the

wounded ones and we began canning those, also, never realizing the danger of salmonella, or rabies from the foxes.

Ma had been up since 4:30 that morning, when she'd brought Pa his breakfast in bed, walked more than a mile of her trip to the paper mill and worked until five in the afternoon. After a hurried supper, she began helping cut and can chickens. The hour grew late and the pile of chickens still loomed large. Everyone was tired from working all day and half the night. Pa grew irritable and began criticizing Ma. She remained silent, jaws clenched. He kept it up. At last, she turned to him, brandishing the knife she was using.

"One more word out of you," she said, pointing the knife at his chest for emphasis, "and you'll get it, with this knife."

He stepped back, astonished. She'd never stood up to him like

that before. I stepped between them and calmed her down. I felt depressed that they were bickering, and at the same time felt admiration for the way she stood up to him.

We finished canning the last of the chickens in the early hours of the morning. Pa seemed to regard Ma with more respect after that, especially when she had a knife in her hand. We moved the surviving chickens to the safety of the hen house.

That was not the end of controversy over chickens.

With World War II heating up, a labor shortage developed and Pa was able to pass the physical exam for work at the mill, the company doctor having apparently misplaced his stethoscope for the duration of the war.

The coop-full of laying hens posed a problem. Who would take care of them?

Pa asked Emmy to quit school to tend to them. She balked, and Pa made her life miserable.

"What you want with school

— if you can read, write and know numbers; what's the use of it, to go more? You probably going to get married pretty soon, anyway, and then it's all for nothing."

Pa held a dim view of education. He had quit school after just one day. The Russian teacher in his school in Poland caught him speaking Polish, which was forbidden. She made him spend the day kneeling on dried peas, leading him to decide he'd learned enough.

His father let him stay home. "You can learn to be a carpenter, like me, and earn a good living."

After immigrating to America, Pa attended night school long enough to learn to sign his name, learn to read Polish and to do simple arithmetic. School beyond the basics was a waste of time, in his estimation — particularly for a girl.

But Emmy had her heart set on being the first in the family to graduate from high school. Soon, she left home to take a job as housekeeper and maid,

continuing to attend high school, mornings. The lady of the house entertained often, with parties that sometimes lasted into the wee hours of the morning. By the time the party mess was cleaned up and the dishes done, it would often be nearly time to head off to school. With no time to study, Emmy fell behind in her studies, grew discouraged and quit school a few months short of graduation.

When Pa learned of her failure to graduate, he rebuked her. "See? You didn't finish high school, anyway. So why couldn't you quit when I asked you to?"

Meanwhile, Pa had proposed Irene a deal. If she would take a year off to tend the flock, she could resume school the following year. As an added incentive, he said he'd buy her Mae Lambert's Model A Ford as soon as Mae traded it in. Irene complied. The Model A Ford was a classy little coupe with tinted windows and a chrome grille.

— Continued Next Week

### MCTV PROGRAM SCHEDULE 11/21- 11/25

**Friday, November 21**  
 8:00 AM Seabrook 1977.  
 9:30 AM Silly Wizard Fantasy Fish  
 11:00 AM Silly Wizard  
 12:00 PM Songs For Wee People  
 1:00 PM Surviving the Vernon Reactor  
 2:00 PM Independent Voices  
 2:30 PM Independent Voices 36  
 3:00 PM Into the Way of Peace  
 4:00 PM Journey to Wissantinnewag  
 4:30 PM Living in the Shadow of VT Yankee  
 6:00 PM MCTV Video Camp 2007  
 6:30 PM Mind Control  
 7:00 PM GMRSD 11/12/08  
 10:30 PM The Katie Clarke Band  
**Saturday, November 22**  
 8:00 AM Memorial Day Parade & Ceremony 2008  
 8:22 AM Memorial Day Parade & Ceremony 07  
 9:30 AM Keep Warm Keep Safe  
 10:00 AM Montague Business Association PSA  
 10:30 AM Montague Machine  
 11:30 AM Montague Update: Ted

Graveline  
 12:00 PM Mik TV with Joe Landry  
 pt1  
 12:30 PM Naturalist Laurie Sanders  
 1:00 PM Amandla  
 2:30 PM An Inside Look into Iran  
 4:30 PM Art Fest 2007  
 6:00 PM TWB The Aging Eye  
 7:00 PM Underground Railway Concert 07  
 8:30 PM UN panel1  
 10:30 PM Valley Idol Finals 2008  
**Sunday, November 23**  
 8:00 AM White House Chronicles  
 9:00 AM Wisdom Way Solar Village  
 10:00 AM TWB Snoring and Sleep Apnea  
 11:00 AM Tiny Tim  
 12:00 PM Three Rites of Spring in one magical evening  
 1:00 PM The Western Mass Dem: Chris Forgey  
 2:00 PM The Spirit of Lake Pleasant  
 4:00 PM The Rise and Fall of Lake Hitchcock  
 5:00 PM TFHS National Honor

Society 07  
 6:00 PM the Epics at the Voo  
 7:00 PM Sustainable Energy  
 8:00 PM Source To Sea 2007  
 8:30 PM Senses of Place  
 10:00 PM Senior Aerobics #2  
 10:30 PM Safe and Green Campaign  
**Monday, November 24**  
 8:00 AM RTR Extending Treatment to Everyone  
 9:30 AM The Looming Crisis in Oil Depletion  
 11:30 AM Refusal 15  
 12:00 PM Red Cross Prevent Home Fires  
 12:30 PM Prevailing Winds in Denmark  
 1:00 PM Preachin the Blues  
 2:00 PM Poetry Music Jam for Montague Reporter from the Voo  
 3:00 PM Physician Focus  
 4:00 PM Over the Falls: the Big Read  
 5:00 PM On The Ridge Turkey Hunting Tips  
 6:00 PM Mik TV with Joe Landry

pt1  
 6:30 PM Montague Update: Stephen Kulik  
 7:00 PM Select Board 11/24/08 (Live)  
 9:30 PM Mass Access  
 9:37 PM Gov\_Budget\_08  
 10:00 PM Vets  
 11:00 PM An Inside Look into Iran  
**Tuesday, November 25**  
 8:00 AM ASPCA  
 9:00 AM Bech Interview  
 10:00 AM Changing Face of Turners Falls  
 12:00 PM Chronicles Mass for Helen Nowoszynski  
 1:00 PM Coffee House Joe Graveline  
 2:00 PM CWA Butterflies and Flowers  
 3:00 PM Darker Image  
 4:00 PM Discovery Center Poetry and Prose  
 6:00 PM Discovery Center Importance of Pollinators  
 7:00 PM GMRSD 11/25/08 (Live)  
 11:30 PM Amandla

### HAVE A HAPPY TURKEY DAY!!!

### HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE GILL POLICE LOG

## Identity Thefts Reported

**Monday, 11/10**  
 8:50 a.m. Motor vehicle accident on French King Highway, with injury  
 12:15 p.m. Assist subject on West Gill Road with property retrieval  
**Tuesday, 11/11**  
 4:16 p.m. Assisted Erving police department with suicidal subject  
**Wednesday 11/12**  
 7:10 a.m. Barking dog complaint on Hickory Hill Road  
 10:50 a.m. Assisted with medical emergency on West Gill Road  
 5:05 p.m. Unwanted subject on Chase Road; same left area prior to call  
**Thursday, 11/13**  
 9:20 a.m. Motor vehicle accident on Main Road, no injury  
 12:45 p.m. Identity theft report received

from Main Road resident  
**Friday, 11/14**  
 5:05 p.m. Larceny / identity theft from Boyle Road resident  
**Saturday, 11/15**  
 8:55 a.m. Assisted West Gill Road resident with property retrieval  
 9:10 p.m. Assisted Bernardston police with domestic disturbance  
 10:05 p.m. Assisted with medical emergency on Dole Road  
**Sunday, 11/16**  
 12:05 a.m. Assisted state police with subject making numerous non-emergency calls on the 911 telephone line from a Main Road residence  
 4:03 p.m. Assisted with medical emergency at Stoughton Place on Main Road  
 6:18 p.m. Larceny from French King Highway business  
 9:55 p.m. Assisted resident at Stoughton Place gaining entry into apartment  
**Monday, 11/17**  
 7:35 a.m. Past disorderly person complaint on Center Road taken at station  
 2:05 p.m. Past vandalism complaint on Boyle Road  
 2:10 p.m. Sick raccoon on Meadow Lane, assisted with same

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### HOLIDAY HOURS

**GILL** - The assessors' office and town clerk's office will be closed the week of November 24th. The collector-treasurer's and selectboard's offices will be closed November 26th and 28th. Trash pickup will be Friday, as usual.

**THANKSGIVING TRASH AND RECYCLING SCHEDULE MONTAGUE** - Tuesday and Wednesday remain the same. Thursday's pick-up will be on Friday. Thursday's recycling pick-up is cancelled. Thursday recycling will not be picked up until the following Thursday.

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# ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



JACK COUGHLIN ILLUSTRATION

**THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 20th**  
Deja Brew, Wendell: *Waitin' Dave Robinson, Tommy Filault & Co. Blues* based roots music, 8 - 10 p.m.

Route 63 Roadhouse: Open Mic hosted by Peter Kim & Jimmy Arnold, 8:30 p.m. to 12:30 a.m., no cover.

**FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 21st**  
A Bouquet of Music Healing Arts Concert Series featuring Mohawk Trail Regional High School Select Chorus under direction of Nick Waynelovich. Held in the main lobby or in the Ethel Lemay Healing Arts Garden (weather permitting) At Baystate Franklin Medical Center, Greenfield. Noon-12:45 pm. (413) 773-2573

Route 63 Roadhouse: FAT, legendary valley band back to rock out the Roadhouse, 9:30 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Josh Levangie*, country folk guitar, Johnny Cash favorites, 9 to 11 p.m.

At The Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Del Andujar's Birthday Bash*, \$3 cover.

Moscow Ballet performs its *Great Russian Nutcracker* at Symphony Hall, Springfield, 7:30 p.m. [www.nutcracker.com](http://www.nutcracker.com), (413) 788-7033.

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 22nd**  
*Moose Sign Field Walk* Spend an afternoon immersed in prime moose habitat in eastern Franklin County searching for sign such as tracks, scat, antler rubs, and feeding sites. Discussion of the lives of moose and opportunities and challenges they face. Directions to our meeting place will be emailed to registered participants. Program co-sponsored by Northfield Mountain and MassAudubon's Arcadia Sanctuary. 1 to 4 p.m. For ages 12 &

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At The Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Critters Are Doing What?* 11 to 12 a.m. What are the critters doing at this time of year? A program for the whole family oriented to learning survival strategies of animals as they prepare for the cold winter. (413) 863-3221.

Christmas Bazaar: Featuring raffles, food, crafts and gifts. Held at the Montague Senior Center, 62 Fifth Street, Turners Falls, 9 to 1 p.m.

Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: *Heroes*, classic & current rock & roll covers, 9:30 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Eric Love*, Eric's smooth voice and mellow style singing favorite 60's & 70's covers, 9 - 11 p.m.

At The Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *The Clayton Sabine Band*, rock, 9:30 p.m. \$3 cover.

**SATURDAY & SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 22nd & 23rd**  
*Seeds of Solidarity at the Red Apple Farm Harvest Festival*, Phillipston. 6th Annual Thanksgiving Harvest Festival! Celebrating, Sharing, Community. Come share and taste New England's bounty. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. \$2/person (1/2 off with non-perishable food donation) [www.redapplefarm.com](http://www.redapplefarm.com).

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 23th**  
At The Rendezvous, Turners Falls: Marisol Celestia & Allison O'Brien, singer songwriters, \$3 cover.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Moonstruck*, Acoustic Duo, 8 to 10 p.m.

**MONDAY, NOVEMBER 24th**  
Evening Sing-A-Long, Montague Center Library, 6:30 p.m. Children's librarian Linda Hickman plays guitar and banjo and performs a variety of children's music. Info., call the Carnegie Library 863-3214 during the week, or the Montague Center Library, 367-2852, on Monday evenings.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *All Small Caps*, A Night of Spoken Word. Open mic at 7 p.m. and guest readers 8 to 10 p.m.

**TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 25TH**  
At The Rendezvous, Turners Falls: Craft night-knit, free juke box!

**WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 26th**  
Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: *Heroes*, 9 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Mel & the Blue Shots*, R&B, 8 to 10 p.m.

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

**FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 28th**  
Deja Brew, Wendell: *Nerps*, dancing tends to break out when this group gets going! Harmonic, eclectic rock/ alternative, 9 p.m.

Route 63 Roadhouse: *Mike Stetson Band*, rock & roll cov-



View the Junior Duck Stamp Exhibit at the Great Falls Discovery Center through December 13th. 2nd Place Winner for Grades 10-12: Leah Hollrock, Frontier Regional High School.

ers. Members of Tracy & Co will rock you! 9:30 p.m.

At The Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *DJ Pushplay post-Thanksgiving Workout*, \$3 cover.

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 29th**  
At The Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Freshwater Mussels in Our Watershed*. Hands-on activity for youngsters, with current information on habitat protection efforts for adults. 11 a.m. - 12 p.m.

The Shea Theater, Turner's Falls: The Hampstead Stage Company's production of C.S. Lewis' popular classic *Prince Caspian*. Fast moving stage play finds the four siblings, Lucy, Edmund, Peter, and Susan, pulled back into the land of Narnia, where a thousand years have passed since they last visited. \$5, 2 p.m. show. Tickets: 863-228, [www.theshea.org](http://www.theshea.org).

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Lord Jeff*, a psychodelic folk quartet, 9 to 11 p.m.

Route 63 Roadhouse: *Drunk Stuntmen*, original alt. country/rock & roll, 9:30 p.m.

At The Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Watcher/Ghostie/Brook Pridemore*, 9:30 p.m., \$3 cover.

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 30th**  
Family Dance, Montague Grange, Montague Center, 4 to 6 p.m. Family-style contra dancing with caller Kathy Torrey. Live music from traditional tradance band *Shingle the Roof*. Simple contras, circle dances, and singing games with instruction for beginners of all ages. \$4/person or \$10-15/family. Last Sunday of each month til April. Info (413) 367-9608, [www.MontagueMA.net/Montague\\_Grango](http://www.MontagueMA.net/Montague_Grango)

At The Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Le Cabaret de Open Mic*. (open mic!), no cover.

**MONDAY & TUESDAY DECEMBER 1st & 2nd**  
Historic Deerfield, History Workshop:

Help create beautiful natural wreaths to decorate doorways of Deerfield. Bring creativity, enthusiasm, and an extra pair of pruning shears. No experience required. Supplies & refreshments provided. 12/1, 5:30 - 8 p.m. 12/2, 2-5 p.m. (413) 775-7214. Free.

**TUESDAY, DECEMBER 2nd**  
Reduce, Reuse, Rejoice! Northfield Mountain Program with Amy Donovan, Program Director, Franklin County Solid Waste District. Ages 12 and older

Amy shares strategies for creatively wrapping common gift items like CDs, DVDs, jewelry boxes, books, etc. She'll show sample wrapping ideas and share some techniques to save paper and money. A suggested list of wrapping items to bring from home will be emailed to registered program participants, some materials shared. 7 - 8:30 p.m. Free. (413) 659-4461

**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 4th**

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: What do your local farmers say about our food? Four Rivers Charter School has spent an intensive period investigating locally grown food by interviewing local farmers. Come hear their findings and meet some of the local growers of your food. 6 - 8 p.m.

**SAT - SUN DECEMBER 6th - 7th**  
Arts & Icicles Open Studio Walking Tour, Turners Falls (details p. 3)

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 6th**  
Juried Craft Fair at Greenfield Center School. Admissions Open House: tours, meet teachers, current parents and students, gift-making workshops for children ages 3-12. Silent Auction with over 40 works of art and fine craft from the region's best-known artists from around New England. 10 to 4 p.m. [www.centerschool.net](http://www.centerschool.net).

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 7th**  
Big Band to begin holiday season in Montague with *Classic Christmas*. Nationally recognized drummer Gregory Caputo and his acclaimed 18 piece big band will ring in the holiday season with a performance sure to rekindle your wonderful memories of Christmas past. Held in the Turners Falls High School Theater, Turners Falls. Advance tickets \$15 are available at these locations: Scotty's Convenience Store, World Eye Bookshop, by calling Sandy-TFHS 863-7218, or [www.thegmf.org](http://www.thegmf.org) Tickets at the door \$20.

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

**ONGOING**  
At the Discovery Center, Turners Falls: Winning entries of the Massachusetts Junior Duck Stamp competition on display through December 13th.

Select Photographs: 1956 thru 2005 by photographer Paul Capinigro on display in Gallery 52 & 56 at the Hallmark Museum of Contemporary Photography, Turners Falls. At Gallery 85: Lois Greenfield - Celestial Bodies, Infernal Souls. Exhibits through December 14th.

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- MADAGASCAR ESCAPE 2 AFRICA**  
DAILY 6:30 9:00 PG  
FRI, SAT, SUN 12:00 3:00
- BOLT** PG DTS sound  
DAILY 6:30 9:00  
FRI, SAT, SUN 12:00 3:00
- ROLE MODELS**  
DAILY 6:30 9:00 R  
FRI, SAT, SUN 12:00 3:00
- APPALOOSA**  
DAILY 6:45 9:15  
FRI, SAT, SUN 12:15 3:15 R
- SECRET LIFE OF BEES**  
DAILY 6:45 9:15 PG13  
FRI, SAT, SUN 12:15 3:15
- TWILIGHT** PG13 DTS sound  
DAILY 7:00 9:30  
FRI, SAT, SUN 12:30 3:30
- QUANTUM OF SOLACE** PG13  
DAILY 7:00 9:30 DTS sound  
FRI, SAT, SUN 12:30 3:30

**Dora Med Cafe & Pub**  
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Wednesday, 11/20, *Mel & the Blue Shots*, R&B. Celtic music cancelled  
Closed Thursday, 11/27 for Thanksgiving  
Friday, 11/21, 9 - 11 p.m.  
Country Folk Guitar Featuring Johnny Cash Favorites: *Josh Levangie*  
Saturday, 11/22, 9 - 11 p.m.  
60's & 70's covers: *Eric Love*  
Sunday, 11/23, 8 - 10 p.m.  
Acoustic Duo: *Moonstruck*  
Monday, 11/24, 7 - 10 p.m.  
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SAT: 11/22 | 9:30PM | \$3  
The Clayton Sabine Band (rock)

SUN: 11/23 | 8:30PM | \$3  
Marisol Celestia + Allison O'Brien (singer-songwriters)

WED: 11/26 | 9:00PM | \$5  
Montague Phantom Brain Exchange

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## Off the Beaten Track

### Día de los Muertos in Oaxaca



BY FLORE

**OAXACA, MEXICO** - The first attempt to land failed. The AeroMexico pilot turned the plane for a second try, just like he was taming a wild horse, with the wind blasting and bumping on all sides. Finally, we were down; we were safe! This landing reinforced what the Oaxacan elders say: "When the wind invades the skies, the spirits are ready to visit us for the *Día de los Muertos*, the Day of the Dead.

*El Día de los Muertos* is the Mexican and Indian version of our Hallowe'en and All Saints Day. But in Mexico it's not about kids parading from door to door trick or treating. Instead it is an extraordinary, haunting feast that combines the profane and the religious! This year was a special one, extending the rites to four days, having an added Sunday.

The first day is dedicated to romping through crowded local market squares, hunting sugar

cane husks, then filling a cart with bread for the dead, queuing at the cacao beans stands, buying incense, heaping on flowers, marigolds and rooster crest. Rooster crest is a flower the same color and shape as a rooster, for your information. Pumpkins are added to the list. What else would please the departed ones during their visit?

Next comes the incredible making of the ceremonial family altars in the home. On these personal shrines, pictures of the family dead are included, and special treats offered, such as the spicy chocolate and turkey dish, *molé*, or *Mezcal*, the drink from the blue agave cactus appreciated so much by the living *and* the dead.

This part of Mexico was and still is under the power of the Zapotec Indian culture, which existed long before the arrival of the Spaniards. The Zapotec language is still used around these parts.

The second day is for the little angels, the children who died in

early childhood. Their tombs are prolifically decorated. The visits to the cemetery are solemn and joyful, for little angels are visiting too.

When you approach the third day of the lighted tombs, the marching players play special songs and merry dances spring up. In the evening, if you are fortunate, as we were, to be received in people's homes, the protocol is to bring chocolate sweets, bread, candles and a special *mezcal*, drunk to the health of every one. You are invited to sit down by the head of the family, then served the best tamales, wrapped artfully in banana leaves!

To close such a special event, one makes a final visit to the village cemetery, with arms full with culinary offerings for the dead, and for more music and exchanges among the living. The Oaxacan's belief is an old wise one: death is a natural phase, not an end but a passage of life.

The gorgeous city of Oaxaca is located in the Southern part of

the Republic of Mexico. It was colonized by the Dominican Friars in the 16th century. Even then, the Zapotec people, who have guarded their culture for centuries, fiercely told the invaders their old gods were not dead.

If you are going to Oaxaca, don't miss, south of the city, the archeological excavations at the ancient Zapotec city of Monte Alban. There is also the amazing city of the dead: Mitla. Originally built by the Zapotecs about 200 BCE, it was later developed by the Mixtecs, and finally in the 16th century was conquered by the Aztecs. You will be astounded by the architecture and the fine museums at each site!

Ready for an adventure?

To further the temptation check *the Oaxaca Times* [www.oaxacatimes.com](http://www.oaxacatimes.com) for the pages on housing. You will be surprised to find how affordable the rents are. You may even want to register to learn Spanish.

Or Zapotec.

BREIZH from page 1



BRULE PHOTO

Allée couverte de Liscuis

the Irish Sea.

This western tip of Europe, Brittany, is a place of legend and myth, where according to the lore of the earliest peoples the wandering souls of the dead drifted westward across the continent toward this region where the sun sets. Megalithic tombs dating back to 5000 BC dot our landscape; standing stones called menhirs rise up from fields and edges of woods, placed here by a vanished people that even predate the Celts.

Brittany is a place where the realm of the Dead and the Living are separated only by a thin border, where marshes and springs are passageways between the worlds.

November the First is the time when Bretons, and indeed most of France, return to the home village and churchyard cemetery to honor the ancestors. This homecoming is not unlike our migrations at Thanksgiving, bringing those who live far away back to the family's roots.

Central to the ritual is the family tomb in the churchyard. So into the churchyard we went on the blustery morning of November 1st, arms laden with a riot of colorful flowers to brighten the tombs of the Breton branch of the family.

No grass grows here, but neat rows of granite and marble slabs lie flat on the earth, much like the burial stones of the ancient peo-

ples here before Christianity. These tombs are already crowded with chrysanthemums — the brilliant fall flower that has the task of brightening these dark stones. Yellows to represent the sun dominate, but also pale to forceful blues, subdued autumnal russets, others white and rose. But it's the sunny yellow lions' heads that throw their sunburst of color in defiance of dark November and the finality of this place.

Families like ours thread along the neat gravel paths among the tombs, children learning and re-learning the names of their forebears, of family lore, the exploits and chagrins of each. Names of old neighbors and old heroes of the wars are read again and again, their memories evoked once more.

A visit later in the day, near dusk, with the sun far in the west on the edge of the horizon sending its last rays to flare up the colors of the flowers on each and every grave, reveals not a one has been overlooked or forgotten, from that of the early pastor from the 1800s to that of the humble gravedigger himself, finally entombed after putting so many others down with the crumbling bones of their ancestors. Dark thoughts maybe, but part of the circular movement of seasons, the wheel of life that turns and figures in so many vestiges of this place: in the megalithic circle

of stones, the legends and poems, with roots going back thousands of years.

Our familial chores done, we end the day sitting around the fireplace, roasting chestnuts gathered down the lane, growing wild for the taking, untouched by the blight that wiped out our New England trees. An evening of roasted chestnuts, homemade cider fermented in its bottles, amber and bubbly like fine champagne, with stories of the old folks who inhabited this house, their tales of hard times we hope will come no more.

November 11th 1918 - 2009

The next benchmark of the month is that of the Armistice of 1918. Whether or not the cannons really fell silent on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month is a matter for historians and legend. The grandfather of this farmhouse left his fields and family when the bell (*le tocsin*) tolled on that fateful early harvest day in August of 1914. He left his wooden sabots behind, was issued ill-fitting leather boots; a gun was placed in his hands and off he went to the slaughter of a war that lasted four years and took ten million lives. The bells in the village regulated the day in the countryside: the *matines*, the *angelus* three times a day, *vespers* on Sunday, the *tocsin* for emergencies, the *glas*, for death.

Almost miraculously, grandfather Honoré survived the four years of war, whereas others in the Breton peasant army died by the tens of thousands. He survived Verdun, where 600,000 on both sides fell. He was to be cannon fodder like the other Bretons, many of whom didn't speak French, but knew how to follow orders and protect their homeland. And after the Armistice of 1918, he came home to the farm, having managed to stay alive and keep the troops of Kaiser Bill away from the village.

These parts were not so lucky in the Second World War, when the Nazi blitzkrieg drove deep

into Brittany and brought a new Reign of Terror, an Occupation that lasted four years. In the sinister house near the village square, the screams of the tortured dying — villagers who died for resisting the invader — still echo in the minds of those here. Bodies were hung in the trees on the square as a warning to the townspeople. Hostages were taken to the killing field by the nearby forest to be mutilated and executed. Here, by day, sons and husbands hid in the fields and woods from the German patrols; by night they came from the darkness to ambush, to attack the invaders, to blow up trains and tracks. Innocent hostages were taken by the invader for revenge. They paid with their agony, while the Underground resisted the overwhelming force by night.

When D-Day came, Patton's march through this region drew out the population that had resisted and endured. Every household still has a story of the Liberation, and the gratitude for the arrival of the Americans. Every village square has its Monument to the Dead: a million and a half lost in the Great War of 1914-1918, close to that lost in the Second World War, a little over 20 years later. These are the thoughts that come to mind when the cycle of the year brings November back around to Brittany.

But of course, there is a way to lighten the spirit, and brighten the dark month. The way the Bretons reaffirm their resistance to dark thoughts and the waning year is the Dance. They dance to drive away the dark, dance to show they have endured in spite of all. Arms linked, dancers side by side in long lines of thirty or more celebrants, the ancient intricate steps stamp down hard on the earth. The endless linking of the call and response of the musicians propel the dancers to another world; the line snakes around the farm courtyard, the village square or the assembly hall.

The *fest noz* this November

night is in full swing and will last 'til dawn. The piercing medieval sound of the *bombarde*, a wind instrument and ancestor of the *clarinette*, the *biniou*, (Breton bagpipes) drive the dance. All over Brittany this month, people are dancing, linking arms, two steps forward, one back, three to the side, the *An Dro* (circle dance) snakes around the room amid shouts and whoops, rhythmic stamping.

"We're still here!" they seem to shout. After 8000 years of untold adversity, invasion, war and destruction, we still go on, we're still here, we're still here! The steps stamp out an irresistible rhythm. Like the circle of megalithic standing stones on the hilltop outside the village, the people have endured. And that is how, in these parts, we bring back the sun, we bring back the light to brighten the Dark Month of November.

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