

The Montague Reporter

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THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

MARCH 7, 2019

THE BIG PICTURE

Does the River Rise and Fall With the Market?



Dr. Eve Vogel has been studying the impact changes in electricity markets have had on the river ecologies of the Northeast.

By KAREN SHAPIRO MILLER

AMHERST – UMass geography professor Eve Vogel researches ways to protect the natural dynamics of rivers. I met Dr. Vogel back when I studied at UMass, and when I ran into her a few weeks ago, she mentioned her current project: she and her students have been studying how Massachusetts' electricity demand affects hydropower plants, rivers, and communities, from Quebec to Holyoke.

The interactions are complex and fascinating. I thought about the in-progress Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) relicensing of Connecticut River hydropower facilities, which will set operating parameters on the river for several decades.

I asked Dr. Vogel if she'd tell me more, and she generously agreed. We took a walk around Puffer's Pond, and she discussed her work.

"One of the key things I'm looking at," Vogel began, "is how altering electric power policy changes what we do with hydropower. For example, I'm looking at the effects of the Massachusetts electric restructuring."

Starting in the 1990s, she explained, the New England states' electrical markets were redesigned to make them more competitive. Previously, the electrical generating companies had been classified

as utilities, delivering power to customers at a price determined by state regulators.

After the restructuring, the companies that owned the generators became independent power producers. "Their purpose in life," said Vogel, "was how to make as much money as they could. One of the ways they could do that was to play the wholesale electric market."

It was a huge shift. Before the change, explained Vogel, "pumps and generators had been managed according to the needs of the local area." For example, companies produced more electricity in the morning, when many were getting ready for work and school. But that connection evaporated.

The restructuring created a wholesale market throughout New England, connected to the electrical grid along the east coast, up to Canada. "Every single generator in the New England grid has its own local price, which changes, depending on overall demand and supply in the region, and also how that supply and demand is moving through transmission lines," she said. Electricity prices fluctuate every few minutes, and companies want to sell electricity whenever the price goes up.

Unlike coal or nuclear power, hydropower can respond to price changes quickly. "If you're a

see **RIVERS** page A4

FIRE INDUCTION



PETER D'ERRICO PHOTO

Leverett's two newest firefighters (see story, A5) were pinned Tuesday evening: Yotam Block, by his mother, and William Ingram, by his grandfather. Deputy fire chief Brian Cook looks on at right. (Thanks to Peter d'Errico for sending in a photo!)

Publicly Funded Hazardous Materials Cleanout Continues At Southworth

By JEFF SINGLETON

TURNERS FALLS – On Tuesday, March 3, vehicles from a company called Environmental Services Inc., located in South Windsor, Connecticut, were seen at the entrance to the former Southworth Paper Mill. The vehicles included a large tanker truck. The company's website stresses hazardous waste removals, emergency response to chemical and oil spills, and "Hazardous Waste Management."

The Southworth Company effectively abandoned the mill in the fall of 2017, and has failed to either sell the building or obtain Chapter 11 bankruptcy from a federal court. Last September, the Turners Falls Fire Department and the town of Montague obtained a court order from the state Superior Court requiring Southworth to secure its Canal Road building, and make operational the building's fire alarm and sprinkler systems within seven days

of the injunction.

The court also ordered Southworth to "...within seven (7) days of the issuance of the Injunction, remove and/or secure from the Property all nuclear, hazardous, flammable and

combustible materials or, alternatively, within seven (7) days, obtain the property permits for the removal and/or securing of such materials."

According to Turners Falls fire see **HAZMAT** page A8



Contractors who spent eight days in January removing various oils, dyes, caustics, and more from the abandoned paper mill returned this week for more.

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Hillcrest Voting a Scene of "Chaos," Says Town Clerk

By JEFF SINGLETON

The Montague selectboard seemed to reach a consensus at its March 4 meeting that the polling station for Precincts 3 and 4 should move from its current location at Hillcrest Elementary School, potentially to the Discovery Center in downtown Turners Falls. Precincts 3 and 4 are primarily on "top of the hill" in Turners while the Discovery Center is located within Precinct 5. The selectboard did not take a formal vote on the issue.

The discussion was initiated by town clerk Deb Bourbeau, who said she felt that voting at the Hillcrest Elementary School, where Precincts 3 and 4 have voted for years, is "totally disruptive – it's totally inconvenient to run a school when we are having a meeting. It also puts the school at risk being it's not locked all day long, having it open to the public, and I myself, if anything happened, would not be able to live with myself."

"Also, parking is an issue, with the buses and voters and the staff," Bourbeau added, noting that the polling workers needed to use the school's facilities. "It's just chaos," she said.

Although Bourbeau did not mention it, the issue of voting at Hillcrest was raised at a school committee meeting on October 23 by Hillcrest principal Sarah

see **MONTAGUE** page A7

GILL SELECTBOARD

Longtime Treasurer LaChance Retires; Purington Promoted

By GEORGE BRACE

The Gill selectboard dealt with several personnel matters at their March 4 meeting, including the appointment of two temporary replacements for treasurer and tax collector Ronnie LaChance, who retired on February 20. The board also approved a change in job title for Ray Purington, from administrative assistant to town administrator.

Chair Greg Snedeker was unable to attend the meeting, but participated remotely by phone.

The board appointed Peter Turban as treasurer until the town election on May 20, and Thomas Hodak as tax collector, through the election on May 18, 2020. Turban has taken out papers to run for the office of treasurer when his temporary appointment expires.

The vacancies were created by the retirement last month of LaChance, who started in the tax collector position in 2002, and added on the treasurer position in 2005. Purington said it had been a great privilege to work with LaChance for his entire tenure with the town.

Board members John Ward and Randy Crochier echoed Purington's sentiments and expressed appreciation for her work. Purington and the board wished her well in her retirement.

A press release issued by the town subsequent to the meeting expanded on the appreciation of LaChance by

see **GILL** page A5

Stop & Shop Strike May Be Imminent

By ANNABEL LEVINE

GREENFIELD – Unionized Workers at Stop & Shop stores in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island have been working without a contract for nearly two weeks. Negotiations are ongoing, but Stop & Shop management and representatives from five Union of Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) locals in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island were not able to come to an agreement before the contract expired at midnight on February 23.

The last set of negotiations in 2016 took an extra six weeks past the contract expiration date to come to a conclusion.

The group of locals includes UFCW Local 1459, which represents over 1,300 Stop & Shop employees in western Massachu-

setts. Local 1459 president Tyrone Housey has been posting video updates on the union's website about how the negotiations are proceeding.

The union's position is that the economic proposals brought forth by Stop & Shop management are "all takeaways," including proposed cuts to pensions and increased healthcare costs for employees. There is also worry that Stop & Shop has been investing in labor-saving technologies in the hopes of phasing out union jobs. The union cites pre-packaged meat, self-checkout lines, and the "infiltration" of surveillance robots into area stores.

Stop & Shop began as a small, family-owned grocery at the turn of the 20th century in Somerville, MA. The company is now the see **STOP & SHOP** page A3



LEVINE PHOTO

The stores' googly-eyed surveillance robots are one source of concern among grocery workers.

The Montague Reporter

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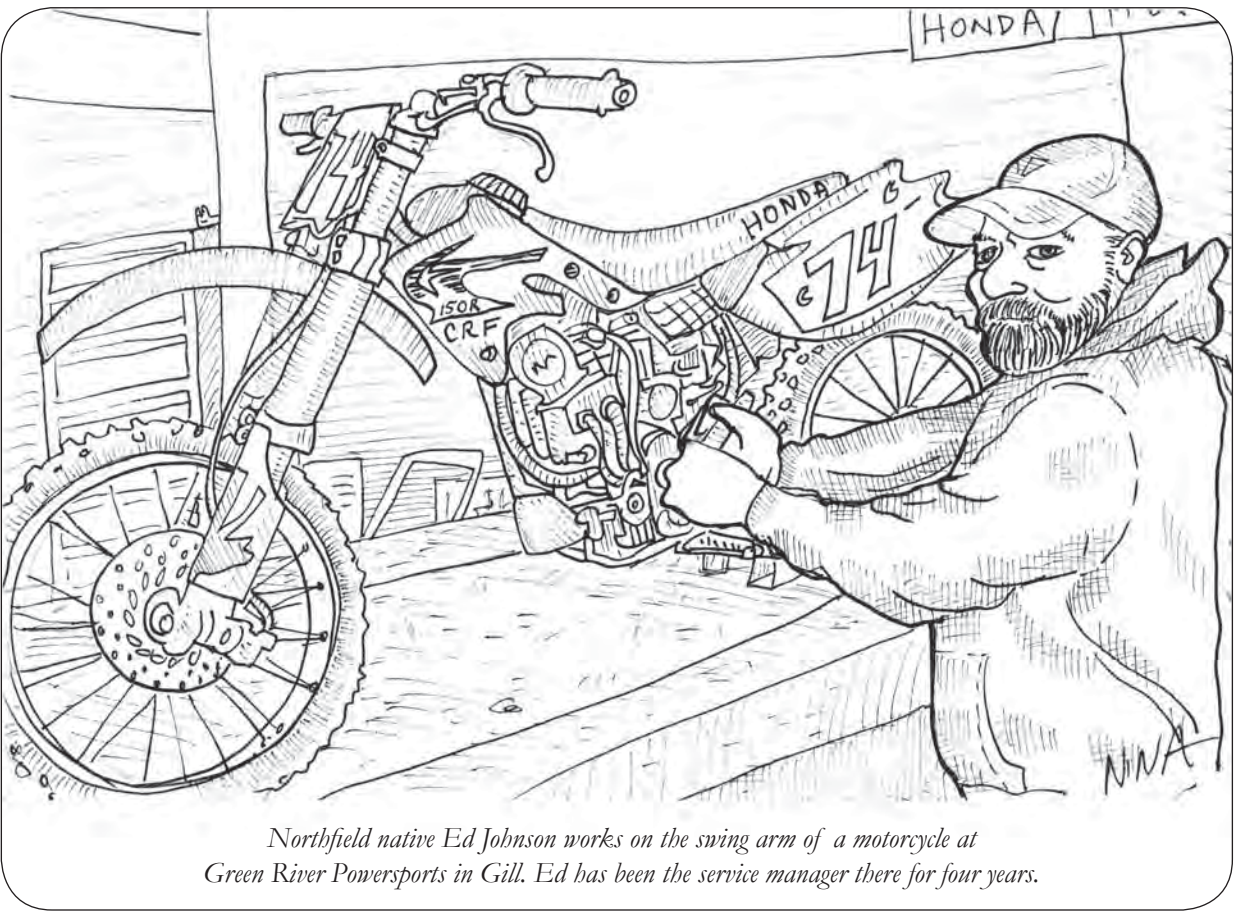
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Northfield native Ed Johnson works on the swing arm of a motorcycle at Green River Powersports in Gill. Ed has been the service manager there for four years.

CORRECTION

Last week in this space, we absent-mindedly attributed a staffing “wishlist” circulated by the Gill-Montague Education Association, the regional school district’s teacher’s union, to the Gill-Montague Education Fund.

The GMEA and GMEF are unrelated organizations. The money

that the GMEF raises in the community for educational enrichment efforts is entirely outside the district’s budget.

We do know the difference, and we hope our readers will, as well. We apologize to all parties for any confusion or consternation we may have caused.

Shutting Down Debate

There are few conflicts as perennially polarizing as that between the state of Israel and the stateless Palestinian people living under its control in the West Bank and Gaza Strip territories. Even so, there is a sense that the politics of the conflict is entering a reconsideration of some sort within the United States.

One reason may be the legacy of Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who abandoned his predecessors’ stance of nonpartisanship in US matters during the Obama years, and ended up an ally of Trump. Both are beset domestically by accusations of corruption.

A deeper reason is the disappearance of a viable path to a two-state solution, once considered by many to be the most reasonable blueprint for peace in the region.

The more pockmarked with settlements the West Bank map becomes, the less political will exists to draw a real border. Since the remaining solution for those who want to support democracy is a single society with equal rights for all, declaring oneself for two states is now mostly a roundabout way of supporting the indefinite status quo.

And though a great many Israelis still value dissent and difference, the country is, like many other places, experiencing an upsurge of nationalism and identitarianism. The rightward trudge not just of Likud but of the political center has resulted in a troubling nationality law, as well as bans on entry to those critical of its government’s actions, even including Jewish Americans, who support the “boycott, divestment, and sanctions” movement (BDS).

Here in the US, 26 states have now passed different forms of legislation – much of it questionably constitutional – refusing public contracts to those who support BDS. It is important to recognize that these laws, which arguably amount to loyalty pledges, enjoy their strongest support not from the more deeply divided American Jewish community, but from Christian Zionists, whose hope for

Israeli expansion is rooted in overlapping religious, military-industrial, and apocalyptic ideas.

Last month the US Senate passed S.1, the “Strengthening America’s Security in the Middle East Act,” by a 77-23 majority. Introduced by Marco Rubio, it included a section titled the “Combating BDS Act,” which among other things allows states and local governments to divest from any “entity that... knowingly engages in activity... intended to... limit commercial relations with Israel...”

The bill split the Democratic senators (both of Massachusetts’ voted Nay), and was received this week by the House.

This is the necessary context for understanding the controversy swirling over freshman Minnesota representative Ilhan Omar’s complaints that members of Congress are being lobbied to pledge their “allegiance to a foreign country.”

Omar, whose family fled the Somali Civil War when she was a child and who spent four years living in a refugee camp in Kenya, faces a movement from within her own party to censure her as an anti-semitic; the flames are being fanned by Republicans, who see a convenient wedge issue, and are calling for her to be removed from the House Foreign Affairs committee.

Anti-semitism is alive and growing in the US; the lone-wolf terrorist attack on a Pittsburgh house of worship was the tip of a real and worrisome iceberg. And so it is understandable that some might hear resonances of old tropes about Jewish disloyalty in Omar’s words.

But she is specifically talking about the Israeli state, and a bill that would nullify the right to boycott it in protest of its actions. And so the appropriate response is dialogue and clarification, not censure.

Whatever you think of BDS, there appear to be no conditions on US military aid to an ally moving ever rightward. Bad-faith smears of racism are still being used to shut down debate over that issue. But that may finally be changing.

Letters to the Editors

Wish On A Higher Star

I have no problem with the Teachers’ Wishlist (*MR*, February 28, page A2). But why is it addressed to the Gill-Montague School Committee?

The only useful addressee at this point – since the *lack of municipal funds* is so obvious on all sides – is the Massachusetts Legislature. The legislature created un- and under-funded mandates in SPED, charter schools, and transportation, to name three big ones. But the legislature continues to fail to put state

money where the state mouth is.

Unsustainable school budgets are wreaking havoc across the Commonwealth. When will the Massachusetts Teachers Association use its muscle to organize state-wide teachers to demand that the legislature remedy the mess it has made?

Teachers in other states are stepping up to the same sort of task. Why not in MA?

Peter d’Errico
Leverett

Teaching Moments

I applaud the GMRSD for attempting to address prejudice and inequality. It is a logical follow up to the mascot discussion, and brings the conflict into the present.

Our schools are reflective of our community and the traditionally poor white Franklin County we thrive in. Thank you to the brave faces of change standing ground to educate us and expose injustice.

The Collaboration for Educational Services in Northampton made three recommendations. One task is to re-write the disciplinary policy handbook with “zero indifference.”

Why is the disciplinary policy the only portion suggested for review? Isn’t the goal to keep children of color away from needing the disciplinary handbook? Racism contributes to what gets them there – can’t intervene after the fact.

Who in the current system is familiar with how a “zero indifference” policy reads? Seems we have to deal with systemic culture and its reflective customs. We need a shared language to discuss the daily words and acts that contribute to the “us and them” divide. Who at the school and in leadership is on board with fostering an atmosphere of tolerance and acceptance? By all means, clarify disciplinary guidelines – but more importantly, implement them fairly.

Is the school bound to the consultants’ recommendation? What feedback has the report gotten from the school committee, parents, teachers?

I advocate for the more talking and less consultation. Spend dollars on facilitation. Advice and direction means little if you can’t bring it to fruition, or if it falls on deaf ears.

Betty Tegel
Disability advocate
Turners Falls

Ellen Spring
Turners Falls

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Compiled by CHRIS PELLERIN

Here we go, circling the Polar Vortex drain again! This Sunday we will “spring ahead” and **begin daylight savings time**, so don’t forget to change your clocks and smoke detector batteries! Hopefully this will usher in more spring-like temperatures.

The Great Falls Discovery Center’s Kidleidoscope program on Friday, March 8 will feature a story, craft, and games based on **the theme of Bobcats**. The program is geared toward tykes three to six years old and their caregivers and meets in the Great Hall from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.

Each month the Friends of the Great Falls Discovery Center host an evening coffeehouse with local talent. From 7 to 9 p.m. on Friday, **Jim Eagan and Anand Nayak** will be performing folk, blues originals, and covers. Refreshments will be available. Donations are happily accepted to support educational programming at the Center. The museum and museum store will be open during intermission.

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STOP & SHOP from page A1

third-largest employer of Massachusetts residents, according to the *Boston Business Journal*, employing an estimated 19,865 residents across the state.

Since 1995, Stop & Shop has been owned by the Dutch corporation Ahold Delhaize, which also owns other American supermarket chains including Hannaford’s and Giant. According to a statement from the union, Ahold Delhaize saw \$74 billion in net sales last year. Jeff Bollen, president of Local 1445, which represents Stop & Shop workers in the eastern part of the state, says company negotiators reported that Ahold still holds the number-one spot in grocery market share from Maine to Florida.

Stop & Shop’s company line is that labor costs associated with union contracts are hindering the company’s ability to compete in a modern market. A document on the company’s website entitled “Negotiation Key Facts” states “[n]ow, our biggest New England competitors – national giants like Walmart, Whole Foods/Amazon, Costco and Aldi as well as strong regional chains like Market Basket and Big Y – are large, heavily funded non-union stores that enjoy both much lower labor costs and access to low prices and great locations.”

Neither the “Key Facts” document, nor Stop & Shop’s website, offer specifics about how the company hopes to amend the current contracts,

I mentioned **Bingo at the Bank** last week, but here is a quick reminder: Saturday, March 9, from 10 to 11:30 a.m. at the Turners Falls branch of Greenfield Savings Bank in the Community Room. I’m not sure if there will be any spaces left by the time you see this, but you can call (413) 863-4316 now to check.

Join ecologist Pat Serrentino and naturalist Ted Watt this Saturday, March 9 from 10 a.m. to noon as they **explore the Montague Plains**, an example of a unique pitch pine and scrub oak community that supports many rare and uncommon species.

They will look for several species of wintering birds and discuss the history of the Plains and why this plant and animal community is important to maintain. The walk is co-sponsored by the Hitchcock Center for the Environment in Amherst and Greening Greenfield.

Binoculars are recommended, but not required. Please dress warmly in layers and be ready for muddy and/or snowy conditions. It is free, geared to adults and children aged 10 and above. Register today with Nancy Hazard: (413) 774-5667, as the walk is limited to 12 participants. Heavy rain or snow cancels.

In last week’s column, I told you about Piti Theater’s celebration of spring for family audiences at Shelburne-Buckland Community Center, 53 Main St. Just a reminder that the **syrup festival** begins at 11 a.m. on Saturday, March 9. For all the details go to www.ptco.org/syrup.

Volunteers are welcome to join **Great Falls Books Through Bars** on the second Saturday of each month to read letters and match book requests from prisoners with donated books. The group will meet on Saturday, March 9 from 1 to 4 p.m. at La Mariposa, 113 Avenue A, Turners Falls.

though the document mentions that at least two benefits – time-and-a-half pay on Sundays, and current paid holidays – are only guaranteed for current employees.

One of the labor-saving technologies that the union fears will take away union jobs is a surveillance robot nicknamed “Marty.” The Greenfield Stop & Shop is one of 500 stores, including other Ahold brands Giant and Martin’s, participating in the first rollout of the robot.

According to management at Ahold, “Marty” will be able to identify areas that need employees’ attention, like a spill or an item out of stock, but will not take care of any issues itself. In a 2017 interview with *PennLive*, given when the first robots were being piloted, Ahold USA’s manager of store optimization, Patrick Maturo, is quoted as saying, “Marty can’t do the work that the associates do, so Marty is doing assistant work. He is also doing work that we currently don’t have people doing on a routine basis.”

Greenfield Precinct 8 town councilor Doug Mayo does not agree with Maturo’s claim that the robot will not take anyone’s jobs. On February 27, Mayo wrote on a Facebook post that he has “renamed Marty to ‘Robbie’ cause his whole reason for existence is to steal union jobs.” His words were posted with two photos of the robot wearing a bright yellow Local 1459 strike solidarity t-shirt, put on it by Mayo himself. According to the Facebook post, the robot went down

If you have any brown paper bags, or paperback books in any genre, the group can always use them.

Our friends at Western Mass Prison Abolition Network are packing backpacks to give people when they have been released from prison. Help us to gather the items needed for these backpacks in this collaborative effort. There will be a collection bin at La Mariposa this Saturday if you have any items to donate.

Here is a list of some of the items they are seeking: backpacks, pre-paid gift cards/Visa cards, toiletries, bottled water, and non-perishable/no-prep-needed foods.

If you missed Rawn Fulton’s presentation and movie, “**Root Hog or Die**,” at the bank last month, you have another chance to see it at the Deerfield Valley Art Association (DVAA) Gallery at 105 Main Street, Northfield this Sunday, March 10 from 2 to 4 p.m.

The **Montague Common Hall** (formerly the Grange building) at 34 Main Street in Montague Center is looking for new Board members and donations toward a new roof. They recently received a \$10,000 grant from the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts, and they need to cover the remainder of the costs. Use the PayPal Donate button at the bottom of the www.montaguecommonhall.org home page to help out.

Many public activities happen at the hall, including **open mic nights** (the next one is March 9 at 7:30 p.m.), **square dances** (March 23 at 7 p.m.), **yoga classes**, **group meditation** – and a new series of **Neigong Taijiquan** (aka Qi Gong and Tai Chi) classes, led by my neighbor Hannah Fuller-Boswell.

Starting Wednesday, March 13 at 7 p.m., this 8-week series will cover meditation, exercises, and the beginning of the Taijiquan form. This practice cultivates balance, strength, and flexibility in the body, as well as stillness and focus of the heart-mind. Hannah is a local shiatsu practitioner and integrative bodywork therapist. The class is by sliding scale donation (\$5 to \$15), and half of your donation will go to support the Common Hall. For more information or to register, contact hannah@curiouslemur.com.

The 2019 season of “**Reading Aloud for Grownups**” continues Wednesday, March 13 (the snow date is March 20) with Christopher Turner and Sally Howe. The program begins at 7 p.m. at the New Salem Public Library at 23 South Main Street in New Salem.

The Friends of the New Salem Public Library will provide wine, cheese, coffee, tea and special desserts during the program. There is no charge to attend, but the Friends are very grateful for any donations.

One more program in this delightful series will take place on April 10 (snow date April 17), with Lisa Finestone and Sue Dunbar. Call the New Salem Library with any questions at (978) 544-6334.

Greening Greenfield presents “**Pollinators! Silent Spring and Rachel Carson’s Legacy**” led by Pat Hynes, executive director of the Traprock Center for Peace and Justice. She and other local advocates will talk about the effects of pesticides, and what we can do in our own yards and community to support native pollinators.

The free program will be held Thursday, March 14 at 6:30 to 8 p.m. at the John Zon Community Center, 35 Pleasant Street, Greenfield.

Robert Lord and other musicians from the Farley Five Group will perform **Irish folk music** at Greenfield Savings Bank, 282 Avenue A, Turners Falls, on Thursday, March 14 from noon to 2 p.m. These talented folks are sure to amaze you with their good humor, fancy dress, handsome countenances and quick wit! They will charm the shamrocks off your socks, and that is no blarney! Stop by to dance a jig and enjoy a St. Patty’s Day sugar cookie.

On “**Pi Day**,” Thursday, March 14 (3.14), 10% of any purchase at Hillside Pizza in Bernardston or Deerfield will benefit the Deerfield Valley Art Association! And on Saturday, March 16, you can catch another performance by the Farley String Band from 1 to 3 p.m. at the DVAA’s **St. Patrick’s Day Celebration** at their gallery in Northfield. Snacks will be provided.

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RIVERS from page A1

hydropower operator, you can change your generation almost instantly. If the electric price goes up on the regional grid, you open your gates. If the price goes down, you close them.”

If you’re Northfield Mountain Pumped Storage, when the price goes down, you start pumping up, storing water that can be used to generate higher-priced power a few hours or a day later.

Vogel remembers the conversation that sparked her research: “Someone told me that after restructuring, Northfield began to be managed differently. The company that owned it at the time was headquartered in Houston. So instead of the local people looking at their local supply and deciding what to do, now it’s somebody in Houston making the decisions – and all they cared about was the instantaneous price of electricity, and whether Northfield could make more money now or later. They’d be watching the new England local electricity price, and they’d be like: ‘Price is up! Time to release water!’

“I developed the hypothesis that this kind of market restructuring might force hydropower operators to manage their facilities in a way that made the river behave in a more volatile way.”

Let the Sunshine In

In the hydropower relicensing negotiations currently underway for the FirstLight-owned facilities at Northfield Mountain and Turners Falls, managing river flow is contentious. River advocates want an ample, reliable flow, which provides fish an easier environment. But the hydropower company doesn’t want strict limits.

“The way that river advocates deal with this,” said Vogel, is to try to install rules in the hydropower operating licenses that constrain how power plants can affect river flow. “For example, in the so-called ‘bypass reach’ around Turners’ Falls, where the sturgeon spawning area is, river advocates want to ensure a minimum flow standard,” so that the fish have enough water to migrate and to breed. “The power company wants to not be restricted by that too much.”

And there’s another wrinkle. Although hydropower can damage river environments – eroding stream banks, killing fish in turbines, blocking their migration – huge pumped-storage facilities like Northfield may help us scale up carbon-free renewables like solar and wind. Pumped storage can even out the flow of energy, and giving the power companies fewer restrictions lets them do this more easily.

Sudden increases or decreases in generation can stress the power grid. Solar and wind can cause those changes, Vogel said: “For wind, it’s less problematic, especially if the grid covers a large geographic area, because wind blows at different times in differ-



MILLER PHOTO

Dr. Vogel, at her UMass-Amherst office.

ent places.” But solar is a different matter: “On sunny days, you’ll get a sudden jump in power going into the grid – and when a cloud goes by, a sudden drop. When you have an abrupt increase in production, you need someplace else on your grid to all of a sudden produce less – and visa versa. You can’t store large amounts of electricity.”

But you can, in a sense, store the power that’s used to generate it. That’s what Northfield does: when it uses energy to pump water to the pool at the top of the mountain, the process “stores” that energy. Northfield can release it later, to make electricity.

Electricity coming into the grid needs to match the amount going out; production needs to match with demand. “If you have a power source going up and down like wind, or solar, then another power source needs to be going down and up,” said Vogel.

And using pumped storage for that purpose changes river flow from its natural rhythm: it yanks the water that it pumps to the top of the mountain directly from the river. And when it generates power, that water whooshes back in.

Double the Pumping

The increased use of solar adds another complication. It can alter when the companies want to generate electricity. In addition to pumping at night, Northfield will also pump on a sunny afternoon, when a lot of solar energy enters the grid. “Right away, you’ll see that Northfield, instead of having a single 24-hour up and down cycle, can have a twice-in-24-hours up and down cycle. That already happens, some of the time.”

Every time Northfield is pumping or releasing, the river level is changing, reminds Vogel. This occurs, she said, even though solar supplies just a small percentage of New England’s total power: although the overall amount might be tiny, “on a spring afternoon in April, with maximum solar, that energy is going to be a significant portion.”

That’s true of hydropower, too. Hydro “is only 6% of the total

electricity in New England,” Vogel said. “But it plays an outsized role in New England, because of its ability to be flexible about when it’s used.” The increased drive for renewables, she predicts, will increase the use of hydropower.

And it’s probable that much of the new hydropower used in New England will be generated in Canada. “In the past few months, I’ve been burying myself in the Massachusetts policy that has been trying to reduce carbon emissions.” She’s been looking at the Global Warming Solutions Act, a 2008 law that requires that Massachusetts reduce its carbon emissions across all activities in the state “by 25% between 1990 and 2020.” That was a demanding goal.

“It became clear a few years ago that they weren’t going to reach 25%,” said Vogel. “They were going to hit maybe 21%.” People got a little bit desperate: “The environmental groups actually ended up taking the state to court.”

The state, she says, eventually did pass the regulations that the Act required. “But that was about three years before 2020. And what were they going to do? They basically said: The only way we’re going to be able to do this really fast is to get a large influx of non-carbon emitting energy. Where are we going to get that? Canadian hydropower.”

The Northern Frontier

Environmental groups had fought against importing more Canadian hydro for several reasons, says Vogel, one of which was that they wanted to support local renewable energy. An eventual compromise called for some of the renewables to be provided locally, but Canadian generators remain a huge piece of the mix. This includes the publicly owned Hydro-Québec, which owns around 60 hydroelectric stations across the globe, and is one of the world’s largest hydro producers, according to its website.

“My student research assistants and I have been spending a lot of time in Hydro-Québec’s documents,” said Vogel. “They are busy building as much hydropower as they can, as fast as they can. They’re

building big dams in pristine rivers in First Nations territories, including a number of Innu communities.”

“Hydro-Québec went through its own restructuring process in the ‘90s, and one of things it did was it basically said, ‘we’re going to have a certain amount of power that we’ll provide to Québecers, but all the excess is to make money from.’ So, ‘we’re going to try to build as much extra power as we can, export as much as we can, and make money off the new competitive US market.’”

Hydro-Québec, said Vogel, is eager to play the same role that Northfield’s owners play: “When prices go up, it’s going to deliver power to our grid. That’s going to generate a lot of profit for Hydro-Québec.”

The company is building a complex of four big dams on the Romaine River, north of the St. Lawrence River, in territory historically occupied by Innu native communities. The communities have signed an agreement with the company, but “it’s hard to get any detail,” Vogel told me, because part of the agreement was a gag order: “They signed an agreement in 2011, and basically the news stops after that.”

But the agreement provided jobs, and a lot of money, to the Innu, Vogel explained.

“Part of the idea of having that much electricity in such a remote area is, you’re going to bring in mining companies and other extractive industries. Part of the agreement, too was that Hydro-Québec would facilitate agreements, so that the native groups would have profit-sharing with these mining and other industries that will be coming up.

“So, as with many development projects, it’s a deeply mixed bag.”

The drive for renewables has changed the politics of hydropower, said Vogel, so that it’s much more possible “for hydropower operators to paint themselves as wonderful, good guys that shouldn’t have to be held to the unreasonable standards of these fish and wildlife people..... I think the drive for renewables changed the politics and the rhetoric in significant ways, and to some extent, some of the policy responses.”

As for Northfield, despite the ecological problems it may cause, Vogel said she “would find it difficult to believe we’re going to get rid of it, because it’s so useful to the grid.” Even so, she argued, there are ways “to have Northfield do much of what it does without nearly as much impact.”

It could be reconfigured to a closed-loop system, so that it doesn’t connect directly to the river. Or the grid itself could be rejiggered into a “smart” grid, intelligently managing the consumers’ electricity use, which would give tremendous ability to reduce demand when you have lower supply. That’s a promising area, said Vogel, and people are currently working on it.




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GILL from page A1

her co-workers. In the release, Purington wrote, “For parts of three decades she was a familiar face for residents who came to Town Hall to pay bills or get information. She especially loved to welcome new residents, and always had a smile for any children who tagged along with their parents. Her retirement is well deserved. She will definitely be missed.”

Town clerk Lynda Hodsdon Mayo added that LaChance “would go to extreme lengths to give the Town and its residents her very best effort. Her work day ended only after she was able to balance every penny for that day.”

The release noted that LaChance was unopposed in every election, and of her many accomplishments, she was most proud of the construction of offices for the clerk and collector-treasurer with real walls and locking doors. “Ronnie championed the project and oversaw every step of the construction process,” the statement read.

A retirement celebration is being planned for later this spring.

The board approved a change in title for Ray Purington from “administrative assistant” to “town administrator,” and his placement on the wage scale for that position. Ward said Purington had “been

functioning as town administrator for years... it’s high time we finally acknowledged that.”

Snedeker and Crochier echoed Ward’s comments. “We have a guy that makes us all look pretty smart, and makes this job a whole lot easier,” said Crochier, adding that the change in title and authority will reflect the reality of the situation, and speed things up by allowing Purington to take care of some tasks “on a Tuesday afternoon,” rather than waiting as many as thirteen days for the next selectboard meeting.

Crochier went on to say that the new title comes with different responsibilities, and the board will need to work through them with Purington. The board had agreed to approve the change in executive session, but conducted the vote in an open meeting so it would be on camera.

License Hearing

At 6 p.m., the board held a public hearing on an application to operate a Class II motor vehicle license to Robert Higgins to “buy, sell, exchange, or assemble secondhand motor vehicles or parts thereof” at 180 French King Highway.

Higgins was seeking to relocate his existing used car business from 64A French King highway, and increase the number of vehicles allowed under his previous license from six ve-

hicles to 10, consistent with a special permit already granted by the zoning board of appeals (ZBA).

Paul Duga, who has a right of way across the property to homes he owns on the other side, was present to express concerns and ask that the license remain for six vehicles. A lengthy back-and-forth discussion took place, with all three board members, Higgins, and Duga commenting on the issues involved.

In the course of the discussion, Ward said he’d known Higgins for 30 years, Snedeker said he’d known Duga for 25, and they each attested to their good character. Crochier said he didn’t know either of them.

Duga began by expressing his concern with the possibility of an unsightly mess involving junk cars, noise, and other nuisances. Higgins said he does not keep parts cars, junk cars, or parts on his property, and that he’d been licensed in town for 20 years and in the state since 1980 with no complaints.

He went on to say that the new location has been a mess for 50 years, and that he had made an agreement with its former owner to clean it up before he takes possession. He said that through his efforts and the type of business he runs, the visual aspect of the property would be improved. Ten cars on the property, he argued, would be much less of an eyesore

than the trailers, bulldozers, heavy equipment, and junk that was being cleaned out.

Purington read the ZBA’s finding on the special permit, including their opinion that as a result of the cleanup, the new business would enhance both the neighborhood’s character and the natural environment. He explained that the ZBA set limits on the property’s use, and it was up to the selectboard to decide on the particulars of the license within those limits.

Duga said he was also concerned that once granted, the license would be difficult to take away if Higgins changed his mind about his plans or sold the property. He was told that the license was not transferable, and came up for renewal every year. Crochier said he “would be the first guy to change the license” if given evidence there was a problem.

Snedeker said he lives 1/10 of a mile from the property, and brought up the requirement to park vehicles more than 200 feet away from the river, to which Higgins replied that the operation would be 400 feet away from it. Snedeker recommended that Higgins reach out to the conservation commission for advice on environmental issues if he ever plans to expand or change what he was doing.

Snedeker said he is familiar with issues that arise with the dynamics of living next to the river, and advised Higgins to be sensitive to the needs of people with rights-of-way.

“I don’t intend to impact the road whatsoever,” Higgins responded. “It’s a 20-foot-wide right-of-way across the land that’s always going to stay open, and is always going to be there for them.”

Duga asked if Higgins would be willing to contribute to the maintenance of the road on the right-of-way, to which Higgins said “not at this point.” “If I have equipment there and I can help you out, I am not opposed to that whatsoever,” he said, but added that he was told by his lawyer it was clear that he was not responsible for the road’s maintenance, and that he had no need of it himself, given other access he had to the rear of the property.

Ward said Higgins should not have to pay a penance for a previous owner’s issues, and Duga shouldn’t be in fear of what may happen with the property. He pointed out that the current board members will be around for a couple of more years at least, and if a problem does arise, Duga will be able to come back to the same people and revisit the situation.

As the discussion concluded, Duga said his hope was that they be good neighbors, in part due to the contentious relationship he’d had with the previous owner. He got up, said “let’s put it to rest – good to meet you,” and shook Higgins’ hand on his way out.

“We’ll be seeing a lot of each other,” Higgins replied. “Stop in any time you see lights on.”

The board approved the license with 10 cars, effective at an undetermined date to allow for the remainder of the cleanup. Snedeker abstained from the vote, saying he would “play Switzerland” due to living so close to the property.

Crochier’s final words to Higgins were that he didn’t expect to see anyone at the December hearing asking to have the decision changed: “I think you and Paul will have a good relationship by then.” He also mentioned the possibility of a beer summit.

Other Business

Fred Chase II, a member of the machinery committee, offered to look at several fire tanker trucks for potential purchase by the town while on a personal trip to Pennsylvania.

He presented the board with photographs and information on three vehicles, and sought authorization to ask a seller to put something on hold if he saw something he felt the board should consider: “I need to know what I can say, and what I can do.”

After discussion, Ward said the board was fine with authorizing him to put something on hold. Chase said that’s what he was looking for. “I’ve only been looking at trucks for 50 years,” he said in closing. “I got an idea what they look like.”

The board reviewed an estimate of \$13,334 for a gear washer and dryer plus installation for the fire department, and discussed next steps in pursuing the acquisition of a system. Purington said there is work to be done figuring out where to put it and what to do with the wastewater.

Purington said that regulations require the solicitation of three written quotes for such a purchase, but more involved state bid laws did not apply. Due to the expense, the matter will also need the capital improvement committee’s approval.

Crochier said he was going to look at the septic possibilities with fire chief Gene Beaubien. He said it would be fine to have the capital improvement committee look at the purchase at the same time he worked on the wastewater issue with the chief.

The board voted to accept an offer of free wood chips for the highway department from Turners Falls Schuetzen Verein. Crochier recused himself due to being a member of the club.

The board approved Karissa Olson as a junior firefighter, and Anthony Zager to the memorial committee.

The board announced there will be a Friends of Gill pancake breakfast on Saturday, March 23, from 8 to 10:30 a.m. at the Gill church, and that applications for the Gill Firemen’s Association \$500 scholarship for a high school senior are available online and at the town hall.



NOTES FROM THE LEVERETT SELECTBOARD

School Budget Likely To Go To Town Meeting Special Article

By **ROB SKELTON**

Two new firefighters were pinned prior to Tuesday’s joint selectboard/finance committee meeting: Lt. Yotam Block and Lt. William Ingram, son of chief John Ingram.

Longtime fin com chair Tom Powers resigned so he could keep his seat on Leverett’s Municipal Lighting Plant, where his expertise is needed; the fin com elected Ann Delano chair.

School committee members Tara Acker, Bethany Seegar, and Audra Goscenski, along with school business manager Bruce Turner came to defend their department’s proposed budget, and ask the officials to trust and support their mission.

The oppositional energy which often accompanies the school budget, which is the town’s biggest budget, threatens to cultivate divisiveness when departments ought to be backing each other, said Acker.

“The only solution is advocating statewide for full school funding,” members of the committee said.

Selectboard member Peter d’Errico faulted the Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA) for failing to take on the state: “We only see the MTA at contract time,” he said. “I’d like to see some serious pressure from teachers statewide. A strike.”

“Teachers can’t strike,” a few people said.

“They have a very heavy hand to play, and they’re not playing it. There’s a need for political action at the state level,” d’Errico continued. “Unsustainability needs to be called out.”

The school committee members said they had done everything they can to keep the costs low; any further cuts will hurt the children. The fluctuating special education costs

can kill a budget; it is often impossible to forecast these costs.

This year there is a SPED student who requires adult accompaniment on the school bus, according to d’Errico, who praised principal Margot Lacey for crafting a cheaper solution than the \$85,000 tuition to enroll elsewhere.

“We don’t want to spotlight individuals,” said Goscenski, prior to exiting the meeting, upset by a lack of support from the two boards.

Selectman Tom Hankinson threw a pencil on the floor, and accused fin com’s Nagy of “driving people away.”

“Craft the language for a special article [for town meeting], and we’ll bring it to the voters,” said Delano.

Public Safety

A boiler breakdown at the public safety complex was estimated to cost ten grand to replace, five grand to fix, according to Jamrog Plumbing, called in on an emergency basis. The cost can be covered by the reserve fund, which currently contains \$28,000, said town administrator Marge McGinnis.

Steve Weiss, attending his fourth meeting as a fin com member, asked about a warranty; since the boiler was eighteen years old, selectboard d’Errico said, any warranty would’ve run out years ago.

Police chief Scott Minckler defended the costs of sending recruits to the academy, which entails paying two salaries – one for the trainee, and one for his replacement while training. He and the board considered the option of hiring already-trained officers, currently precluded due to Leverett’s paltry payscale.

“A cop with six years on in Amherst is making \$60,000, plus \$12,000 in educational incentives,” Minckler noted.

“Ultimately my goal is to have three full-time officers,” Minckler said. “Ideally we get two into the academy this year.” The next 18-week session starts in June, and spots fill up fast, he warned. “We can get creative with my budget,” he said, to make it happen. “To save money, we can send one trainee in June, and one in January.” Minckler said he had two trainees in mind.

Other Business

The boards reviewed the annual costs of the landfill plume remediation: \$24,000 for monitoring and \$600 for bottled water for residents whose wells have been poisoned.

A meeting with a hydrogeologist is slated for Thursday, March 7 to get some “science” behind continuing efforts to mitigate the leachate, selectmen said.

D’Errico stressed the importance of this meeting, which will include townsmen Sam Black and Skip Fournier, saying it will cover some new, game-changing regulations. Fin com’s Steve Nagy, holding up a report from 2012, asked what the point was in doing another study when the last one was never acted on.

A shallow well permit to augment Mark Doubleday’s leachate-blocked deep well trickle was granted Monday by the con com, according to commissioner Isaiah Robeson.

The \$2,550 per year which the assessors want to reprint maps to reflect ongoing changes struck the selectboard as “extremely high.” In the past Steve Schmidt used to pay for an update every few years. Weiss noted that “the maps are inaccurate. Period.”

Selectwoman Julie Shively said that their accuracy was immaterial, essentially, to the assessing process.

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to get the news from poems
yet men die miserably every day
for lack
of what is found there.
- William Carlos Williams

edited by Christopher Sawyer-Lauçanno
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This Month’s Featured Poet: Dina Stander

We are very pleased to present the work this month of Dina Stander, whose new book *Old Bones & True Stories* has just been published by Human Error Publishing, and is available on Amazon.

Dina writes that she “has always wanted to be a poet when she grows up. She is a daughter, sister, wife and mother; a funeral celebrant and burial shroud maker; a story teller and artist. She loves the dogs, trusts the cats, and is amused by the neighborhood raven that croaks about its dreams when she sits in the garden.” She lives in Shutesbury.

Love in times of bone on bone

what is love in times
of bone on bone
when appetites go unsatisfied
and sorrow’s ghosts hunger for crusts
we no longer afford them

in times of bone on bone
love is like being surprised
by a dandelion blooming in February
the most ordinary beauty in an
extraordinary time and place

in times of bone on bone
love does not prevent the
inevitable raw scraping inside us
(we carry our bones with us into love)
but it gives the solace of turning away
from our complaints

finding instead a small
fragrant
golden possibility
foretelling a new season
promising the gentle hum
of pollinating bees.

shroud

from our fathers we are gifted
half the sky
the rest we must fly on our own

from our mothers we are gifted
half the earth
the rest we must dig on our own

I'm not sure how it is
that we begin to know
in our fingers in our hearts

how to spin threads of continuity
through & through to sustain
a coherent existence

in the grace of a last breath
it is this quilt of
sewn together elements

all of sky
all of earth
pierced & pulled whole

just then a summation

with this self made cloth
we cover our bodies our faces
when finally our eyes have closed

Whole poems in three words:

perched, then flew

death said come

elephants danced there

she pointed low

saffron sails unfurled

frogs blink twice

blue chicory dreams

lampshades tilted west

reach then pull

trains don't whisper

now open wide

last words

I was not allowed to stay
at my father's death bed

I was sent away to fend for myself
alone on the long road home

asking through a veil of tears
the ancient query of Jewish children

why is this night different
from every other night?

I left carrying a box of memorabilia
hoisted clumsily on a shoulder

photos of my grandparents in the 1940's
posed outside their apartment building

a fedora tilted across his forehead
her cloth coat neatly buttoned up

the burden of their existence
swept out the door as dad lay dying

"I'm on my way out" he said to me
clutching my hand with aching sweetness

I let him go without letting on
that we were no longer welcome

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MONTAGUE from page A1

Burstein. Burstein, in the words of this newspaper, raised “problems ranging from loss of space, additional staffing, dangerous parking, and inappropriate restrooms to security issues and a ‘climate of anxiety’ for students and staff.”

Town administrator Steve Ellis told the *Reporter* that he believed concerns about polling at the school had been “ongoing,” particularly last fall when a state election took place on the first day of school. Ellis told the selectboard that polling at the school had become an issue in negotiations over the lease of the Hillcrest and Sheffield school buildings and property, which are owned by the town.

The board and Bourbeau discussed a number of options for moving the polling stations. Michael Nelson suggested moving Precinct 6 (Montague City and the Patch) to the senior center, where Precinct 5 (downtown Turners) now votes, and then moving Precincts 3 and 4 to the police station, which is in Precinct 4, but where Precinct 6 now votes.

Bourbeau said there was not enough parking at the police station for two precincts, but she might still consider putting Precinct 6 in the senior center.

Bourbeau also said that, with the 2020 census coming up, there might be another opportunity to “shrink the number of precincts.” She noted that a proposal to do this in 2010 had been thwarted by a close negative vote of town meeting.

Bourbeau was asked if there had been an effort to find out what the people in Precincts 3 and 4 think about the issue. “She’ll probably get

phone calls tomorrow,” said selectboard member Chris Boutwell. “I’m sure I’ll get negative feedback from those who want their polling places to stay in their neighborhood,” Bourbeau said. “But it’s at the cost, and risk, of children’s safety.”

“I voted at Hillcrest for quite a few years,” said selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz. “I have mixed feeling about it. I think it’s a good opportunity for young people to see the parents and adults in the community voting, and the importance that they place on that...”

“I remember as a youngster going to school there and seeing voting. It was always explained to us that was something very important. From time to time, different classes got brought down, and they showed you what they did, so to me, it was a good educational piece.

“But again times change, things change, and people’s perception of how safe or unsafe things are changes, so we need to look on down the road.”

“I agree with you,” said Bourbeau.

The board did not take a vote on the issue, because Bourbeau indicated that she needed to wait for a response from the state Department of Conservation and Recreation to see if the Discovery Center is an option.

Fancy Trash

Steve Ellis reported on the progress of negotiations with the firm Republic Services over a new contract for municipal solid waste disposal. The contract includes recyclable and non-recyclable curbside trash.

Ellis said that there had been problems missing pick-ups last year,

but that Republic had made changes in its management team, and its performance has been “much better.”

Ellis said that under the current contract, Republic was hauling at a rate of \$64 per ton, but the company had made a “preliminary proposal” for the next three years at \$85 per ton. After consulting with Jan Ameen of the Franklin County Solid Waste Management District, he secured two more bids, both of which were higher than Republic’s; he recommended staying with the company.

The board did not take a vote on the issue, because Ellis had not yet negotiated a final contract with Republic.

Other Business

The board approved a proposal by police chief Chris Williams to request a civil service list from the state to hire a reserve officer.

The board also approved an \$8,650 payment to engineering firm Tighe & Bond for work on the design project to demolish a section of the town-owned Strathmore mill complex.

Kim Kosloski came before the board to request the use of public property to film a “mini-documentary” on the Whistle Stop Cafe in Millers Falls. The board approved the request.

Ellis reported on upcoming “Legislative Breakfast” meetings sponsored by the Massachusetts Municipal Association on March 29 in Athol and on April 5 in North Adams.

The board adjourned to an executive session to discuss collective bargaining strategy. The next scheduled meeting will be on March 11.





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LOOKING BACK: 10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Here’s how it was on March 5, 2009: News from the Montague Reporter’s archives.

Center School Reuse
Design Bid Awarded

Greenberg and Associates, an architectural firm in Putney, Vermont, was the low bidder – for \$19,600 – in the town of Montague’s request for proposals for a feasibility study for the reuse of the Montague Center School building.

The building came into the town’s possession in June 2008, after the Gill-Montague regional school district closed the elementary school and consolidated most of its students and staff into other district schools. Since then, Montague town meeting has allocated \$80,000 to heat, insure, and secure the building.

“The building is in excellent condition,” said town administrator Frank Abbondanzio. Greenberg will produce cost estimates and schematic designs for the three most likely reuse scenarios for the building. A public hearing will be scheduled at the Montague Center fire station to comment on the plans.

Abbondanzio said a market feasibility analysis will also be conducted, with reference to “some kind of use that could be synergistic with the Book Mill.”

Wendell Couple Seeks
“Deep Green” Permit

Jonathan and Susan von Ranson live in a small farmhouse in the center of Wendell, just off the town common. For more than a year, the couple has sought approval from the town to construct a “deep green,” non-electric apartment in their recently rebuilt post-and-beam barn.

On March 17 at 7:30 p.m. in the town office building, the Wendell

planning board will hold a public hearing on the von Ransons’ application for a special permit to move into the barn. The apartment would be designated a secondary dwelling, defined in the town’s bylaws as “a single unit limited to 800 square feet of living space which provides complete, independent living facilities for not more than two people, making provisions for living, sleeping, cooking and sanitation.”

The von Ransons say their plans “don’t depend on petroleum or electricity and are lower-tech than current state building and health codes specify.”

Board of health chair Harry Wiliston said the proposed apartment would be “in violation of state law, and we can’t help them out.” He confirmed that the board of health has denied their request for approval to build the apartment.

Vermont Town Meetings
Support VY Closure

At this week’s annual town meetings in 45 towns throughout Vermont, resolutions were voted on calling for the Entergy Corporation’s Vermont Yankee nuclear reactor in Vernon to be permanently shut down when its current 40-year license expires in March 2012.

Entergy is actively seeking permission to relicense the reactor for an additional 20 years.

As of press time, 43 towns had reported the results: 35 towns voted in favor (most by overwhelming margins; Topsham voted against the resolution by 2 votes and Granville defeated it as well; Walden, Grafton, and Barnett tabled the resolution without a vote; Bolton, Glover, and Wardsboro split the resolution, passing only its third part, which called for the company to fully fund a decommissioning account for the plant.

NOTES FROM THE ERVING SELECTBOARD

Bastarache “Confident” Elementary School Will Cut Costs

By KATIE NOLAN

The Erving selectboard, finance committee, and capital planning committee met jointly on March 4 to consider \$392,400 in capital improvement items on the draft town meeting warrant.

The board and committees decided to delete \$8,000 for town computer upgrades from the draft capital improvements article because they are defining computer licenses and maintenance as operating expenses, not capital expenses.

They decided to increase the “roadwork/sidewalks” item from \$130,000 to \$200,000. Administrative coordinator Bryan Smith told the board and committees that engineering costs were not included in the initial estimates of the cost for River Street repairs.

They decided to move the \$25,000 Riverfront Park electrical service and lighting item from FY’20 to a FY’19 expense, because the recreation commission would like to have electrical service for concerts at Riverfront Park starting in May, and money voted at annual town meeting for FY’20 won’t be available until July.

In addition, selectboard members agreed that the \$6,000 requested for server maintenance/upgrade might actually cost \$10,000.

Funding for new kitchen equipment for Erving Elementary School was not included in the capital improvements budget for the annual town meeting. According to capi-

tal improvements member Debra Smith, the equipment purchase “was voted forward conditional on an assessment” by a third party of the current kitchen equipment, and that assessment has not yet been done. Selectboard chair Scott Bastarache said that any appropriation could be put off until a special town meeting after an evaluation of the equipment was completed.

Stabilizing, Solidifying

The 2018 annual town meeting voted to establish a capital improvement stabilization account to “fund the majority of all annual capital projects as identified by the long-range capital improvement plan.” That plan is developed by the capital planning committee, based on information provided by town departments.

The board, fin com, and capital planning committee discussed whether to “go live” with the capital improvement stabilization account, by raising money from taxes to fully capitalize it and then voting to pay for FY’20 capital improvements from the account. An alternate plan is to add a smaller amount to the stabilization account, which has a current total of approximately \$570,000, raise tax money directly for FY’20 capital improvements, and start paying for capital projects from the account in FY’21.

Bastarache noted that water and wastewater department capital improvements are included in the 25-year capital improvement plan, and

that capital items for these departments are paid through enterprise funds, not through appropriations. He said that the board and committee “don’t have numbers for a five-year rolling average” in order to determine the correct amount to appropriate to the account.

Debra Smith said that the capital planning committee intended to “go over it [capital requests] with department heads and get this number really solidified.”

Looking at requests for future years, and observing that for FY’21 there are requests for a new fire truck, fire department radios, and highway dump truck, Bryan Smith said, “it would be helpful for department heads to know what other department heads are asking for in the same year.”

School Gap

At the February 25 selectboard and fin com meeting, the school committee had requested a 6.1% increase in the Erving Elementary School budget over FY’19.

For the draft town meeting warrant, the selectboard and fin com set the elementary school budget at 3% over the FY’19 amount, for a total of \$3.17 million. Bastarache said he was confident that the school administration and school committee could “close the gap to a 3% increase.”

The selectboard intends to approve both the final FY’20 budget and annual town meeting warrant at their March 11 meeting.



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HAZMAT from page A1

chief John Zellman, Southworth is now in violation of the court injunction, including the rather ominous paragraph on hazardous materials.

Zellman and town officials have turned to the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to facilitate the hazmat removal. Zellman said the DEP will pay for the removal, the cost of which is approaching \$100,000, and then “chase” Southworth to get the money back.

Reports on the DEP website’s “Reportable Release File Viewer” (the “tracking ID” is 1-20371) indicate that the state agency has been monitoring the mill since Southworth shut its doors in August 2017.

On September 27, 2017 two DEP officials, “concerned about the discharge of oil/hazardous materials and/or untreated wastewater,” inspected the facility. The officials found a large collection of hazardous materials at the site, including large totes of dyes, a 750-gallon tank containing industrial-strength bleach, a dozen drums of hydraulic oil, “miscellaneous totes of polymers and fixing agents,” various lab chemicals, and a “radiation source for paper thickness measurements.”

The agency returned last October, after the court injunction, to reinspect the premises with Zellman and other town officials. According to their reporting, they found that some, but not all, of the hazardous materials had been removed. The DEP warned Southworth executive David Mika that the company could be found liable for three times the

cost of hazmat cleanup if the state agency had to contract for the job. Mika told them he was no longer with the company.

Soonafterthat, “[r]epresentatives from the Southworth Company indicate that their company is bankrupt and they do not have financial ability for completing proper disposal of oil/hazardous materials remaining at the site.”

On January 2, 2019, Environmental Services, Inc. (ESI), the Connecticut company hired by the DEP to remove remaining hazardous materials, began the work of cleanup. DEP spokesperson Catherin Skiba said this was a precaution to “prevent release,” due to “the deterioration of barrels.”

Since electricity had been cut to the building, a vac truck was needed to drain the containers, and a rack truck used for “off-loading drums and lab packs.”

ESI initially estimated that it would take “one to two weeks” to complete the job, but at the time of the latest report posted on the DEP website, January 16, 2019, a significant amount of material still remained in the mill.

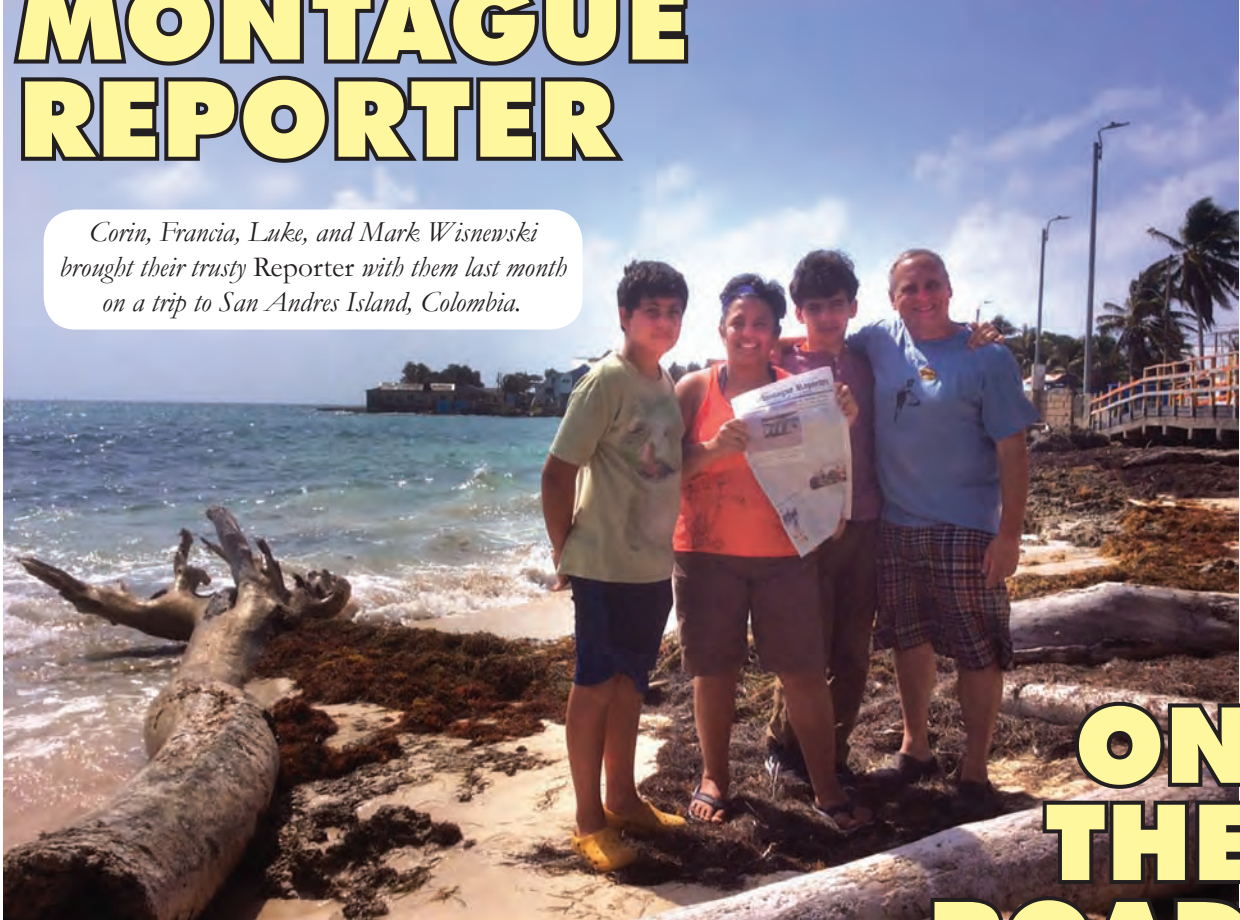
The contractors returned this week to continue the job.

Town administrator Steve Ellis told the *Reporter* that the DEP hazardous waste removal is a “positive development – having removed these types of materials, prospects for a new owner to emerge would only improve.”

The town of Montague has recently designated the strip of land between the canal and the Connect-

MONTAGUE REPORTER

Corin, Francia, Luke, and Mark Wisniewski brought their trusty Reporter with them last month on a trip to San Andres Island, Colombia.



ON THE ROAD

Going somewhere? Take us with you! Send photos to editor@montaguereporter.org.

icut River, on which Southworth sits, as a “canal district.” The town is seeking grants to improve water and sewer service to the area.

A recent overhaul of the town’s zoning bylaws included a section called “Planned Unit Development,” specifically designed to encourage multiple uses of factory buildings like the Southworth Mill.

However, the building is still owned by the bankrupt company, which has been unable to maintain it and is in violation of its court

order. Problems including broken pipes, a leaky roof, and vandalism have caused the adjacent Strathmore buildings to deteriorate since their abandonment. After its use as a paper mill had ended, the Strathmore complex was purchased on the open market by individuals who were unable to invest the capital to maintain or redevelop it. The town is now debating whether the buildings are past the point of no return.

Zellman said the Southworth building may have emerged from

the past winter in relatively good shape. The water department cut off water to the former factory to avoid the kind of massive leakage from broken pipes experienced at the Strathmore a few years ago.

Yet Zellman has also noted the similarities between Southworth and the Strathmore. “We’re heading down a road I don’t want to head down,” he told the selectboard last August, referring to Southworth. “We’ve been there before.”



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FEATURES@MONTAGUEREPORTER.ORG OF THE MONTAGUE REPORTER MARCH 7, 2019

Above: Features editor Nina Rossi captured this Monday morning's snowfall on Prospect Street in Turners Falls.

Goose Exquisite Thrift: Art, Opportunity, and Affordability

By EVELYN AUGUSTO

GREENFIELD – Take art, and heal your broken heart.

That is the impression I got after spending the afternoon with Astranada Gamsey, the purveyor of the Greenfield boutique called Goose: Exquisite Thrift.

“We are living in a time of extreme transmutation,” she assured me. “This can trigger a general sense of everything being out of whack. Art has always anchored me to the brilliance of humanity. It reminds me that love and beauty are at the core of our collective experience.

Living with art is therapeutic on a deep level.”

From the sidewalk of Main Street, a passerby would be hard pressed to guess just what Goose: Exquisite Thrift housed inside. The word “thrift” in the shop’s signage is deceiving. Typically, one thinks of used and discarded items when one sees the word. Not the case with Goose! I found everything in the boutique desirable and inspiring, from the eclectic and chic racks of women’s clothing, to new and antique watches, to kitchenware; all seemed noteworthy.

But it is the art that pulsates from the walls and shelves that might resonate with a shopper who

hasn’t anticipated finding the treasures that Astranada has accumulated. The forty-two year old shopkeeper offers an assortment of paintings, pottery, hand blown glass, and even collectible books like *How to Massage Your Cat*, which was written by the famed Alice Brock of Alice’s Restaurant, a former West Stockbridge venue made famous by Arlo Guthrie in his song “Alice’s Restaurant Massacre.” Brock has shared her extraordinary prints with the Goose, as well as her hilarious cat massage book, copies of which she has signed and drawn an original sketch in.

Astranada says she believes that “buying art and collecting art should not be something exclusive and connected to privilege.” She takes great pleasure in serving as a conduit between people who appreciate and love art but feel like it is an indulgence they can’t afford, and actual art that they can afford to own.



AUGUSTO PHOTO
The Main Street storefront.

Astranada has an eye for beautiful things and a generosity of spirit that allows her to share them, but it is through the generosity of the artists exhibiting at Goose that she can offer fine art at reasonable prices.

see **GOOSE** page B2

BOOK REVIEW

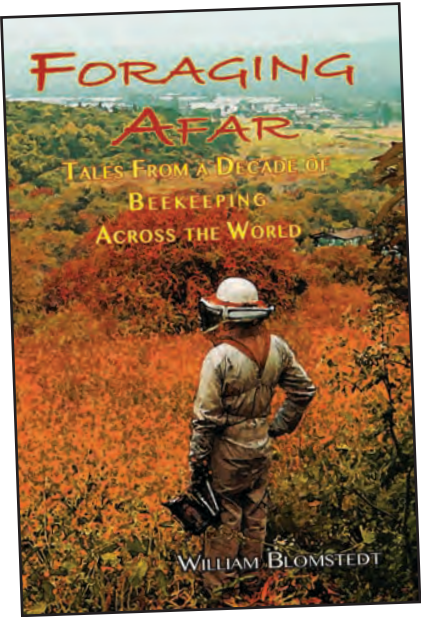
A Beekeeper’s Journey

By NINA ROSSI

GILL – William Blomstedt’s book, *Foraging Afar: Tales from a Decade of Beekeeping Across the World* details the decade he spent traveling and working for various beekeeping operations in some fifty countries. William became a journalist during the few months of the year when hives were dormant and apicultural work dried up; some chapters were previously published as or adapted from some of the 70-odd articles he wrote for the *American Bee Journal* and other trade publications.

I found the book fascinating on several counts, though it took me a very long time to read it for reasons of my own – chiefly, the weekly arrival of *New Yorker* magazine. In the meantime, the book was reviewed in another local publication. Oops. William grew up in Gill, where his family still lives, and I apologize for being tardy in reviewing it!

This is a coming of age story with a twist; a young man finds purpose and meaning through the common language of beekeeping, bridging cultural divides everywhere he wanders, and through the reality of



back breaking work. In *Foraging Afar* he seeks to capture, as he puts it, “small moments in the life of a beekeeper, the grinding, hard work involved in commercial apiculture, and a handful of sometimes foolish bee-related escapades.”

William attended some hardcore academic schools – Deerfield Academy and Dartmouth. And after spending a summer during his Dartmouth years in Montana, counting the grizzly bear population with a

crew of off-beat veteran nomads, he decides to take a year off from college to travel to New Zealand, inspired by tales he heard from his Montana coworkers.

An existential crisis of sorts develops in New Zealand; William realizes that he won’t find satisfaction in aimless wanderings and random work-for-room-and-board. He sits under a bridge abutment to define his values; he likes to travel; he likes animals and the relationships humans have built with different species; and he wants to be hands-on with this work, not just studying numbers on a computer somewhere. He emerges from under the bridge with this resolved, and when he sees a sign saying “Honey For Sale,” asks the store owner to direct him to the nearest beekeeper.

That summer he falls in love with beekeeping and with bees, harvesting Manuka honey from 400 hives with a New Zealand farmer, and learning basic facts about the biology and behavior of the honey bee from his host.

Readers will slowly learn more and more about these complex

see **BEEKEEPER’S** page B4



WEST ALONG THE RIVER EARLY MARCH OUT OF DOORS

By DAVID BRULE

ERVINGSIDE – March 3.

The night sky is filled with diamond-sparkling crystals filtering down, and flames of the campfire down below rising up. Bone-dry white pine branches send sparks upward to meet those first snowflakes of the coming storm. Oftentimes a personal ritual is to light a fire out of doors in the snow on a cold night like this, on the edge of the woods.

My chair is pulled up to the fire, the showers of sparks sputter out when they fall into the snow all around us glowing briefly red before going dark. Nikolai, my constant companion, sits with me staring at the flames – or does he have designs on the king salmon filet sizzling over the coals? Snowflakes build up slowly on my coat sleeves and on the thick husky fur between the dog’s two pointed and alert ears. I’ll just sit here keeping an eye on fish and dog, snow-dreaming into the flames.

Indoors, the woodstove warms the house all by itself, the parlor light shines its pale yellow light out onto the snowbanks beneath the windows.

My fire has always been set outdoors where I am now, on the terrace over the river. My back yard reaches a point out here, like the prow of a ship. I can look both upriver and downriver through the woods. Eons ago, the river formed this terrace, before cutting down even deeper to the current floodplain level 15 feet lower than where I’m sitting. That river flowed west from the vicinity of Mount Wachusett before turning abruptly north right here at the bend to rush, greet, and vanish into the Connecticut below what is now known as the French King Bridge.

In the last several thousands of years, the Millers carved its bed two hundred feet away, where it rushes by ever since then, leaving my flood plain terrace high and dry. I’m probably not the first to be drawn to this point, or keep a hearth fire here. I believe I’m sitting a few feet away from a 7,000-year-old Indian.

Let me explain: about 30 years ago, we needed to bury a beloved dog, here on the point of land, under the lilacs he loved and where he found cool, green and shady respite from summer heat. While digging out a hole for his final resting place, we unearthed what were later described by

indigenous friends as burial objects and talismans, dating back to the Paleo-Indian era. At the time, we didn’t recognize any other burial features, and our first dog was placed in the earth.

I’d like to believe that the Indian buried nearby loved this site as much as I do, overlooking what was then a meadow along the *papaguntiquash*, the original indigenous name of the Millers.

His campfire may have been located just in this spot, and you may well know yourself that just staring into the flames like this, those kinds of thoughts enter your mind and imagination. Moments like this do contain actual messages and signs, if you are open to receiving them.

I’m sure that small glass of spirits sitting within arm’s reach, just there on the snow-covered table has something to do with it too.

Out here in the nighttime I’m waiting for the great horned owl’s mating call that usually comes booming out across the frozen marsh, from the tall pine tree island overlooking the cattails. It may be high time to think about getting over across the river to see what we can see in that winter marsh.

The salmon has by now been perfectly grilled over the glowing oak coals, the 7,000-year old spirit spoken to, honored, and thanked for letting me stay near this fire. Tobacco tossed into the fire, the other liquid spirits duly consumed as well. The dog knows nothing of these reflections, he just wants his share of the salmon, dancing by my side as we make our way back to the house and the supper table.

After supper, dog and his human both decide we need to get over to that frozen marsh tomorrow morning.

see **WEST ALONG** page B2



LOUIS AGASSIZ FUERTES ILLUSTRATION

Northern Pileated Woodpeckers –
Phloeotomus pileatus abieticola

Pet of the Week



“SASSY”

I’m a squishy soft girl, with big eyes and a cute short tail.

I am friendly with new people, and happy to coexist with your cat. I’ve been described as a couch potato, and I really like my food.

I never bite, scratch, or go outside my litter box. I won’t wreck your house. I’ve had all my shots, I’m spayed and microchipped.

I’ve been waiting a long time for my new humans to arrive. Maybe that could be you?

Contact the Dakin Pioneer Valley Humane Society at (413) 548-9898 or at info@dpvhs.org.

WEST ALONG from page B1

March 4. This morning the last snowflakes trail off as in a slow-motion dream. There’s a promise of bright skies in the afternoon.

A pileated woodpecker greets the day by whooping and hammering away at a dead branch in Bob Miner’s old maple tree just yonder where our properties meet. That big woodpecker has probably found a cache of carpenter eggs in a winter-dormant nest, as he goes about whacking away and talking to himself.

Nick and I will carry through on our promise of a visit to the frozen marsh. I’m suited up already, knee-high Muck Boots “waterproof, insulated, protective,” the label says. I’ve added red gaiters to go up over my knees to keep out the snow that always finds a way in, in spite of efforts to keep it on the outside. It manages to get down your neck or down into your socks, no matter how you try to keep it out.

I first came across this knee-high winter boot concept almost thirty years ago, up near the Arctic Circle, back in the ‘90s. I was given a pair of Russian valenki to wear while ice-fishing in Karelia. These are knee-high felt boots worn by the inhabitants of this region. They are, of course, most effective in those frigid climates where the snow

rarely melts during the winter, and with these you can trek across snow fields or frozen lakes as comfortably as though you were wearing bed slippers. The Muck Boot Company came out with the same concept, only the materials are rubber and plastic, not traditional felt.

Dog and I park the car on the high valley rim, across the river from our home, and look down into the oxbow bowl at the frozen water-world below. We start down the rim, slip-sliding down swales and draws until we reach the edge of the frozen pond, a hundred feet below.

The dry cattail stalks are locked firmly in winter ice, a few still carry the battered seed tufts of the ‘tails at the top. A lone redwing perches atop one of them. He’s the first to arrive and start staking out his little corner of what will be a teeming colony of blackbirds in a few months. A piping call from the song sparrow indicates the same intent, singing for his potential mate, and claiming a tangled thorn patch of multiflora rose as his ideal nest site.

Beyond these very first faint signs, what is usually a vibrant community of wild creatures in the summertime, is still very much in winter mode these first days of March.

The beaver lodge is in good repair, their dam is snow-covered and

clearly has served as a highway from one side of the pond to the other for deer and raccoon. Some creatures, beaver or otter, have gone up and over the dam along a well-traveled slide.

This first visit to the marsh of the new year bears only the promise of changes to come. For now, the winter has kept its grip here. Soon, the goose pair will begin circling and honking in the morning air. The redwing and song sparrow will have dozens of rivals.

But for now, the only other company we have are the tracks left behind by that single doe who stepped out of the copse just over there, before seeing man and dog. She was so lovely she could well have been the one described in *Crystal Declension*:

... *She steps lightly across the creek through the under-story and half-lit grasses, Then disappears in a clutch of willow bushes. If one, anyone, Could walk through life as delicately, as sure, as she did, Would stay sunlight, and ring like crystal among the trees*

– Charles Wright



Senior Center Activities

MARCH 11 THROUGH 15

GILL and MONTAGUE

The Gill Montague Senior Center, 62 Fifth Street, Turners Falls, is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Congregate meals are served Tuesday through Thursday at noon. Meal reservations must be made one day in advance by 11 a.m. All fitness classes are supported by a grant from the Executive Office of Elder Affairs. Voluntary donations are accepted.

Council on Aging Director is Roberta Potter. Kitchen Manager is Jeff Suprenant. For more information, to make meal reservations, or to sign up for programs, call 863-9357. Messages can be left on machine when the center is not open.

M, W, F: 10 a.m. Aerobics;
10:45 a.m. Chair Exercise
T, W, Th: 12 p.m. Lunch
Monday 3/11
8 a.m. Foot Clinic (by appt.)
1 p.m. Knitting Circle
Tuesday 3/12
10:15 a.m. NO Chair Yoga
1 p.m. Healthy Eating Session 4
Wednesday 3/13
9 a.m. Veterans’ Outreach
11:30 a.m. Friends’ Meeting
12:30 p.m. Bingo
Thursday 3/14
9 a.m. Tai Chi
10:15 a.m. NO Chair Yoga
1 p.m. Cards & Games
4 p.m. NO Mat Yoga
Friday 3/15
12 p.m. Breakfast at Noon
1 p.m. Writing Group

p.m. for activities and congregate meals. Lunch is at 12 p.m., with reservations required two days in advance. Call (413) 423-3649 for meal information and reservations.

For information, call Paula Better, Senior Center Director, at (413) 423-3649. Transportation can be provided for meals, shopping, or medical necessity. Call to confirm activities, schedule a ride, or find out about the next blood pressure clinic.

Monday 3/11
8:45 a.m. Step & Sculpt
9:30 a.m. COA Meeting
10 a.m. Healthy Bones & Balance
11:30 a.m. Breakfast Brunch
12:30 p.m. Pitch/Bridge Game
Tuesday 3/12
8:45 a.m. S.W.A.P. Exercise
10 a.m. Stretch & Balance
12 p.m. Soup & Sandwich
1 p.m. Create to Donate Blankets
Wednesday 3/13
8:45 a.m. Line Dancing
10 a.m. Chair Yoga
12 p.m. St. Patrick’s Day Lunch
12:30 p.m. Bingo and Snacks
6 p.m. Pitch Night
Thursday 3/14
8:45 a.m. Aerobics
10 a.m. Healthy Bones
12 p.m. Congregate Lunch
1 p.m. Crafty Seniors
Friday 3/15
9 a.m. Quilting Workshop
9:15 a.m. Flex & Stretch
9:30 a.m. Bowling Fun
10:30 a.m. M3 Exercise Games
12 p.m. Lunch

WENDELL

Wendell Senior Center is at 2 Lockes Village Road. Call Nancy Spittle, (978) 544-6760, for hours and upcoming programs. Call the Center for a ride.

ERVING

Erving Senior Center, 1 Care Drive, Erving, is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4

LEVERETT

For information, contact the Leverett COA at (413) 548-1022, ext. 5, or coa@leverett.ma.us.

Wednesday 10 a.m. Flexibility & Balance Chair Yoga at the Town Hall. Drop-in \$6 (first class free).

Friday 12 p.m. Senior Lunch. Call (413) 367-2694 by Wednesday for a reservation.

GOOSE from page B1

“My favorite thing,” she told me, “is when customers who’ve purchased art from Goose stop by to tell me how much they love it. Often, they’ll show me pictures of how they’ve framed it and where they’ve hung it in their home. I usually pass that information along to the artists, who are also thrilled that people are appreciating their work. It creates a gorgeous vibration that reaches far beyond the thrill of an ordinary purchase.”

Her John Clayton collection is remarkable. Paintings by Clayton, a revered Cape Cod colorist and *plein air* artist known for gorgeous street, rooftop, and harbor scenes are coveted by collectors. Many of his quirkier pieces end up at Goose, for example, his Van Gogh portrait series, and the unusual condiment and cigar box still life series.

Originally from Cape Cod, Astranada has lived in art-forward places such as New York and Los Angeles. She currently lives in Charlemont. When asked why the change in scenery, she said, “the Cape is unsustainable for the average person,” and she wanted more of a year-round economy. She added that “there was something limiting about the *up and down* of Cape Cod. I like the web of western Massachusetts, where if you head out in any direction you find what you need in the people and places you encounter.”

Astranada said she loves the blooming art movement in Greenfield, initiated by what she calls “art bright spots” such as Greenfield Gallery and Looky Here. She feels there is a con-

tinuous flow of artists challenging themselves to be part of the Greenfield art scene, and this allows her a chance to work with people like craftsman and artist Ty Forton, son of the fine furniture maker Tim Coleman.

Forton, having worked with renowned glass artist Josh Simpson for several years, has come into his own as he swirls molten glass orbs into art. His work has been chosen for many juried shows throughout New England. He grew up in Shelburne, and attended the Greenfield Center School and Pioneer Valley Performing Arts High School in South Hadley. Forton has paintings and ceramics as well as his glass works at the Goose.

Typically, Astranada will buy items outright from the seller; only

the art is taken on consignment. In some instances, she will invite bartering with customers who may not have the cash for an item they want or need. With her generous and problem solving nature, she hopes to offer everyone the opportunity to own affordable art.

Astranada’s anecdote for all that ails a soul is so simple it might elude some. And yet grateful customers come and go throughout the day at Goose Exquisite Thrift, searching for something they can’t live without: goodwill.

Stop in and see Astranada, and get and give some for yourself. The shop is at 223 Main Street in Greenfield and is open every day. Find out more online at goose-exquisite-thrift.business.site or by calling (413) 773-3076.



Owner Astranada Gamsey works the register at Goose.

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THE

SPIRIT SHOPPE

BEEKEEPER’S from page B1

creatures throughout the book, as bits of the story unfold along with facts about the complicated life of the honeybee. This is similar to other bee-journal-type books I have read: beekeeping seems to attract introspective and articulate writer types, and a personal story that unfolds in tandem with biological facts is not uncommon.

However, I haven’t read another bee journal that details the kind of large-scale industrial queen-breeding operations that William finds himself working on. Employed by a queen breeder in Texas right after graduation, William describes the work there as “hot, sticky, heavy, and constantly getting stung even through protective garments... a test of temperament as well as manual skill, as remaining calm, moving slowly, around bees means you get stung less. Veterans can bare-handedly handle frames out of a hive.”

His work involves making “packages” to sell to beekeepers consisting of three pounds of bees and a queen for people to start their colonies in the spring. He learns to open a hive and evaluate its health, because it has to be strong enough to spare bees, and then literally shake three pounds of bees into a wooden box. A queen will be added in her own special cage, and then these will be shipped to beekeepers.

As a new apicultural worker, the young man has much to learn, and makes quite a few costly mistakes in the process. The process of becoming an expert involves honing his hand-eye coordination in opening hives and removing frames, extracting honey and warehousing it, stacking hives and transporting them from one field to another across vast landscapes in North Dakota and Texas.

There are accidents involving losing hives off a truck bed in the middle of traffic; frying three breeder queens – worth thousands of dollars – inside a car parked in the June sun; dumping a pallet of hives off a fork truck; and getting stung. One chapter is also devoted to working with this danger and describing what it is like to be stung repeatedly, as this is inevitable. Veterans are able to maintain a sort of calm that mollifies the bees’ desire to sting and some can even work without wearing protective gear.

He devotes one full chapter to praise the virtues of his hive tool, used to pry out and clean frames in the hive and a symbol that identifies him across many cultures as an apiculture worker. The book is also an

ode to work: in what he describes as “a Steinbeck moment,” Will stands at the gate of a bee yard in Texas and thinks, “This is what I wanted. The nostalgia for something I’d never experienced, holding onto it as it slipped away. To be dirty and working hard in this quiet, bee-peppered glade; alive, completely alive.”

It is also a test of endurance: living in a bunkhouse with assorted eccentric characters, being content with simple pleasures after a day of mind-numbing agricultural work. Playing hard, at times, and suffering for it afterwards.

William is unsparing of himself when he shares his adventures, and I found this very appealing. He is not too self-deprecating either; the book describes a good balance of earned successes and admitted failures, some of which are very amusing.

He journeys to Hawaii, a zone that is perfect for queen breeding, then on to Turkey, Australia and South America, Italy, Morocco, Slovenia, Japan, China, and more, meeting and working with beekeepers everywhere he goes, at times tracking down some unusually rare strain of honey or unusual breed of bee that is rumored to have mythical properties, such as the Anzer honey (\$116 a pound in 2010 with possible toxic qualities) in Turkey. The Turkey chapter leaves off just as he raises a dab of this fabled honey to his lips in a honey shop in Istanbul.

Slovenia, a country bordered by Italy, Austria, Croatia, Hungary and the Adriatic Sea, and considered the bee keeping capital of the world, becomes his home. He falls in love with a Slovenian girlfriend in March of 2015 and then hungers for “a dog, starting a garden, having a kitchen with sharp knives” and getting his own hives. Although by now fairly expert at beekeeping, he never had the responsibility of owning his own hives, and his first winter breaks his heart when the outcome of his decision about how to treat mites in the hives is that no colonies have survived the winter.

William Blomstedt is still living in Slovenia, and keeping bees is his occupation. We emailed across the distance. I asked him if he misses his nomadic existence, and he wrote back that “I miss the different flavors and smells. The freedom of a backpack and an open-ended schedule. Working hard and saving for a season and then getting a few months free.”

But, he says, he is also “happy to be doing all the things that require staying put (gardening, woodworking, animal care). Last year I put some of my hives on a trailer and moved them around the country so I could get different types of honey. It was a great season for the bees, but this winter has been tough – high losses across the country. Now spring has already arrived here (all of February was sunny and warm), but it feels too early and may suffer for it later.”

Foraging Afar: Tales from a Decade of Beekeeping Across the World (WicWas Press, 2018) is available online and at local bookstores.



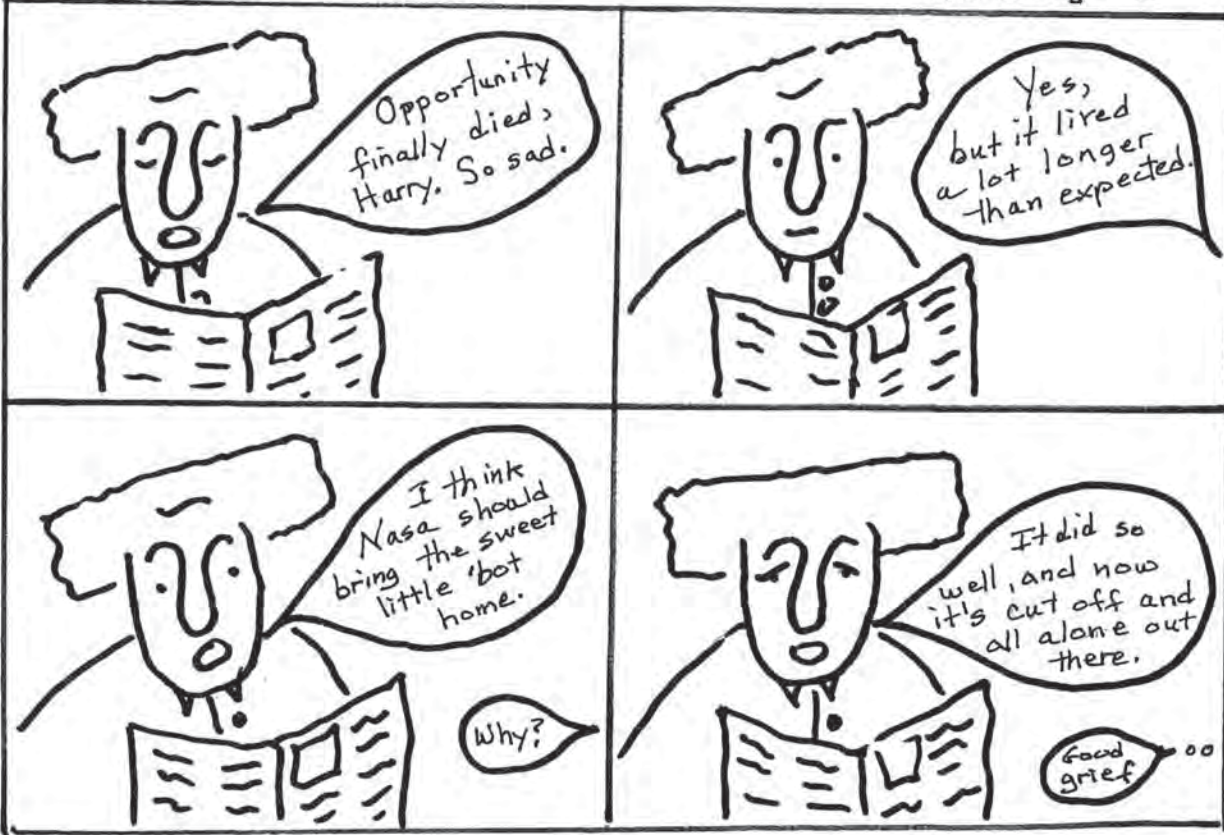
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OVER THE HILL

Ann O. Nymous



Hermit’s Tale Picked for Ten-Town Club

By REPORTER STAFF and from combined sources

FRANKLIN COUNTY – Ten small towns have joined to create a community-wide book club dubbed “Libraries in the Woods.” The communities of Northfield, Leverett, Shutesbury, New Salem, Pelham, Sunderland, Erving, South Deerfield, Warwick, and Wendell will comprise a Community Read focusing on *The Stranger in the Woods: The Extraordinary Story of the Last True Hermit* by journalist Michael Finkel.

Book discussions and related events will take place during the months of March and April throughout the ten towns, highlighting the book’s many themes.

Organizers hope that talking about books with friends, family, and neighbors adds richness and depth to the reading experience. The book is available at libraries and from online resources and as an audio book, and everyone is welcome to participate in the Community Read, including those from surrounding towns – including Montague and Gill, whose libraries are not “In the Woods.”

Stranger is the true story of Christopher Knight, who abandoned his car on the road in Maine in 1986 and walked into the woods with a backpack and tent, creating a secret campsite where he lived through all seasons in solitude, undetected and without human contact for 27 years. He was caught in 2013 stealing food. Knight stole supplies from the

surrounding community to survive, a string of mysterious burglaries that created unease among the residents. Incredibly, he never made a fire during the winter, instead developing ingenious ways to keep himself warm and to store edibles and water.

Knight chose one journalist to tell his story to, Michael Finkel, of the over 500 who contacted him after he was discovered. He told his story through interviews and letters, and when he had finished, he declined further contact. Knight currently resides back in the house he grew up in, living with his mother and sister somewhere in Massachusetts.

Here is an excerpt selected by the Dickinson Library in Northfield:

In the dead of winter, there was not a rustling leaf, not a candle flick of wind, not a bug or bird. The forest was locked in arctic silence. This was what he craved. “What I miss most in the woods,” Knight said, “is somewhere between quiet and solitude. What I miss most is stillness.” To reach this pristine state, the forest hard-frozen and the animals bunched, he had to bring himself to the brink of death. It was only when he heard the song of the chickadees, the state bird of Maine, that he knew winter would soon loosen its grip.... The feeling, he said, was momentous; he referred to it as a celebration, the chirps volleying through the trees, the little birds with their black-capped heads bobbing in the bare branches, calling their own names – chick-a-dee-dee – the sound of

months of mute suffering coming to a close, the sound of survival. If he still had some fat left on his body, he was proud. Most times, he did not. “After a bad winter,” Knight said, “all I could think was that I’m alive.”

On his website, michaelfinkel.com, Finkel says the book “asks fundamental questions about solitude, community, and what makes a good life, and a deeply moving portrait of a man who was determined to live his own way, and succeeded....

“Knight’s story has so many elements that verge on the utterly unbelievable – no fire for 27 winters? never a severe illness? not one conversation? a thousand burglaries? – that it was essential to try and present the tale just as it happened, free of embellishment or exaggeration.”

Some of the activities scheduled for Libraries in the Woods include a session with K9 tracker Artie and his handler, Montague police officer Jim Ruddock (Leverett Library, March 17, 2 p.m.); “How to Tie Knots and Hang Tarps” (Northfield, March 23, 10:30 a.m.); “A Space of One’s Own: Silence, Solitude, and Creativity” with Barry Deitz (Sunderland Library, March 26, 6 p.m.); “Capturing Maine Landscapes with Drone Photography” (Leverett Library, April 14, 3 p.m.); and many more events too numerous to list here.

Find out about more scheduled events at librariesinthewoods.word-press.com. Check our monthly Libraries listings and Local Briefs for events during those months as well!



William Blomstedt was raised in Gill and traveled the world pursuing his passion for beekeeping. He poses with a beehive in Hawaii.

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

EVENTS

THURSDAY, MARCH 7

Hubie's Tavern, Turners Falls: *Open Mic Night*. 7 p.m.

Northfield Mountain Recreation Center: *Dale Monet* presents an evening filled with beautiful wild-life images and engaging narrative from his years spent photographing local wildlife. He has worked for 25 years as an educator and naturalist, and recently published a book, *Secrets of the Quabbin Watershed*. 7 p.m.

Looky Here, Greenfield: *The Big Draw*. Figure drawing session with a model in monthly sessions. \$ donation. 7 p.m.

Root Cellar, Greenfield: *Dead Horses, Honeysuckle*. Two rising bands that are redefining folk music. \$. 7 p.m.

Mt. Toby Meetinghouse, Lev- erett: *John McCutcheon*. Mc- Cutcheon has a huge catalogue of original folk songs and is a multi-instrumentalist and story- teller. \$. 7:30 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Falltown String Band*. 8 p.m.

Gill Tavern, Gill: *Trivia Night*. Come with a team or by your- self, \$5 to play. Winning team receives \$25 gift certificate to the tavern; proceeds go towards a monthly good cause. 8:30 p.m.

FRIDAY, MARCH 8

Sloan Theater, GCC: *GCC Cho- rus Concert*. Preview of the longer program at end of se- mester. Baroque and classical choral music. 12 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Uncle Hal's Crabgrass Band*. 6:30 p.m.

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Jim Eagan and Anand Nayak*. Great Falls Caf- eehouse Series presents Eagan and Nayak "picking" and singin' folk, blues, originals and covers." Suggested donations support programs at the center. Refreshments. \$. 7:30 p.m.

Pothole Pictures, Memorial Hall, Shelburne Falls: *Farmer of the Year*. Plainfield residents Vince O'Connell and Kathy Swanson sold their Northampton business and became filmmakers. Their first feature is about an aging farmer and his granddaughter who take a cross-country trip. Meet the filmmakers at both

showings. Live music before the show. \$. 7:30 p.m.

Root Cellar, Greenfield: *Jon Camp, The Caribbean, Blue Dreamers*. Avant pop and elec- tric guitar inventions. \$. 8 p.m.

Hubie's Tavern, Turners Falls: *Acoustic Country*. With Heath Lewis. 9 p.m.

SATURDAY, MARCH 9

Brattleboro Museum & Art Center: *Opening*. Six new exhibits. Brunch reception, 11 a.m.

Pothole Pictures, Memorial Hall, Shelburne Falls: *Farmer of the Year*. (See Friday listing.) \$. 7:30 p.m.

SUBMITTED IMAGE



Amy Bennet, "Doghouse" (2018) oil on panel, an example from one of six new exhibits opening this Saturday, March 9, at the Brattleboro Museum & Art Center. Come for a free brunch reception at 11 a.m. Exhibits include Glasstastic, glass creatures that replicate local children's drawings of monsters. Photo courtesy of Mile McEnery Gallery, NYC. The new round of exhibits will be open through June 16.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Annual Big Surf Dance*. More than 30 bands, art, food and raffles to support Homeward Vets. \$. 1 p.m.

Montague Center: *Montague Common Hall Open Mic #32*. Open mic in a beautiful space and friendly environment. Featured artist: *The Hilltop Trio*. Donation. 7:30 p.m.

Root Cellar, Greenfield: *I Love You, Grist, Pronoia, Plants of the Bible*. New wave, synth pop, post-punk. \$. 8 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Mardi Gras with Samirah Evans, Trailer Park*. \$. 8 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *The Defi-*

nite Maybes. Rock/blues/soul. 9 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *MazzOrchestra, Jonathan Keezing*. 9:30 p.m.

SUNDAY, MARCH 10

McCusker's Market, Shelburne Falls: *Celtic Sessions*. Musicians, all levels welcome. 10:30 a.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Country Music and Dance lessons*. With Josh LeVangie and the Pistoleros and Wild Bill and the Flying Sparks. Lessons at 1:30, music at 2. \$. 1:30 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *TNT Karaoke*. 9 p.m.

Music Series with Under the Tree Music Company. A five week music series for young children combining music, laughter, song and movement. Adults and infants under 1 year are free; small fee per child or \$20 for five weeks per kid. 10:30 a.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Matt Stamell with Craig Eastman, Guy Devito*. Folk rock. \$. 7 p.m.

Root Cellar, Greenfield: *Jeff Carey, Sigtryggur Sigmarsson, Andrea Pensado, and Foam-bitz*. 8 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *John Lentz Trio*. 8 p.m.

Hubie's Tavern, Turners Falls: *Karaoke Night*. 8 p.m.

FRIDAY, MARCH 15

Element Brewing Co, Millers Falls: *Brule's Irish Band*. 6 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Ragged Blue*. 6:30 p.m.

Arms Library Shelburne Falls: *Open Prose and Poetry Reading*. Arrive early to sign up for 5 or 10 minute slots. 7 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Roomful of Blues* and *She Said*. Classic Blues rock with *Roomful*; blues, rock, jazz, country originals with local all female band *She Said*. \$. 7:30 p.m.

Guiding Star Grange, Green- field: *Contra Dance*. David Kay- nor and friends with the *Back Row Band*. All are welcome with or without a partner. \$. 8 p.m.

Hubie's Tavern, Turners Falls: *Acoustic Country*. With Heath Lewis. 9 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Flathead Rodeo*. 9 p.m.

SATURDAY, MARCH 16

Greenfield High School, Green- field: *Travis LeDoyt*. Fundraiser for music department at GHS with alum Travis LeDoyt doing his Elvis impersonation. \$. 7 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Monte Belmonte Second 40th Birthday Bacchanalia Orgy*. Variety show, birthday bash for Monte, and roast of WHMP radio host Bill Newman. \$. 7:30 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Jim- my Just Quit*. Eclectic local cover band playing dance music for St. Patty's day. \$. 8:30 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *The Great Craic Blackguards*. Classic Irish music for St. Patty's day. 9 p.m.

studio classes, from March 4 to March 23. Opening reception March 16, 1 p.m.

Nina's Nook, Turners Falls: *In the Vicinity*, featuring *Nina*

Rossi's mixed media works depicting Turners Falls, wraps up on March 9. *Spontaneous Combustion: Improvisatory Art by Adam Bosse* opens March 14 through May 5; reception April 14.

Salmon Falls Gallery, Shelburne Falls: *Women of Power*. Fabric Figures by *Belinda Lyons Zucker*. February 8 through April 28. Reception March 9, 3 p.m. Als, *Creating Together*, collaborations between mothers and their children and an art making space for children.

EXHIBITS

Artspace Gallery, Greenfield: *Art as Veil: ixchelailee*. Local multi-media artist. Through March 22.

Brattleboro Museum & Art Center, Brattleboro, VT: Six new exhibits opening on March 9 include large paintings by a reclusive Vermont artist *Sandy Sokoloff*, glass creatures based on children's drawings, narrative paintings by *Amy Bennett*, collaborative fiber art of *Jackie Abrams and Diedre Scherer*, an immersive mixed-media installation by *Joey Morgan*, and paintings documenting several generations of an African-American and Cape Verdean family on Cape Cod by *Joseph Diggs*. Through June

16. Opening reception, March 9, 11 a.m.

DVAA Gallery, Northfield: Members' exhibit in February/ March: *Farms*. Reception March 31, 1 p.m.

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *The Time of My Life: Vintage Views of Western Massachusetts*. Enlarged postcard scenes take visitors on an imaginary road trip, with stops at Mount Tom, Sugarloaf, Turners Falls, Greenfield, Shelburne Falls, and the Mohawk Trail. Sit down and relax with reproduction postal souvenir albums, a hands-on stereoscope, and a Viewmaster with other area scenes. Sponsored by Memorial Hall Museum. Through April 21.

Gallery A3, Amherst: *In Tune with our Imagination*. *Diane Steingart's* mixed media pieces are tangible, outer manifestations of her memories and emotions, while *Gloria Kegeles's* photographs use the camera to capture images that are overlooked, unnoticed, or invisible to the naked eye. Through March 30. Forum, March 21, 7:30 p.m.

Greenfield Gallery, Greenfield: *Marjorie Morgan's The Long View*. Dream landscapes. Through March 15.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Rodney Madison and Friends*. Paintings and mixed media.

Leverett Crafts & Arts Center: *Jump Start*, annual exhibit of student work from Louise Minks'

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Sawmill River Gallery, Montague Center: *The Glance of Mercy*. Paintings of animals by *Shali Sanders* of Orange. Also, *All Creatures Great and Small*, works from the gallery collection. Through March 31.

Shelburne Arts Coop, Shelburne Falls: *Seeing Red*, a members' show with a red theme, on view through March.

Smith College, Northampton: *Spring Bulb Show*. Spectacular flowering hyacinths, narcissi, irises, lilies and tulips. Lift your spirits with color and scent. Daily from March 2 to March 17.



Binge Watching: Cool, Until It's Not

are not unique. I believe many people in some way, shape, or form struggle with finances: all of us could do with more money. And for those of us who are single and in search of a partner, these long cold winter nights are not always the easiest. But would my soul be truly at peace and would I really feel happy with my life if I had a man beside me and more money in the bank? I mean, would I? I highly doubt it.

I once heard of a study where they followed people over a course of time and of those who were predominantly pessimistic would eventually fall back on this mental attitude even after winning the lottery; while those who were more optimistic would eventually return to that happy state of being even after something tragic had befallen them. At first, the Debbie Downers would feel ecstatic with their extra cash, and the Positive Pauls would experience some form of depression due to the tragedy, but over time, they would return to their initial, core ways of being.

My point being that no, receiving more would not necessarily make me feel the way I want to feel long-term. And as corny as it

sounds, I'm trying to comprehend what it means to go within to find that which I most desire. Even though it drives me nuts whenever I read something cliché like "everything you seek is within," I know there is truth to this.

It is a lot easier, at least from the way we operate as a culture, to just satisfy our needs with objects, people, or experiences outside of ourselves. Instant gratification hardly ever leads to long-term anything. So on this early March winter morning, with yet more snow coming down, I am left wondering if perhaps all I need to do amidst my overall discomfort is to practice stillness and relaxation.

The (very watered-down) philosophy behind *savasana* is this: after putting the concentrated effort into a challenging yoga posture, returning to a neutral state and easing into relaxation allows one to receive the health benefits of the posture that was just previously done. I like to think of corpse pose as being a microcosm of winter, a season of death.

And so, perhaps the best I can do and therefore model for my son is to practice more conscious stillness. Particularly during those moments of discomfort when fear begins to

creep in, uncertainty follows not far behind, and worrisome thoughts of lack and self-worth take up more and more space.

Rather than binging on Netflix or wasting precious hours on social media, two very tempting and easy ways to distract myself and ignore the discomfort, I will practice more stillness. Though I can easily find comfort and ease in a really hot room practicing challenging postures, the time has come for me to translate this into my day-to-day. The stresses of single parenthood are gonna come and go, but if I can find ways to be still and breathe during moments of discomfort, I can at least model for my son a healthy way of coping. I want to create a life for us where screen time has its place as something we enjoy sporadically, rather than succumbing to the rabbit holes that they can become.

The true magic of *savasana* happens with all the circulation that takes place throughout the body, unencumbered. So maybe, just maybe, embracing stillness in these last few weeks of winter is just the right medicine to help me stay in the flow.

Ecuadorian-born and New York City bred, Mishel Ixchel is mama to a toddler, and currently resides in Turners Falls where she practices and teaches the art of sacred self-care. You can find her on Instagram @rootsandembers.

By **MISHEL IXCHEL**

TURNERS FALLS – In general, us Westerners have a hell of a time being still. If there's one thing I learned from teaching hot yoga in one of the most non-stop cities in the world, it's that when we feel uncomfortable, practicing stillness becomes nearly impossible.

This was most evident in the practice of *savasana*, a posture that translates from Sanskrit to "corpse pose," which requires complete stillness and relaxation. In Hatha Yoga, *savasana* is practiced right after a more vigorous posture, and though it requires little of us, the

stillness and relaxation is far easier said than done.

So over the years teaching in a hot and humid room, guiding people from movement to stillness, I noticed firsthand what one of my teachers often said, and I paraphrase: "*Savasana* is nearly impossible for Westerners." Sometimes it really feels truly impossible to relax and breathe when the room feels so hot and you feel unbearably uncomfortable. So I write these words in an effort to remember what this posture has taught me along the way: how to practice stillness, even when faced with discomfort.

The discomforts I currently face

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