

The Montague Reporter

YEAR 18 – NO. 20

also serving Irving, Gill, Leverett and Wendell

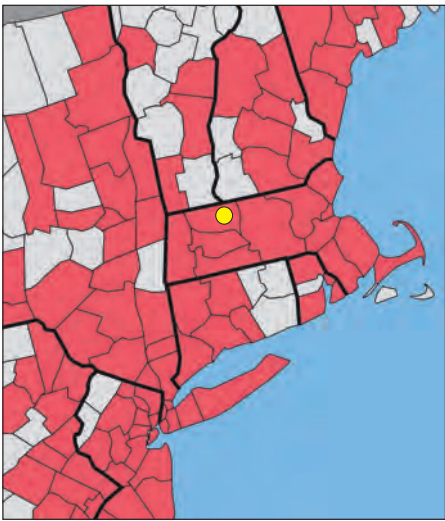
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EDITOR@MONTAGUEREPORTER.ORG

THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

MARCH 19, 2020

Schools Closed, Gatherings Banned As Virus Concern Overtakes Economy



Positive cases of COVID-19 have turned up in most Northeastern counties (shown in red).

By MIKE JACKSON

TURNERS FALLS – In the course of a week, life in Western Massachusetts has been upended by the widespread effort to protect public health against an ongoing novel coronavirus outbreak.

Confirmed COVID-19 infections in the United States, where there is a shortage of test kits for the virus, rose from 1,248 to 9,003 during the last seven days, with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) confirming 2,848 positive cases and 41 new deaths on Wednesday alone. Every measure shows the infection’s steady, ex-

ponential growth through the human population.

Public health officials continue to advise mass “social distancing” to slow the spread of the virus, which causes respiratory infection and poses a significant risk to people over the age of 60, and continue to warn of a scenario in which the nation’s medical facilities are completely overrun by cases.

Wednesday marked a local milestone: Franklin County’s first confirmed positive case. The town of Ashfield confirmed that a resident had tested positive for the virus, adding that others who had see **VIRUS** page A2

GILL SELECTBOARD

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Lockdown: Towns Declare States of Emergency, Restrict Town Buildings, Advise Phone Meetings

By MIKE JACKSON

“Whereas, whereas, whereas,” chair John Ward read at the outset of Monday’s meeting of the Gill selectboard. “We have many Whereas here that I’ll not read off, but therefore I, John R. Ward, selectboard chair of the town of Gill, Massachusetts, hereby declare that as of 5:35 p.m. on March 16, 2020, a state of emergency exists in the town of Gill.”

Fire chief Gene Beaubien, who serves as the town’s emergency management director, explained that the declaration made Gill eligible for emergency state and federal funds during the outbreak of the novel coronavirus.

see **GILL** page A8

By JEFF SINGLETON

The Montague selectboard and board of health held an emergency joint meeting on the afternoon of Sunday, March 15 to declare a local emergency in response to the developing COVID-19, or novel coronavirus, pandemic. The measures adopted in response to the emergency declaration included closing all town buildings to public entry and canceling all “non-essential” meetings. The board pledged to maintain town services and programs, “to the extent possible.”

Town staff met the next day to coordinate the implementation of these policies, and the results of these discussions were announced

at a previously posted selectboard meeting Monday night. That meeting, however, was closed to the public – and the press. The *Reporter* was able to access the discussion and ask questions through a computer application called GoToMeeting, shared by executive assistant Wendy Bogusz.

The emergency declaration and list of measures adopted unanimously at the Sunday meeting closed the town hall, Montague’s three public libraries, the Gill-Montague Senior Center on Fifth Street, the parks and recreation department in Unity Park, the police department on Turners Falls Road, the public works department at 500 Avenue A, see **MONTAGUE** page A7

Jail, Courts Face Challenge Of Pandemic Preparedness



The county jail went into an emergency lockdown mode last week.

By SAMANTHA WOOD

GREENFIELD – Franklin County Sheriff Christopher Donelan said he is concerned about the threat the coronavirus poses to people incarcerated in Greenfield, and is working to prevent the inmates in the Franklin County House of Correction from getting it.

Toward that end, on March 12 the jail began taking inmates’ temperatures daily and put extra measures in place to increase the distance between them. This was “to

get a comfortable sense the virus is not in the jail,” Donelan said in an interview on Tuesday.

All programs requiring extra staff, as well as any outside visitors, were canceled to reduce the number of people who could unwittingly bring the virus into the facility, and inmates’ freedom of movement has been restricted.

Guards and staff now have their temperatures taken each time they check in at the beginning of a shift, before they enter the jail. If they are

see **JAIL** page A6

Restaurants Pin Hopes On Takeout (And Bailout)

By ISABEL KOYAMA

FRANKLIN COUNTY – On Sunday morning, Five Eyed Fox owner Ashley Arthur gathered the staff of her Turners Falls restaurant together for a meeting in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. They decided to finish brunch that day, close for a week, and then reopen the following week for takeout only.

Hours after Arthur met with her staff, Governor Charlie Baker announced statewide restrictions on restaurants, bars, and other dining establishments from serving food or drink on-premises, effective until at least April 7.

“We’ve been reopened for a month now,” said Arthur. “The first few weekends we were consistently selling out of food, so I ordered a ton of food. Then the pandemic took hold, people stopped coming out, and the mandatory closures happened.”

Local bars and restaurants are responding to the new mandate in various ways, from changing their see **TAKEOUT** page A4

Wendell Good Neighbors Distributes Food... Carefully



Volunteers at Sunday’s outdoor food pantry exercised extreme precaution.

By MARY THOMAS

WENDELL – Under the recommendation of the Wendell board of health, at about 7 a.m. on Sunday, March 15, volunteers and staff with the Wendell Good Neighbors food distribution program cordoned off the Wendell Common with yellow “caution” tape.

Then, in preparation for shoppers’ arrival at noon, a dozen volunteers in white protective suits spent five hours pushing loaded hand trucks, carrying boxes of food out of the Wendell town hall, and sanitizing tables which were

then set up on the Common.

The town hall, where the distribution normally takes place, has been closed to all events by the board of health to help curb the spread of COVID-19.

In addition to the caution tape, protective suits and outdoor venue, the board of health recommended that all the workers use hand sanitizer and wear medical-grade gloves.

Shoppers were asked to leave children at home, maintain a distance of six feet from volunteers and from each other, use hand see **NEIGHBORS** page A8

Mutual Aid Networks Form Amid Bleak Economic News

By SARAH ROBERTSON

FRANKLIN COUNTY – As the coronavirus pandemic threatens the health and livelihoods of people across the valley, volunteers are beginning to step up, forming mutual aid networks to take care of our most vulnerable community members.

Those who may need help getting groceries, making medical appointments, finding childcare,

paying bills, or other kinds of support can reach out to one of several networks forming to offer these services.

“There’s a lot of this kind of energy and activity in the area, and a lot of really strong organizers,” said Story Young, a coordinator behind the newly formed Western Mass Community Mutual Aid network. “I mostly am doing it because I saw the need, and saw

see **MUTUAL AID** page A5

Meals on Wheels Adjusts, Calls for More Volunteers



Laura Monetter (in blue) and Bry Nadean place foods in trays for heat sealing at LifePath’s rethermalization center in the Renovator’s Supply building in Irving.

By ANNE HARDING

ERVING – It’s a daunting task in the best of times to provide over 500 weekday meals for some of the area’s most vulnerable residents – one made more challenging with the likelihood of a local outbreak of COVID-19 in the near future.

In the middle of a downpour last Friday, I pulled up to the parking lot of the “Rethermaliza-

tion Center for Home Delivered Meals,” more commonly referred to as the Meals on Wheels Kitchen on River Street in Irving. The parking lot was a hubbub of activity with 30 or so volunteer drivers rushing back and forth between their cars and an ordinary-looking door labeled “LifePath.”

The volunteers loaded up containers of cold and stable foods – see **WHEELS** page A4

... Plenty More To Read, If You're Feeling Bored!

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The Montague Reporter

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Important Note!

Dear Readers,

Due to ongoing public health concerns, the *Montague Reporter* will temporarily move to a digital-only format beginning next week. Each new issue, starting with this one, will be posted on our website, www.montaguereporter.org.

We have decided to make digital access free to the public. We plan to return to print publication as soon as is appropriate.

While we are digital-only, we will also email a link to each new edition to every subscriber whose email address we have on file. To add your email address to our list

or change the email address on the account, send us a message at info@montaguereporter.org.

Even in calmer times our small, independent, non-profit newspaper runs on a razor-thin margin. If you can, please consider supporting us by subscribing, purchasing a t-shirt, or donating online here, or by sending a check to our office at 177 Avenue A, Turners Falls.

We appreciate your continued support. Check in on your neighbors, and reach out if you have any needs, or resources to offer the community... We’ll get through this together!

The Montague Reporter staff

A People’s Bailout

Publishers of weekly newspapers are well familiar with the old Russian adage that there are entire decades in which nothing happens, and there are weeks in which decades happen.

On Wednesday, two members of the House of Representatives tested positive for coronavirus, and President Trump signed into law the first federal relief bill, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act.

The law guarantees free testing, and requires companies with under 500 employees to offer 14 days’ worth of paid sick leave. Companies with fewer than 50 employees can claim a hardship waiver. Gig workers may claim the leave as a tax credit.

In the face of a worsening double crisis of the nation’s healthcare sys-

tem and global financial markets, it’s a pittance. Fortunately there are more proposals in the wings, including the PAID Act, which would give workers 12 weeks of family medical leave, and competing proposals for direct cash assistance to every American adult.

The pandemic virus is still only nibbling at the margins of the population, and the vast majority who contract it will survive with little hassle. But it has already exposed the brittleness of our just-in-time economic order, and the shaky foundations of the post-2008 recovery.

Take care of your neighbors, and don’t hoard resources. What we all do in this moment will determine the course of history.

For starters, wash your hands.

VIRUS from page A1

come in contact with the patient “are currently self-quarantined and are asymptomatic.”

Following the declaration of a federal emergency last Friday, local towns declared emergency states of their own over the weekend, with many restricting access to town buildings to employees. Massachusetts has announced a modification of its Open Meeting Law to allow public bodies to either convene remotely or restrict public participation to a call-in basis.

Gill-Montague schools had originally announced a week off, but that decision was eclipsed on Sunday by a set of orders by governor Charlie Baker closing all schools, shutting down bars and restaurants, and banning any gathering of “25 or more persons” in any “confined indoor or outdoor space” for three weeks across the state.

The orders come amid a worsening economic contraction and turmoil. The value of major market indices has dropped by over

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NINA ROSSI ILLUSTRATION



NINA

The Montague selectboard and board of health carefully maintained a viral distance during their emergency meeting on Sunday. (This image came from MCTV video footage. For the time being, we’re taking submissions of photos from readers to use as the basis of the illustrations on this page! Send to features@montaguereporter.org, and be sure to include a phone number.)



Letter to the Editors

Spring Sweeping

Happy Spring! Suzanne LoManto from RiverCulture is spearheading an annual spring clean up of the downtown and planters on the weekend of March 28 and 29.

That weekend – or anytime before then – we are encouraging people to help clean out the planters as well as the surrounding sidewalks. All non-woody debris can be swept into the street for the annual spring street sweeping. (The DPW always sweeps Avenue A and Third Street before the parking ban is lifted April 1.)

This is an ideal time to sweep or rake plant debris and sand into the streets. RiverCulture also usually buys several dozen leaf bags for us to use for any stuff the DPW does not want in the street, like branches.

If you have any questions, feel free to get in touch with me or Suzanne. Thanks!

Owen Wormser
Turners Falls Planter Coordinator

Useful Resources in the Time of Coronavirus

www.greenfield4sc.org/fc-food-access-covid-19
Franklin County Food Access Resources list

www.massfooddelivery.com
Contact-free delivery of food from six local farms

1 (800) 732-4636
Meals on Wheels (LifePath)

www.mass211.org or dial “211”
MA United Way’s COVID portal
(with applications for childcare financial assistance)

www.westernmassrlc.org
Includes listing of online and phone peer support groups for people struggling with substances, in recovery, hearing voices, in emotional distress, etc.

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This newspaper, available online for free in the coming weeks!

disagreement as to their size.

The Treasury department has suggested two checks of up to \$1,000 in April and May; a group of Democratic senators, according to the *Washington Post*, is pushing for initial payments of \$2,000 and \$1,500 followed by quarterly payments of \$1,000 for the duration of the crisis.

Many workplaces have asked employees to work from home, and others have begun layoffs. Amazon, meanwhile, has announced it is hiring 100,000 new workers nationwide and plans to raise their base wage by \$2 an hour in anticipation of a surge in orders for home delivery.

Governor Baker quashed rumors on Tuesday that the state is preparing to issue a “shelter-in-place” order, a measure already taken in 16 northern California counties. While Boston has joined cities and states around the country in enacting a moratorium on evictions, it has not yet been applied statewide,

though a temporary shutdown of the state’s Housing Court system means no eviction orders are currently being signed.

Baystate Health advises anyone with possible symptoms of the virus – fever, cough, and shortness of breath – to contact a provider, but at this time, most local residents presenting mild upper respiratory symptoms are being asked to stay at home and rest.

“We know that most patients who test positive will not require hospitalization,” the company writes, advising adults to take ibuprofen or acetaminophen, drink plenty of liquids, take hot showers, and avoid contact with others.

Current guidance from the Centers for Disease Control also focuses on stress reduction. “Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media,” the institute writes on a section of its website titled *How to Prepare*. “Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting.”

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Compiled by NINA ROSSI

Closed. Canceled. Postponed. Many of the regular listings in Briefs involve groups of 25 or more people gathering together, not allowed now in Massachusetts in order to **slow the spread** of COVID-19. Schools, libraries, and many workplaces are closed; eating and drinking establishments are closed, too, except for curbside to-go orders.

Many, if not most, of us have built parallel lives online, through social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, through texting and emailing with groups of friends and colleagues, and through attending meetings on Zoom and other video conferencing platforms. All of these are being used to stay connected to friends, family, and the worlds of work and school while we practice social distancing and self-isolation.

People are also seeking sunshine and **the great outdoors** during these times. Hiking, walking, and biking have been popular activities, and these can all be done while maintaining enough distance from other people. But we are in for a long haul here. Not having the comfort of gathering with our friends and family, which usually helps us through hard times, really sucks. We can't forget our troubles while dancing to some great live music, because all those terrific venues are now closed for the duration as well.

If there was an event scheduled in March, **assume it was canceled or postponed**. From pancake breakfasts to library programs to rabies clinics – check the venue's website or call – and think hard about the necessity of attending, even if it is still scheduled.

The Shea Theater has postponed all shows in March, as have Hawks & Reed, the Parlor Room, the Great Falls Discovery Center, Laudable Productions, the Rendezvous, 10 Forward, Amherst Cinema, and the LAVA Center. Most galleries and museums are also closed, including Sawmill River Arts, Shelburne Arts Coop, college museums like the UMass Contemporary Arts Center, plus Mass MOCA.

In many cases, these closures ex-

tend into April, but some are waiting to see what it looks like a few weeks from now before making that call.

If you are stuck at home, **now's the time** to make slow foods like bread and soup, and consume slow media like books and newspapers, crosswords and other puzzles. Do the mending, the chores, the patching, the cleaning, the petting, and the loving.

Write the letters, spruce up the online blogs and websites, then be sure to unplug from the constant anxiety of the newstream, the blue lite from all those screen devices, and go outside for a while.

If you are one of those working in vital services and unable to hunker down at home, **thank you** for going out there and doing your part at this time! We are all so grateful and deeply appreciative of your presence on the front lines.

There's been an effort to enhance online life with free entertainment offerings. The **Metropolitan Opera will begin a free nightly screening** of its *Live in HD* encore performance series after canceling their live performances.

Each evening at 7:30 p.m. a performance will be available for 20 hours via the homepage on *metopera.org*. The performances are culled from their collection of HD presentations from the last 14 years, streaming now through March 22.

You may also **visit many museums through Google Arts & Culture's** collection of virtual tours and online exhibits. Sites include the British Museum in London, Guggenheim in NYC, the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, the Musee d'Orsay in Paris, the Pergamon Museum in Berlin, the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam, the Uffizi in Florence, Italy, and more. Go to *artsandculture.google.com*.

Not all museums are in the Google collection, however: the Louvre offers its own virtual tour on its website, *louvre.fr*.

The LAVA Center in Greenfield has announced they are starting an

Online Open Mic: "To participate, take a video of yourself performing a song, reading, or whatever you'd like. You can also send creative short video projects." Please keep the video to five minutes or less, and be sure it's family-friendly. In the file name, please include your name and any other information you wish to share with the public (short bio, link, etc.). Send your files or YouTube links to *info@localaccess.org*.

The Online Open Mic will go live on Wednesday, March 25 as a public YouTube playlist that LAVA will share that day via email and on social media. Get updated when the open mic is live by following the Facebook event (find it through *www.facebook.com/theLAVACenter*) or the their YouTube channel (search for "The LAVA Center – Local Access to Valley Arts").

Great Falls Books Through Bars canceled last Saturday's work bee in Turners Falls and has sent out a link to an e-newsletter, with directions to ways you can **support people who are incarcerated** in prisons, jails, and detention centers and who are extremely vulnerable to the virus and to isolation.

Email them at *gfbooksthroughbars@riseup.net* to get their e-newsletter or for more information.

Many other community groups are moving online – we can't list them all here, and odds are if you are involved in one of them, they have reached out via email with links to what they are offering.

But with many venues canceling performances, freelance musicians, actors, designers, producers, stage technicians, visual artists, teachers, dancers, playwrights, writers, photographers and others in **the gig economy** are basically "shit out of luck" for who knows how long.

Various organizations are seeking to offer relief on local and national levels. One clearinghouse of resources may be found online at *covid19freelanceartistresource.wordpress.com*. You will find an aggregated list of free resources, opportunities, and financial relief options available to artists of all disciplines.

The Mass Cultural Council also has a link on their website to a survey about the **impact of COVID-19 on artists and performers** in this state. They have started discussions with state legislators on future mitigation efforts, and the data will be part of the conversation about impacts: *massculturalcouncil.org*.

CISA (Community Involved in

Sustaining Agriculture) has sent out an email with a link to **new markets for buying local** through home delivery and online ordering. Visit *buylocalfood.org* to find farms, restaurants, and other businesses that deliver or have other new options to improve access to fresh healthy food during this shutdown time.

Those in the recovery community may experience the hardships of isolation more acutely, and peer-to-peer support is a fundamental part of many recovery strategies.

The Western Mass Recovery Learning Community created two sections on their website (*westernmassrlc.org*) to help point out important closings and cancellations, and where to get **online and phone support for people in recovery or dealing with extreme states**.

Many group meetings may be canceled for now, and that includes Alcoholics Anonymous. Western Massachusetts AA information is online at *area31aa.org*. More and more meetings by phone are popping up each day.

The **Center for Self Reliance food pantries in Shelburne and Greenfield** are open with pre-made bags for sidewalk pick up at both pantry sites. Call to check on changes or updates, or if you are sick and need food but can't get out: (413) 773-5029.

Greenfield, Gill-Montague, and Franklin County Tech **schools are all providing free meals** at certain pick up points. Refer to information from the individual schools as to where to access these to-go meals.

All three schedules are available at *greenfield4sc.org/free-meals-for-kids-during-covid-19-school-closures/*. Anyone 18 and under can pick up food at any of these stops, whether or not they are in a given school district or previously qualified for free lunch.

There will be **no monthly mobile food bank** until further notice. Regular ongoing community meals – Second Congregational Church and Salvation Army in Greenfield, Our Lady of Peace in Turners Falls, and the Orange Armory – will be doing bag lunches at their community meal times.

If you have established any community resources in response to the COVID-19 shutdowns, and want to let our readers know about it, please send us the information!

Send your local briefs to *editor@montaguereporter.org*.



www.MontagueMA.net
local gossip, news & business listings

Great Falls Middle School Students of the Week
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Martin

Grade 7
Matthew Richards

Grade 8
Anne Kolodziej

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WHEELS from page A1

milk, fruit, desserts, breads, and canned goods – that were waiting in a cold preparation room.

Next, each picked up an insulated hot meal delivery bag loaded with hot, freshly packed, nutritious meals, along with their route and a list of names for that day’s deliveries. The meals are delivered daily by a Massachusetts-based division of TRIO Community Meals.

The kitchen crew at the Retherm Center starts to arrive around 6 a.m. One of their tasks is to get the meals ready for delivery. This means heating the food, serving it into individual meal trays, heat-sealing each tray, and packing them into the insulated bags.

The Franklin County and North Quabbin area Meals on Wheels program is administered by LifePath of Greenfield. With the help of 13 paid staff and 55 volunteer drivers and cooks, manager Charles Cornish coordinates the delivery of meals to more than 1,000 homebound clients in the 30-town area.

There are 30 routes, covering every town in Franklin County plus Athol, Petersham, Royalston, and Phillipston.

Lynne Feldman, director of community services at LifePath, said Friday that the program was starting to receive calls from residents concerned about the spread of the virus. Some are wondering if they should discontinue using the Meals on Wheels service, while others are concerned it might be canceled.

Feldman said she understands the importance of the program to its clients, and assured me her organization is putting as many resources

as possible toward maintaining safety and continuing service.

Last week drivers and recipients received memos on the COVID-19 virus and guidance for self-distancing and sanitation. Knowing that many clients are shut-ins with limited resources, LifePath has made available a one-time opportunity to order up to 14 additional meals to store for future use. There is a choice of frozen meals or “pantry” meals, such as tuna or beef stew. The idea is to allow clients to store these meals for a time when delivery might not be available.

Cornish, manager of the Retherm Center, told me Wednesday morning that orders are starting to come in for the added meals. In addition, the program is receiving more and more calls from concerned citizens as transportation options are dwindling.

Just this week, Cornish said, Meals on Wheels has added 50 more daily meal clients to their already packed routes. He said he anticipates they will receive more calls on a daily basis as area residents begin to take public health officials’ self-isolation recommendations seriously.

An important part of the Meals on Wheels program has historically been a wellness check and brief personal visit to clients, some of whom may not have other visitors. Volunteer drivers must now avoid physical contact with their clients and avoid entering their homes. In addition, drivers are expected to wash their hands thoroughly before and after picking up meals at the kitchen, sanitizing them between deliveries, and following the recommended prevention techniques being distributed by health service

TAKEOUT from page A1

hours and transitioning to takeout-only menus to, in some cases, beginning layoffs and closing their doors to wait out the crisis.

New Territory

In Greenfield, the People’s Pint made the call to close last Friday.

“This is definitely new territory for us,” said owner Alden Booth, reflecting on how rapidly things changed within the last week. “We really haven’t gone through anything quite like this.”

“We’ve decided to pay our employees for the week, calling it ‘personal time’,” continued Booth, “but obviously, with no money coming in, we won’t be able to do that for very long. We’re hoping unemployment will kick in within another week or so.”

Asked whether the Pint would consider moving to takeout like some of its counterparts, Booth expressed reservations.

“There’s so many unknowns to that,” he said. “Our feeling is, for now, not to have the staff come in and interact with each other. We want to discourage people from gathering.”

Booth said he worries for other area businesses which might not have enough of a financial cushion to withstand the pandemic. The Pint, at least, is still selling beer from its brewery at package stores.

“That’s the only source of revenue [now],” said Booth. “Our federal government is just going to bail out big companies,” he added. “They’re already talking about giving \$50 billion to the airline industry.... Let the cruise lines go. People shouldn’t be doing that stuff anyway.”

A Radical Slowdown

“The question is: Is it worth continuing to provide this service in order to keep a few people employed, or not?” asked Christopher Janke, owner of the Rendezvous bar and restaurant in Turners Falls, where 15 staff are employed.

On a normal day, Janke said, around six employees might be on the clock at once. On Tuesday, the first day the establishment transitioned to “to-go only,” only two people were working.

“There’s plenty to do in the short term, like cleaning up the basement or sanding the floors,”

said Janke. “But with a radical slowdown or closure, we can go a few weeks before things get serious.”

It doesn’t help, he added, that insurance provisions for loss of income from disasters don’t cover pandemics.

“If a hurricane were to come and knock down a tree, we would file a claim,” he explained. “But for diseases, that’s not a thing.”

The Rendezvous, which usually operates with a margin ranging from -5% to 7%, depending on the year, has been happily in the black for the past couple of years, and was planning to go solar and upgrade its kitchen equipment – until the coronavirus outbreak put those plans on hold.

Whether the “Voo” will boom as a takeout-only restaurant remains to be seen. “I relate this a little to the 2008 crash, which didn’t require social distancing,” Janke said. “You can’t fax a conversation – you can’t fax a beer.”

Janke added that he worries a federal bailout would be structured through tax credits, which the Rendezvous is not large enough to take advantage of.

“What we’re facing is a financial crisis that is going to impact people and small businesses the most,” he said. “I’m concerned that it will be similar to other crises in the past, where the largest companies gain power and market share, and the smallest companies go out of business.”

Survival, Not Profit

Across the parking lot from the Rendezvous is Great Falls Harvest. The eatery has been closed since Saturday, but owner Chris Menegoni says he doesn’t plan to keep it that way.

“We’re looking at ways to gather orders from people and do deliveries,” said Menegoni. “We’re also in the midst of developing a website that will allow for online payment.”

Since well before the pandemic, Menegoni has been working to open an additional market in the Third Street restaurant’s adjoining Avenue A storefront, which he says was originally meant to be “something between a deli, a café, and a co-op.”

Menegoni still plans to open that market within two weeks, but said it might have to look different than what he initially imagined. In the

LifePath Seeks Volunteers

In a press release this week, the agency calls on the community for the following:

- Apply to be a backup volunteer to cover routes and shifts of volunteers affected by the virus (self or family). These roles include: Meals on Wheels drivers; grocery delivery; transportation to a medical appointment; etc.
- Consider becoming a Personal Care Attendant. LifePath expects to see a decline in frontline in-home care providers resulting from the effects of the virus on our community.
- Take on the responsibility of checking on the wellbeing of an older adult in your neighborhood, especially if you believe they receive support in their homes.
- Get involved with your local

Village program to provide assistance to a neighbor who has a specific household need.

- Step up to create and activate community-based systems, made of informal efforts meant to sustain local communities through this difficult time.
- Revenue streams are at risk of being disrupted, and in order to keep our systems going, and provide for increased service needs, please support LifePath with a donation so that we may address existing as well as new and different requests from those we serve.

To sign up for or inquire about any of the opportunities, please contact the Information and Care-giver Resource Center at (413)773-5555 x 1230, or send an email to info@lifepathma.org.

organizations: not touching their faces, not coughing into their hands, and so on.

The staff at the Retherm Center continue to use strict hygiene practices for the packaging of foods. All drivers and employees have been directed to do a personal wellness check each morning – and not report to work if they have any signs of illness.

In addition to the order form for additional meals, meal program recipients are receiving a memo from LifePath nutrition program director Jane Severance including similar advice about avoiding physical contact with drivers, added sanitation measures, and planning for extend-

ed periods of isolation.

Clients are advised to have on hand a 14-day supply of over-the-counter and prescription medication, as well as non-perishable foods. Included was a list of suggested foods, with a focus on nutritional content and an avoidance of high salt and high sugar content.

On Monday, LifePath reached out to the public for help in a number of programs, including covering for “staff and volunteers on whom LifePath relies, needing to step away from their duties” during the pandemic. We are reprinting their appeal in a sidebar on this page.



meantime, he says, Harvest is moving toward making larger batches of food that keeps longer, such as stews.

The restaurant is taking meal orders by phone during the day, with pickup scheduled between 5 and 7 p.m. As Menegoni stocks the market in the coming weeks, he plans to include retail food in the pickup menu.

“We have food, and we want to make sure we can get it to the people who need it,” he said. “At this point it’s about survival, not profit.”

Solidarity in a Scary Time

Ashley Arthur, the Five Eyed Fox owner, said she is worried about kids who rely on school lunches being stuck at home.

“I was a kid who depended on food at school every day,” Arthur reflected. With all public and private schools across Massachusetts closed until April 7, families that utilize free or discounted school lunches are put in a difficult position.

In an Instagram post on Monday, the Five Eyed Fox announced that it would provide individually-portioned bagged lunches outside their establishment every weekday at noon for families in need, and those without a vehicle could request their lunches be delivered.

“At this point, we’ve been working off of the food we had in-house, and we’ll be out of food tomorrow,” Arthur reported Wednesday afternoon. “Today we put out 40 meals on the patio, and they were all gone within twenty minutes.”

Front-of-house manager Jeffrey Kuhn said the mandated restrictions will mean reduced hours for staff. Beginning next Wednesday, the Fox will reopen on a limited schedule for takeout by the general public.

“We decided the best thing for us is to reopen in some capacity. We need cash flow,” said Kuhn, adding that reopening will allow the restaurant to offer some hours to back-of-house and front-of-house employees. “Ashley is also providing the option for people to get laid off so they can get unemployment benefits,” he added.

“It’s a really scary time,” Arthur said. “The unfortunate fact of the matter is most of us are not going to survive unless the government gives out a substantial amount of money to all of us.”



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MUTUAL AID from page A1
other places that were doing it, and just hopped on.”

Modeled after similar efforts in Somerville and Manchester, Young started the Western Mass Community Mutual Aid (WMACMA) network with their friend, Liam Gude. Young lives in a collective household in Northampton and works odd jobs, and Gude is a recent graduate of the Labor Center at UMass-Amherst, currently unemployed while the pandemic has put his job prospects on pause.

The pair first started the network as a workspace on the communications app Slack, then posted a link to a Facebook group for the local queer community.

Different teams, each with their own Slack channel, quickly formed to meet specific needs, including food distribution, financial aid, childcare, ride sharing, education, recreation, and emotional support. The network is using a range of online collaboration tools, such as spreadsheets with columns for unmet needs and offers of help.

As of Wednesday, 715 people had signed up online as volunteers for the WMACMA, according to Gude, and the group has grown by about 150 people per day.

“People flooded it, it spread like wildfire,” Young said. “Younger folks, and queer folks, are definitely at the center of getting this all started.”

So many people signed up this week that they nearly overwhelmed Slack’s capacity to manage all the communications. That’s when Barry Scott, a volunteer from Turners Falls, decided to reach out to the company, which agreed to provide them with a free 90-day trial of Slack Plus, valued at \$30,000, he said.

“We need to identify the resources that already exist, while still trying to maintain social distancing,” said Scott, who added that he is immunocompromised. “I don’t think our existing structures anticipated this being a barrier.”

While the group has been flooded with volunteers, it is now working to find and communicate with those in need.

“It’s definitely bigger than us, and requires an immense amount of participation from everybody,” Gude said. “There is a technological divide that can really hinder some people from putting their needs, for example, on a Google spreadsheet.”

One pressing issue being discussed is the houseless population’s limited access to water and hand soap, with restaurants and other establishments closed indefinitely. In a childcare workgroup, volunteers brainstorm how to sanitize donations of supplies.

Central to the WMACMA network’s vision is the concept of a “neighborhood pod.” Pods are formed by point people who volunteer to connect with their immediate neighbors, establish a means of communication, and find out their specific needs. A pod might consist of five to 30 households, Story said, adding that the network’s most active participation so far is in Montague, Greenfield, Northampton, and Easthampton.

“We do want to avoid as best we can... reinventing the wheel,” Scott said. “Any existing organization that wants to coordinate – we are totally open to working with as many people as we can help, in as efficient a fashion as possible.”

Young and Gude emphasize that

anyone, regardless of experience, can help in any capacity, not just experienced organizers. “There’s no prerequisites,” Story said. “If you think you can do it, you can do it.”

Anyone in the Montague area with a need or who wants to volunteer can call (508) 304-0341 or email montaguemutualaid@gmail.com.

“I could see these kinds of things lasting after the virus because of the scars it left on the economy,” Gude said. “I would like to see a mutual aid network established in the Valley that can go beyond the crisis.”

Low-Income Freelancer Fund

Another local effort underway is focused specifically on financial relief for artists, freelancers, and gig economy workers who will lose income as a result of canceled shows and commissions.

The GoFundMe campaign, which can be found by an online search for “Western Mass Low Income Freelancer Relief,” was organized by Emma Ayres, program coordinator at the Shea Theater Arts Center in Turners Falls.

Cait Simpson and Mara Penatzer of the Dwellings, a nonprofit focused on equitable female representation in the arts, are assisting Ayres in the campaign. Out-of-work artists can apply for relief funds via an application linked on the GoFundMe page, where donations are being collected.

“The intention of this fundraiser is to provide emergency and preventative resources for those at financial risk,” Ayres wrote in a Facebook post. “Our government is doing little to protect our well-being and we must address this on a local level.”

Neighbor to Neighbor at the Co-op

About 60 members of the Franklin Community Co-op have begun forming a different volunteer network, the Neighbor to Neighbor Project, to take care of those in need of help during the pandemic.

“We have a really robust member program, so it wasn’t surprising to me that I was receiving a lot of people reaching out to me and asking how they can help,” said Sarah Kanabay, communications manager for the coop. “We’re very aware of, and connected to, vulnerable populations in Franklin County.”

The Neighbor to Neighbor Project will deliver food to people who are unable to leave their homes, provide rides to medical appointments, walk dogs, pick up children’s school lunches, and other tasks as they come up.

On Tuesday, the New England Grassroots Environmental Fund announced their creation of an emergency fund to help communities respond to the coronavirus outbreak. Within 24 hours of the Co-op sending their grant application, with the help of Greening Greenfield, they received \$1,000 from the fund.

“Although this project is aimed at people with health concerns that prevent them from going out, we know that parents with children at home from school will find it difficult to get to a grocery store or to access some other service,” Susan Worgaftik of Greening Greenfield wrote in a press release. “We wanted to make this service available to everyone.”

For more information about the Neighbor to Neighbor Project, email Kanabay at sarah.kanaby@franklincommunity.coop or call (413) 325-4625.



Free Meals for Kids: Dropoff Schedule



MIKE JACKSON PHOTO

Gill-Montague food service staff Ann Marie Annear, Priscilla Robison, and Tamara Covalenco drop off free lunches at the Brick House in Turners Falls on Monday.

The **Gill-Montague Regional School District** is distributing meals at 12 locations in Montague, Turners Falls, Erving, and Gill from Monday through Friday on this schedule:

Turners Falls High School, *out front*: 11:20 to 11:50 a.m.
Hillcrest Elementary, *drop-off lot*: 11:20 to 11:50 a.m.
MCSM, downtown Turners Falls: 11:20 to 11:35 a.m.
Montague Center town common: 11:30 to 11:45 a.m.
Erving Park, *near the fire station*: 11:45 a.m. to 12 p.m.
Unity Park parking lot: 11:55 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Millers Falls, *Franklin St. near Carroll's*: 12 to 12:20 p.m.
Erving Center, Church Street Park, *near the fire station*: 12:15 to 12:30 p.m.
Sheffield Elementary, *main lot*: 12:30 to 1 p.m.
Rutter’s Park, Lake Pleasant: 12:45 to 1 p.m.
Four Winds School, Riverside, Gill: 12:45 to 1:05 p.m.
The Brick House, Turners Falls: 1:10 to 1:30 p.m.

The **Greenfield Public Schools** are distributing meals in Greenfield at Newton Elementary School, Greenfield Middle School, Greenfield High School, Oak Courts, Leyden Woods, the Greenfield YMCA, and the Days Inn from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., Mondays through Fridays.

Free grab-and-go meals are available in many Franklin County locations for children 18 and under, thanks to the quick thinking and hard work of several public school districts in our coalitions’ communities, in collaboration with Kuzmeskus Bus Company. The food is prepared in sanitary conditions, and the meals are distributed in ways that limit contact. **Any person 18 and under will be given one free bagged meal**, while supplies last. There are no residency or income requirements, and you do not have to be enrolled at one of the sponsoring schools.

Franklin County Technical School, which serves 19 towns, is delivering meals by bus to stops throughout Franklin County, Monday to Friday. They note that “all scheduled times are approximate, so please plan to be there 15 minutes early and/or stay 15 later in the event the bus is running late.”

Montague, including Turners Falls:

Unity Park Skate Park: 10:45 a.m.
Millers Falls Library: 10:45 a.m.
Sheffield Elementary: 10:55 a.m.
Food City parking lot: 11:05 a.m.
Farren Care Center, Montague City: 11:15 a.m.
Montague Center Library: 12:25 p.m.

Greenfield:

McDonald’s: 11:45 a.m. Foster’s Supermarket: 12:05 p.m.
YMCA: 11:55 a.m. Leyden Woods: 12:15 p.m.

Elsewhere in Franklin County:

Erving Town Hall: 10:50 a.m.
Northfield Post Office: 11:05 a.m.
Executive Inn, **Orange**: 11:05 a.m.
Buckland-Shelburne Elementary: 11:05 a.m.
Orange Post Office: 11:20 a.m.
Dollar General, **Bernardston**: 11:20 a.m.
Colrain Fire Department: 11:25 a.m.
Four Leaf Clover, **Bernardston**: 11:30 a.m.
Yankee Candle parking lot, **Deerfield**: 11:30 a.m.
Wendell Free Library: 11:35 a.m.
Heath Public Library: 11:35 a.m.
Whately Diner *parking lot*: 11:40 a.m.
Hawlemont Elementary: 11:50 a.m.
Whately Elementary: 11:55 a.m.
Sunderland Corner Store: 12:10 p.m.

NOTES FROM THE LEVERETT SELECTBOARD

Teleconnection Troubles Plague Selectboard’s First Remote Meeting

By JERRI HIGGINS

The Leverett town hall is now closed to the public, so residents should call or email in order to make any arrangements they may need. All meetings will be held remotely until further notice.

Though the Leverett selectboard held a personnel committee meeting earlier in the day without a hitch, connecting to the board’s free-service public participation conference call Tuesday night through a Washington State number was no easy feat.

This reporter encountered “high traffic volume” and “service unavailable” messages and multiple disconnections from the conferencing service, finally connecting to the meeting only to have difficulty with line static, and was dumped from the call within a half-hour.

After being placed back into the conference call and realizing only town clerk Lisa Stratford was on the line, we hung up and tried again. The conference-call service “muzak” was the only consolation during the ten-minute wait for another connection that never arrived.

According to town administrator Marjorie McGinnis, a town-wide COVID-19 emergency declaration was signed on Friday, March 13, followed by discussion of what should happen regarding town meeting, and the budget hearing originally scheduled for Tuesday. Both are unanswered for now, though a March 30 deadline for town meeting warrant requests remains in effect.

A resident suggestion made to selectboard member Tom Hankinson for the board of health to use

ERSI, a geographic information system (GIS) mapping software company to track local cases of COVID-19, will not be considered on the grounds that it could be a HIPAA violation.

Policy Revisions

Asked for a recap of what the selectboard discussed while the press was unable to access the meeting, board member Julie Shively said: “We passed a transfer-station shed policy, appointed a full-time police officer, Meghan Gallo, and appointed a firefighter, Timothy E. Cowles.”

The board revised the town’s physical examination policy for employees. Per the old policy, part-time police officers and firefighters were required to pass a physical exam as a condition of employment, costing the town \$550 per exam.

“This was based on [town] policy, not by legal requirement,” Shively explained. “Part-time police and fire department employees will now need to have a document signed by their doctor stating that they’re physically able to do their job.”

McGinnis noted that full-time officers and firefighters will still need to pass a physical exam upon hiring, but many part-time police and fire employees work for other departments as well. The change brings the fire and police departments under the regular town employee policy.

The board discussed concerns about fire and police employees contracting COVID-19 on the job and requiring quarantine, and decided the town will continue to follow existing sick and medical leave policy, and wait for state and federal

programs to address the issue.

Leverett employees can donate unused sick hours to a “sick bank,” and the personnel board can assign the banked hours to employees who have a longer-term illness.

The board also discussed cross-contamination of materials coming from outside libraries, and decided to consult library director Natane Halasz on Leverett’s plan to address this, and to use the town-wide notification system to announce the decision.

Other Business

The Leverett highway department is changing its schedule from four 10-hour days to operating from 6 a.m. to 2 p.m., five days a week.

A small personnel policy change will be drafted for the next selectboard meeting to reflect the current state hands-free cell phone law for drivers.

The town locked in its heating oil price with Sprague Energy at \$1.695 per gallon, 76 cents less than the 2019 price.

The regular contract with the Atlas Company Group, the firm monitoring the closed Leverett landfill, was renewed.

The board discussed a letter from the state Department of Environmental Protection requiring testing of the testing wells and landfill for perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). Originally developed to extinguish petrochemical fires, PFAS have appeared in products ranging from food packaging to stain-resistant furniture, and can carry a toxic load that accumulates in our bodies over time, according to the Environmental Protection Agency website.

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JAIL from page A1

feverish, they’re immediately sent home. In addition, guards have been instructed and advised to reduce their exposure at home.

When asked if any inmates had been tested for the virus, Donelan laughed in frustration. “No one has been tested,” he said. “There are no tests! We have been taking everyone’s temperature for five days.”

Now that staff have established a measure of confidence that the virus isn’t present, Donelan said he plans to loosen the new restrictions a bit to allow for some more movement inside the jail.

Donelan said he understood families of incarcerated people are worried about the virus, and acknowledged the inmates are experiencing extra stress from the situation. “The men and women we are charged with protecting are safe,” he said.

Since the loss of visits, each inmate can now make two free 15-minute calls per week. These calls normally cost 21 cents per minute.

“We started increasing orders for food three weeks ago, in case there are interruptions in the supply chain,” Donelan said, adding that the jail has ordered “books, workbooks, and puzzles” to provide more activities for inmates during this period of reduced programming, and is keeping

them informed of the crisis with a newsletter.

The sheriff said he feels the department’s focus on the opioid crisis in recent years – collaborating with outside community partners and developing new programming – has helped prepare the House of Correction staff to assess the threat of the virus, and adopt new procedures quickly. He added that he wished other government sectors were as “flexible.”

“Frankly, we’ve been frustrated,” Donelan said. “Government has a hard time.”

Teleconferencing in Courts

The Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court suspended operations late last week in an attempt to put a stop to crowded court rooms where the virus could easily spread. Courts were closed Monday and Tuesday while officials worked to draft new guidelines for video and telephone hearings.

On Tuesday morning, Donelan said there were people still being held at the Greenfield jail awaiting arraignment.

Later that day, the Supreme Judicial Court released new standing orders detailing procedures for necessary hearings. Cases scheduled through May 1, the court ruled, will be continued “to no earlier than May 4, 2020 and no

**No Evictions...
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On Friday, March 13 all non-emergency proceedings in Massachusetts Housing Court, including those required for evictions, were suspended until April 21.

All the latest emergency procedures adopted by the courts, including for probation and Housing Court, are available for the public to read at: www.mass.gov/guides/court-system-response-to-covid-19.

less than 60 days from the date of the scheduled event or to a date by agreement of the parties and the respective clerk’s office.”

Abuse prevention orders that might have been scheduled to expire “on or after March 18, 2020, shall remain in effect until the matter is rescheduled and heard by the court.”

The standing orders include permission to go to the courthouse to post bail.

Attempts to follow up with Donelan and the county clerk magistrate on Wednesday as to whether arrestees were still being detained awaiting bail hearings at the Greenfield jail were not successful as of press time.



City’s COVID-19 Response Pulls From Every Corner

By SAMANTHA WOOD

GREENFIELD – The coronavirus has already prompted big changes to daily life. Local officials are pulling together to assess and meet the needs of a diverse community in a situation that has been shifting rapidly for days.

Many area students depend on schools for regular meals, and with schools closed, sites have been set up to distribute to-go boxes.

The list of these sites is available on the website shared by the Gill-Montague Community School Partnership and the Greenfield Safe Schools Safe Streets Coalition at www.greenfield4sc.org/free-meals-for-kids-during-covid-19-school-closures. (See page A5 for a listing.)

People in need of shelter are particularly vulnerable during a pandemic. Sanitation and a safe place to rest are immediate concerns for avoiding transmission and staying healthy.

Toward that end, Greenfield’s director of community and economic development, MJ Adams, has been working to find a space that can be used for quarantine and shelter in the event anyone currently living in a local ServiceNet shelter is diagnosed with coronavirus. ServiceNet operates shelters on Wells Street and Federal Street.

This week, Adams learned that the National Guard and the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency had approved the use of the Armory building on Hope Street for this purpose. She made clear that this would not be a new shelter for general use, but would be available only to provide a safe quarantine space.

Isolation Challenges Recovery

Debra McLaughlin, the coordinator of the Opioid Task Force for Franklin County and the North Quabbin Region, hosted a conference call Tuesday that brought together about 50 care providers and community leaders to discuss the coronavirus crisis.

The need for social distancing to slow the virus’s spread, and the state ban on gatherings of more than 25 people, pose a challenge to the peer support groups and counseling at the core of the recovery practice.

“Part of the struggle here is that to get better in recovery you need to connect. Everybody knows that connection is the opposite of addiction, and it is hard to connect right now,” said Dr. Ruth Potee, the Opioid Task Force’s medical director.

Many area group sessions have been canceled, and counselors are reaching out one-on-one to clients.

The Task Force has launched a community grant program to help address some of these immediate needs. For instance, the grants can be used to provide phones to help people stay connected.

Care providers are also keeping a close eye on the supply chain of medications used in treatment.

“At all of our Tapestry Harm Reduction locations, the only services we are going to provide right now are distribution of Narcan, and distribution and exchange of safer injection supplies, including needles,” said Liz Whynott, director of Tapestry’s harm reduction programs. “It is a priority for us to make sure that Narcan gets into the people’s hands who need it.”

Narcan is the brand name for naloxone, which can temporarily reverse opioid overdoses.

“At our Greenfield site we are currently operating normal hours, and we’ve luckily been able to get four transit vans to start doing outreach,” Whynott said. “I think we need to be outside as much as possible, trying to reach people where they’re at.”

Wait times in lines for methadone treatment raise concerns about the need for physical distance between people. In some cases, doctors are providing larger prescriptions so people are not at risk of running short of medications if they cannot get out of the house.

In treatment centers, too, there are concerns about transmission.

“These are actually nursing homes for people in recovery,” Potee said, pointing to the Kirkland, Washington nursing home that has seen a deadly outbreak, and the need for vigilance and screening for virus symptoms.

The Task Force is maintaining an online resource devoted to coronavirus-related issues at www.opioid-taskforce.org/covid-19-resources.

Internet Access is Key

In an interview Tuesday, John Lunt, the general manager of Greenfield’s municipal internet provider GCET, said he is “expecting overall internet traffic to rise somewhat significantly” as more people work from home or learn online.

Lunt said he has already reached out to the city’s data provider for assurance that its capacity can accommodate the increase.

“We keep about 5 [gigabytes per second] of bandwidth, and we can dynamically access quite a bit more than that when necessary, in real time,” Lunt said. GCET maintains “two parallel, redundant systems” to provide backup.

New installations, which require work inside customers’ homes, have been suspended until April 3 to avoid exposure to crews and residents alike. When work in the home is required, crews will observe social distancing and wear protective gear to reduce risk of spreading the virus.

On Wednesday, Lunt sent an email to GCET customers outlining specific measures to address the coronavirus crisis, including an immediate temporary halt on disconnection for nonpayment.

“Should it be necessary, our agents will work with you on a payment plan that allows you to keep your service during this period and still responsibly address your bill over time,” the email read. “This policy will take effect immediately and we will evaluate the policy again in Mid-April.”

Lunt said the GCET buildout has reached about 82% of Greenfield residents. He expects this work to continue, with Leyden Road and Deerfield Street to see service sometime this summer. “We don’t control all of the aspects of the buildout,” Lunt said. “We often have to wait for permits. I suspect, during this time, that will be more problematic.”

Lunt said GCET’s proposed FY’21 budget will be a “break-even” budget, with the utility achieving the customer numbers to become financially self-sufficient.

City Hall Adapts

Greenfield mayor Roxann We-

degartner and her chief of staff Danielle Letourneau have been working to help transition city government to provide services online and by telephone when needed. This includes ensuring payment systems are running smoothly.

Some city employees will work from home. Board, commissions, and the city council will meet remotely now that the state Open Meeting Law has been relaxed by emergency order to accommodate teleconferencing.

Letourneau explained that city employees will work regular hours even as the city buildings will be closed to the public. They will be available by phone and email to answer questions and help residents navigate online payments, licensing, and accessing documents.

Couples in need of a marriage license may make appointments to enter city hall in person. Building inspections will continue as normal, Letourneau said.

In an interview this week, Wedegartner had nothing but praise for city departments.

Greenfield school superintendent Jordana Harper, she said, “has been a part of our COVID-19 response team from the get-go. I think she and her staff have done an amazing job. I couldn’t say enough about how strong she’s been during this time.”

“People of Greenfield are so lucky they have the people that are running the different departments that get work done,” the mayor said. “They are phenomenal, and so quite willing to pitch in and help and make sure that we run as smoothly as we possibly can.”

“And that goes for my own staff here, up and down the ladder – from, obviously, the two chiefs, to our finance director, to the health director. They are all top notch, and they have really risen to the occasion.”

Wedegartner added that things have been “pretty hectic, hour to hour. Our focus right now is on how to keep our city running the best we can under the circumstances.”

“One of the things that’s been keeping me up at night,” the mayor said, “is the enormous economic impact that this is going to have on the city of Greenfield and, really, our region.”

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MONTAGUE from page A1

the water pollution control facility on Greenfield Road, and the Turners Falls Municipal Airport building.

The town hall, at 1 Avenue A, houses the offices of the treasurer and tax collector, town clerk, retirement board, town administrator, town planner, building inspector, health department, assessors, and town accountant.

The selectboard’s vote did not cover the buildings housing the Turners Falls fire and water departments, the Montague Center fire and water departments, or the Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority, all of which have also been closed to the public.

Chairs in the audience at the Sunday afternoon meeting, which was open to the public, were set up at least five feet apart, facing a variety of angles. Most attendees were heads of town departments. The selectboard members, town administrator Steve Ellis, and board of health member Al Cummings sat at the front table, with more than the usual degree of separation. (Mike Nelson and Chris Boutwell serve on both boards.) Bogusz sat nearly ten feet from the table.

As the meeting began, selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz announced that he and Nelson had both attended an unposted emergency meeting the previous day with Turners Falls fire chief John Zellman and public health director Daniel Wasiuk, a potential violation of the state open meeting law. “This was not done with anything but the public’s best interest,” said Kukle-

wicz, who said the minutes of that meeting would be posted publicly.

Ellis said that the town’s response to the emergency had “changed markedly over the past week.” He said he had participated in a conference call held by the state Department of Public Health in which “we really identified the shift from isolating people who are carrying the disease from other places to an understanding that we now have community transmission,” a term meaning the transmission of the disease within local communities.

The new policy emphasis, Ellis said, is about “taking steps to flatten the curve,” a collective attempt to reduce a large projected spike in the number of people who will require emergency services, thus overwhelming the local medical system.

“I’m not an expert on what’s going on in Italy,” he said, “but it’s used as an example of a place where the peak has gotten very, very steep, and it’s a real crisis situation.” The town website highlights a graphic representation of the “flattening the curve” concept.

Wasiuk said the town needed to enact emergency measures to “do what we can” to encourage “social distance.” He said the building closures would help implement the recommendations of the federal Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the state Department of Public Health.

The two boards unanimously voted to approve the declaration of an emergency, then approved “emergency measures” closing town buildings and setting protocol for holding public meetings. All “unnecessary” board and committee meetings

should be postponed, they ruled.

However, one measure provided for committees to meet by phone, citing “the Governor’s order relative to relaxation of certain Open Meeting Law requirements to protect individual or public health, including remote meeting options.”

“All meetings must be posted, provide some option for public input, and be recorded to ensure accountability and transparency,” it read.

Kuklewicz suggested that the town should encourage separation between staff members, for example by asking public works employees to take “separate trucks to job sites.”

Wasiuk asked about the town’s policy on town employees who become symptomatic, potentially with the virus. Ellis, noting that the selectboard also serves as the personnel board, said he would take the same approach “as before, but much more being on top of it,” and would “ask that person to go home.”

Ellis also said he would work with employees and their unions to develop policies for the “different personnel instances that could come up” during the pandemic.

According to Kuklewicz, all town staff are expected to report to work “as normal,” but town buildings will be closed to the public. He said an effort would be made to continue to provide certain “essential” town services, such as accepting building permit applications in a “mail drop slot.” He said Ellis would be meeting with staff “to work on the particulars of how people could interact with various activities that need to happen.”

Turners Falls fire chief Zellman

proposed a “friendly amendment” to the policies, noting that his department shares a lobby with the town police department. “I don’t think that we can impose a measure that affects your organization,” Ellis agreed.

Police chief Chris Williams said the police department would “keep the doors open” to the front foyer of the facility, allowing residents to communicate with staff who sit behind a window.

Kuklewicz encouraged Williams to publicize how residents could contact him. “It’s an evolving situation,” he said. “We, A, didn’t have time, and B, didn’t feel it was our place to tell department heads how exactly to interact with things.”

Sunday’s emergency meeting ended after nearly 40 minutes, but the discussion continued at the regular selectboard meeting the next night, with online participation from residents and the press. Both meetings were filmed by Montague Community Television and posted on the station’s Vimeo site.

“Nobody wanted town buildings closed to public access,” Ellis said at the outset of Monday’s discussion of the emergency. “It is required. We’re hoping that the state does not impose more draconian restrictions on us.”

Ellis said he had met with department heads. “For some parts of town governments, there’s not a huge ‘to do’ list in terms of operational planning,” he said. “For others, there’s a tremendous one.” He said that departments were identifying “operational issues that might confront them,” giving the examples of delaying “tax time,” the status of spring elections, and the annual town meeting.

The dates of some of these events are regulated by state law, Ellis said, adding that the Governor and legislature are looking at “a litany of changes in emergency measures that would provide us with flexibility.”

The board did not discuss specific measures to provide services, but Kuklewicz said applications could be provided to the public “in the foyer of the front hall,” and that most documents are available on the town website. He said the building and health departments would continue needed inspections, though some health inspections might be “pushed” lower on the priority list “while the department deals with... the COVID issues.”

“We call it triage,” said Boutwell, who sits on both the selectboard and board of health.



MORE NOTES FROM THE MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

New Waste Boss’s Public Health Degree: “Not a Bad Thing at This Time”

By JEFF SINGLETON

In a meeting closed to the public, but allowing some public participation by computer or phone, the Montague selectboard on March 16 took care of important business and some “housekeeping.” The portion of the meeting devoted to the coronavirus emergency is covered on page A1. But this is a moment when readers may find it difficult to resist the temptation to declare, “What a difference a week makes!”

Seven days earlier, the pandemic emergency was not even on the selectboard’s agenda – though questions about the town response were raised at the end of the meeting by the press – and there was no information about the virus on the town website. This week, the board was meeting without the public present, town buildings had been ordered closed, and virtually all other public meetings had been canceled. The town website now featured a graphic display of the need to “flatten the curve” to combat the emerging pandemic, and contained numerous links to public health websites on how to accomplish that goal.

Monday’s meeting began with the official appointment of Chelsey Little as the new director of the town’s water pollution control facility (WPCF), and the board signed a contract with Little. As noted last week, Little has been the director of the Northfield wastewater plant, and holds degrees in both biology and public health. Her tenure will begin on March 30 at a sal-

ary of \$80,588.

“Another public health degree in our fold is not a bad thing at this time,” said town administrator Steve Ellis.

The board then returned current acting WPCF director Kevin Boissonault to his former position as chief operator at the plant, voting to send a “letter of appreciation” to Boissonault for his service. Ellis said that former superintendent Bob Trombley would continue to assist the facility on a consulting basis during the transition to a new director. “We will step down his time fairly quickly,” said Ellis.

Continuing in its role as the town’s personnel board, the selectboard then appointed Chandra Maroon to the position of truck driver/laborer at the department of public works (DPW). “We’ve been down a person since a retirement in December,” said Ellis.

The board approved a list of surplus DPW equipment for potential auction, including a number of older vehicles, a sweeper, and a sewer router.

A number of MassDOT grants to the Turners Falls Airport were executed. These included \$62,500 for parking lot improvements (noted as “Phase 1 of 3”); \$9,910.23 for the purchase and installation of an LED solar wind cone; and \$18,638.92 for LED runway lights.

The board voted to waive Montague’s “right of first refusal” on a property on the corner of Sunderland and Gunn roads under state law Chapter 61, which gives the own-

er a tax reduction in exchange for keeping land out of development. The parcel’s owner wishes to convert the property to residential use. Ellis said both the planning board and conservation commission had concluded that there was “no potential for farming on this land.”

Selectboard member Michael Nelson recused himself from the discussion and vote because he lives next to the property.

The board voted to appoint Richard Ruth and Moon Morgan to the town’s Economic Development and Industrial Commission (EDIC). Ellis said the EDIC’s “purview” included the Airport Industrial Park, the land at the end of Sandy Lane, the old “Cumby’s building” near the Discovery Center, and possibly the development of a strategic plan for the “Canal District” and 500 Avenue A, the location of the current DPW garage.

The board approved a change order request of \$7,800 from Larchelle Construction Co. to replace and repaint trim on the Unity Park field house, and another \$1,100 was disbursed to the Berkshire Design Group to oversee bidding on the Spinner Park restoration project.

On the other end of the cost spectrum, the board executed a \$326,833 contract with H.M. Nunes and Sons for a variety of road and sidewalk projects to be started this spring under the Complete Streets program. The projects are primarily funded by a state grant.

The next selectboard meeting is scheduled for March 23.

LOOKING BACK: 10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Here’s the way it was March 18, 2010: News from the Montague Reporter’s archive.

General Pierce Bridge Construction Begins

SPS New England employees Jeremy Thurlow and Ryan Wilkins began putting up traffic signs in preparation for repairs to the General Pierce Bridge over the Connecticut River, joining Montague City with east Greenfield, on Tuesday.

The same company, SPS New England of Salisbury, MA, also has the contract to reconstruct the Gill-Montague bridge, a \$40.7 million project that will get underway as soon as repairs to the General Pierce Bridge are completed this spring.

Superintendent Henry Mulvey said the General Pierce Bridge repair job entails the replacement of an expansion joint that rests on the center pier. The bridge will be restricted to a single lane as the company replaces half of the expansion joint and the steel stringers tying the joint to bridge framework.

Traffic lights will allow alternate direction of travel, as on the Millers Falls Bridge while that was under construction. Mulvey expects to get the usual complaints about travel reduced to a single lane.

Once work begins on the Turners Falls-Gill Bridge, traffic will flow for at least three years one way from Route 2 into Turners Falls, and one way over the White Bridge out of Turners Falls to the French King Highway and back to Route 2.

Erving Senior Center Heads For Third Town Meeting Vote

Erving town administrative assistant Tom Sharp told members of the senior center building committee on Thursday, March 11, “No borrowing will be involved,” when

the proposal to build a new \$2.4 million senior center on Route 10, on town-owned land north of the elementary school, comes back before the voters at annual town meeting on May 5.

That means only a simple majority of town meeting voters would be required to approve spending for the new 7,000-square-foot center.

Last year, at consecutive town meetings in May and June, the proposal to build a new senior center fell just four votes shy of passing, both times. But then, a two-thirds majority would have been needed to approve borrowing one million dollars from the town’s stabilization fund to help pay for the project.

Holy Smokes on the Avenue

Lou and Leslie Ekus, proprietors of the late lamented Hatfield eatery Holy Smokes, are re-opening Holy Smokes this spring as a deli at 52 Avenue A in Turners Falls.

Hard at work on the first floor of the Crocker Building, on the Second Street corner, where the Hallmark Museum expansion and before that the US Fish and Wildlife office were formerly located, the Ekuses took a few minutes to talk about their plans for the new space this week.

First of all, there will be no seating, Lou explained. They are setting up a deli, not a restaurant.

The cooking will be done in the same mobile kitchen the Ekuses have been using ever since their restaurant burned in an unexplained arson fire in June of 2007.

A few elements of that popular eatery, which was located in a former Lutheran church on Routes 5 & 10, were salvaged and will assume pride of place in the new location – including the old, slightly charred pulpit, which will once again hold the cash register – and a Styrofoam flying pig named Mary, Holy Smokes’ iconic mascot, which miraculously survived the blaze.

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NEIGHBORS from page A1
sanitizer, and wear the protective gloves provided. The tables were placed nine feet apart, with one shopper at a time allowed at each table.

The board of health posted guidelines recommending that anyone coughing or feeling ill should stay home. In addition to their regular food deliveries to the homebound, volunteers also delivered food boxes to a few of their neighbors who are in voluntary quarantine. Further guidelines included washing produce and hands as soon as shoppers got their food home.

According to Wendell selectboard chair Dan Keller, on Saturday, March 14 the selectboard voted unanimously to declare a state of emergency in Wendell in response to the novel coronavirus pandemic. To assure that no one in the community would go hungry, the selectboard also conferred with

the board of health, the Wendell fire department, and the Good Neighbors board about how to safely operate the weekly food distribution.

Keller, board of health chair Barbara Craddock, and Wendell's emergency response coordinator Lonnie Ricketts served as safety monitors at Sunday's distribution.

As the official response to the pandemic evolves, whether the distribution will be held each week must be determined on a weekly basis, says Good Neighbors director Nancy Graton.

Information about each week's program will be available at (978) 544-3775 by Friday.

Good Neighbors, a nonprofit, receives food from Trader Joe's, Whole Foods, Hannaford, Walmart, and the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts for distribution to over 150 households in Wendell and New Salem.



Selectboard members Greg Snedeker, John Ward, and Randy Crochier and administrator Ray Purington practice social distancing.

The Week In Sports?

By **MATT ROBINSON**

TURNERS FALLS—This week in sports, the world was canceled. The NBA suspended the rest of its 2019-2020 season, the Kentucky Derby was rescheduled to September, and the NCAA cancelled March Madness and postponed or cancelled every other sport.

In golf, the Masters has been postponed; baseball's spring training was suspended and Opening Day postponed; the Boston Marathon has been pushed back to September; the National Hockey League paused their season; Major League Soccer has suspended match play; and, although athletes continue to train, the fate of the 2020 Olympic games in Tokyo hangs precariously in doubt.

In local high school sports, well, everything has been canceled.

Also this week, Tom Brady parted ways with the Pats, and local girl Gert Woodard passed away at the age of 101.

I've known Gert Woodard since before I can remember. She was there when they took me home from the hospital. She was one of the church ladies who comforted my family after my father died, and she stayed a loyal parishioner of the First Congregational Church of Turners Falls (a.k.a. the Congregation of Grace) until her passing.

Gert lived in Turners Falls for 100 years — I believe she was born in a house — before moving to Greenfield for the last few months. When she was in her mid-90s, she lost her husband Charlie, a couple months short of their 70th anniversary. She did an Irish jig in front of the congregation when she was 98.

I last saw Gert a couple of months ago at her nursing facility. The students from Bement were performing a sing-a-long. She made me sit with her and sing all her old favorites. Goodbye, Gert. See you in the Afterlife.

GILL from page A1

"I would highly suggest that this building is closed," said board member Randy Crochier, who also serves on the board of health and works as a regional health agent for the Franklin Regional Council of Governments. "Everything but town employees."

Crochier noted that governor Charlie Baker had relaxed the state Open Meeting Law to allow committees to convene telephonically. "We're in a very different time," he said, "and it's important that we treat it different." Details such as how the town will hash out its FY'21 budget or hold its annual election and town meeting have yet to be worked out.

Beaubien said the police department was conducting welfare checks by phone and text, joking that when sergeant Jason Bassett had told him he was checking on the elderly, "I said thanks." He mentioned that masks the fire department ordered two weeks earlier had not arrived.

"We don't know what the arc of this thing is," board member Greg Snedeker said.

Talk turned to Northfield Mount Hermon School. There was a request on the agenda from the school for permission to block access to its campus via Mount Hermon Road, restricting entry to a checkpoint at its Bernardston entrance.

Crochier pointed out that the school was still on break, and that the governor had ordered both public and private schools to close until April 7. Nevertheless, the select-

board signed off on the idea, pending emergency access arrangements with the police and fire departments.

The board agreed that committees should be discouraged from meeting in person, and noted that if any meeting involved a video link, the feed must be made fully available to the public and the press. Ward was authorized to sign warrants by himself.

Four Feet of Solid Grease

Highway superintendent John Miner came in to discuss serious equipment problems at the Riverside pump station, which sends that neighborhood's wastewater under the river for treatment in Montague.

Responding to high levels in the well which were not pumping down, Miner, still in his first months on the job, encountered a series of troubling electrical malfunctions. Two staff members from Montague's water treatment control facility came to help him, he said, and they ultimately recommended an electrician to repair the deteriorating system.

"They were both extremely knowledgeable," Miner said. "I can't thank them enough."

"It's nice that they came over on a phone call," Crochier added.

Compounding the pump station's issue, Miner continued, was "four to five feet of solid grease" accumulated at the floor of the well. The Montague operators lent him buckets of degreaser and powdered enzymes, he said, but Gill will need to stock up on its own chemicals and start prop-

erly maintaining the pump station, which he said may not have received any attention in eight years.

The selectboard approved the purchases, gave Miner the go-ahead to contact the electrician, and agreed that the entire electrical panel may need replacement.

Other Business

Energy commission members Vicky Jenkins and Alden Booth came to discuss an upcoming Green Communities grant application. Together with the selectboard they hammered out the outline of a plan to apply for funding to replace the town hall boiler with a ground-source heat pump.

A similar application was rejected several years ago, but Jenkins said a "turnover in leadership" at the state program and a greater emphasis there on eliminating fossil fuel use may make the proposal more viable. The selectboard suggested the town sweeten the deal with matching funds from the energy and capital improvement stabilization funds.

The selectboard voted 2-0 to renew the liquor license at the Turners Falls Schuetzen Verein club, and accepted the resignations of Kim Sprankle from the library trustees and Lynda Hodsdon Mayo as assessors' clerk at the end of June.

As the meeting adjourned, Crochier reminded everyone to wash their hands. "It also will help you with the flu," he pointed out. "Stay safe, treat other people nice, and don't hoard toilet paper."



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NINA ROSSI PHOTO

Above: All is quiet along the power canal and Canalside Bike Train in Turners Falls..

MoRe

ArtBeat

by Trish Crapo

This Is Where You Live: Joe Kopera's Maps

MONTAGUE – If you dribble ink on water, it will float languidly, then begin to diffuse and spread, resembling wisps of smoke twisting in air. Like ink on water, Joe Kopera's images seem delicate and fleeting, hinting at things that change so quickly, they're beyond your grasp.

And yet, these images, some of which you can see at Rise Above Bakery in Greenfield, are based on very precise, scientifically accurate geological surveys of landscapes, most of them familiar chunks of our western Massachusetts terrain. They are portraits of our rivers and their surrounding floodplains, rendered in shades of indigo blue.

Kopera, who lives in Montague and often submits photos for the *Montague Reporter's* MoRe page header, says the arrangement at Rise Above is open-ended. He estimates that the images will be on display for another month or two.

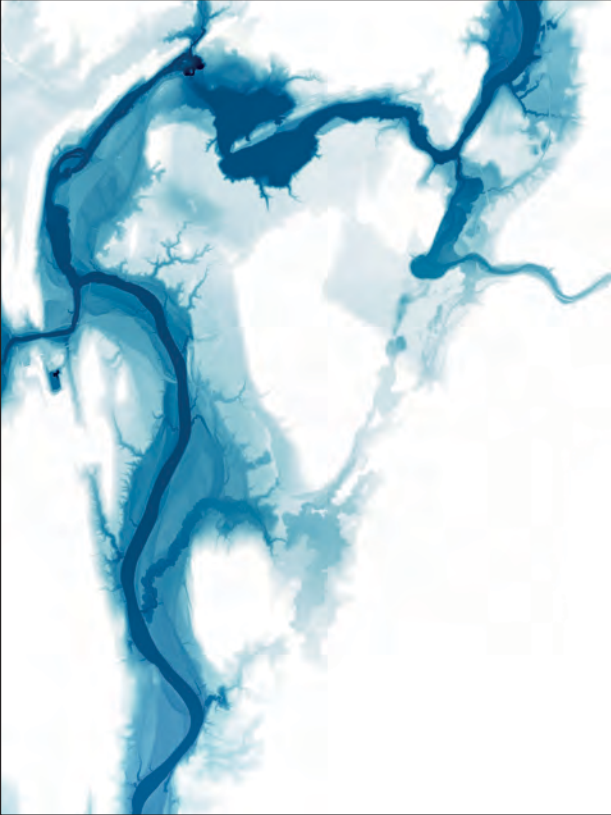
But if you're not going out much right now – as many of us aren't – you can also see the images at joemaps.com, and on Kopera's Facebook page. The website serves as a gallery and store from which you can purchase existing maps printed on canvas or fine art paper, or contact Kopera about commissioning a custom piece. Kopera says commissions, often for maps of rivers that his customers grew up near, make up most of his business.

Before he began his fine art map business, Kopera worked as the assistant state geologist for Massachusetts for over a decade, co-running the state's geologic survey out of UMass-Amherst. He's still employed at UMass, essentially working three part-time jobs that all involve computer mapping.

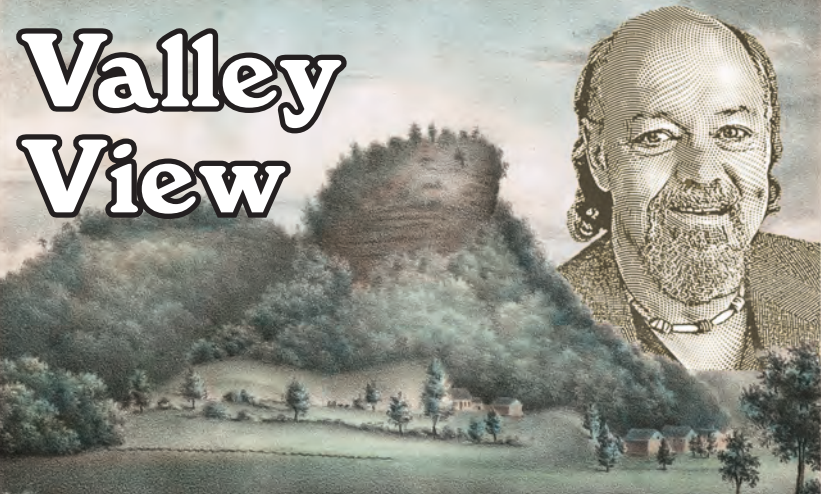
In his work, he makes use of GIS, which stands for "geographic information system," a framework that in-

tegrates many types of data to create visualizations such as topographical maps, and LIDAR, "Light Detection and Ranging," a remote sensing method that uses laser pulses shot from a small plane to detect precise elevations in a landscape. Kopera clarifies that by "precise" see **ARTBEAT** page B8

IMAGE COURTESY OF THE ARTIST



The Connecticut River wrapping its way around Montague, from the French King Bridge down to the Sunderland town line.



By GARY SANDERSON

GREENFIELD – Who was that mysterious stranger occupying Room 34 of South Deerfield's "Warren Hotel" in September 1970?

His byline appears as Giles Weaver in the Winter 1970 revival edition of *The Phoenix*, a small literary magazine published after a 40-year hiatus by James Cooney at his West Whately Morning Star Press. Cooney introduces Weaver to his *Phoenix* readers as a pseudonymous "writer living like a solitary Bushman in America's Kalahari," and leaves it at that.

Some scholars believe Weaver was none other than reclusive author Jerome David (J.D.) Salinger, most

known for his novel *The Catcher in the Rye*. The late Cooney himself refused to discuss it when queried, and today his son says no, Weaver was not Salinger. Still, the mystery endures. May never be solved to everyone's satisfaction.

Had it truly been Salinger, a deeply private man and troubled World War II vet, a worn, out-of-the-way railroad inn like the Hot'l would have been a perfect place to hide in plain sight while undergoing outpatient psychiatric care at the Northampton Veterans Administration Hospital (VA). Salinger would have then been living comfortably on *Catcher* royalties, and thus could easily have paid cash and registered under an alias

to conceal his identity. Although he could have afforded the posh inns in Northampton or Deerfield and registered under another name, the possibility that he'd be recognized would have been far greater in the academic communities.

Too bad current Hot'l owner Betsy Shea can't produce a registration book for September 1970. Who knows? She may yet find one. If so, we would at least know what name was registered for Room 34. Was it Giles Weaver? Some obscure, aspiring writer no one has ever heard of? Or maybe even Jerome Salinger, which seems unlikely, given the backwater site and the fact that the author wanted to slip the public eye.

The *Phoenix* Weaver byline appears in successive 1970 and 1971 revival editions. Titled by Cooney *Further Notes From The Underground*, what unfolds is a series of rambling, at times outright bizarre, though well-written letters. The first letters are addressed from the Warren Hotel. The more hostile final letter came from "Everywhere, Somewhere, Zip-zip, 000." Despite an open invitation from Cooney for more, Weaver's byline never again appeared in the magazine, which see **VALLEY VIEW** page B4

Unearthing the Archives

By Charlotte Kohlmann

PART X: EMMALADD SHEPHERD AND THE KEEP HOMESTEAD MUSEUM

MONSON – An ordinary family home, beloved by a lineage of homesteaders, dairy farmers, ministers, and teachers, is rarely – if ever – the foundation of a future museum site. But the ancestry and private possessions of the Keep family of Monson, Massachusetts are immortalized in the rooms they were born in, lived in, and ultimately died in. Without the aid of renowned fame or generous fortune to preserve their legacy, the Keeps are remembered for their simple existence in Monson, and the everyday objects they left behind.

I recently visited the Keep Homestead Museum and met with Emmaladd Shepherd, its director of operations. Originally from Saint Louis, Missouri, Emmaladd can narrate the entire Keep ancestral line, their timeline in Monson, and stories passed between generations of Keeps as if she were a part of the family. It's as if they were renowned for venerated acts of life-changing patents, or scientific discoveries.

Perchance the surname is an eponym for the family's 150 years of collecting. The Keeps were obsessive accumulators of all kinds of things, from diaries, tools, needleworks, quilts, shells, rocks, minerals, records of income, books, and cobbled kitchenware to the largest button collection known in the country. The museum is a cultural stockpile and visual bibliographic walkthrough of their home life spanning eight generations. An immortal vessel of one family's reality is on display, with 16 rooms, three attics, two cellars, one 1740s indoor water well, 75 acres of farmland, a pond, and a small granite quarry.

The idea is not to portray museum-made period rooms. "It makes it more sterile that way," says Emmaladd. "The formation of each room is to show how the Keeps really lived in their home, and what they did with their days." In unforeseen ways, walking through a home with room decor preserved from the

years spanning from the 1740s and 1890s to the 1980s can reveal the domestic mechanics of an existence usually unacknowledged the minute one steps into a home.

"This stuff would lose its context if it was in a museum," Shepherd says. Suddenly one can begin to take stock of what brings and builds comfort into a family home, like a rhyme or pattern revealing itself.

Walking With the Keeps

The oldest section of the house was built in 1749, with new additions built in the 1820s. Eighteenth century footstones of deceased family members, once brought over from the cemetery, lean against the exterior siding of the house, seemingly never moved. The main entrance feels just like any neighbor's porch, with no formal museum attributes – a loud knock or ring can suffice to enter.

The entrance opens to an empty foyer, with button displays lining the walls. Jetting off to the left is the original 1740s kitchen, its warped walls juxtaposed with a brand-new refrigerator. Each room is decorated with early furniture bought from previous generations of Keeps, each intricately labeled with the date and person responsible for its purchase.

Emmaladd hadn't been to the house in a while, and needed to turn on the water. "We have to get the house repainted, and need someone to analyze the existing shade of color," she says. "And we are dealing with quotes for new shutters for the 40 windows we have."

As she begins to reveal the laundry list of chores ahead of her, it becomes clear that this estate is more of a gathering space for local residents, rather than just a formal museum. "When the alarm goes off in the middle of the night, or when the furnace explodes, it's me that gets called," says Emmaladd.

Each volunteer does their part to make sure the house is kept up see **UNEARTHING** page B4

KOHLMANN PHOTO



The Keep Homestead Museum's volunteers: Emmaladd Shepherd, Tod Beall, Elinor Beall, and Debbie Harris in the Button Exhibition Room.

Pet of the Week Success Story!



“MRS. PEANUT”

Last week’s Pet of the Week has a new home, and a new name! Mrs. Peanut, *née* Clover, is enjoying her new digs with lots of purrs and headbutting.

Here’s the latest from the Dakin Humane Society website (see www.dakinhumane.org for more info):

“In an effort to consolidate staffing and focus on animal care needs, we are temporarily closing our Adoption Centers to visitors and volunteers. Animals are still available for adoption by appointment only. Please call (413) 781-4000. Leave your name, pet’s information and a callback number. We will return calls on a first come-first served basis within 48 hours. Finding homes for our current population of animals is a critical need as pets arrive under emergency situations.”

Senior Center Activities MARCH 23 THROUGH 27

GILL and MONTAGUE

The Gill Montague Senior Center is closed and will reopen when advised by state and local authorities that it is safe to do so. This measure is taken not lightly but with the utmost concern for the most vulnerable in our community.

The Council on Aging staff will be available for referrals and information from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Mondays through Thursdays, at (413) 863-9357 by telephone, and coa@montague-ma.gov by e-mail.

ERVING

Erving Senior Center director Paula Betters writes:

“We will be closed for the next three weeks. All programs are canceled or postponed. With that said, I will be here or at least checking my messages daily. I want anyone to call me and leave a message if they have any questions or concerns regarding food or other services. I will call them back and if we can help with services of any kind we will do so. I am working with other agencies so we can be sure to keep our seniors healthy & safe.”

Paula can be reached at at (413) 423-3649 or paula-betters@erv-ing-ma.gov.

LEVERETT

Leverett senior activities are currently canceled. Further updates are being distributed via TTY telephone and email. For more information, contact the Leverett COA at (413) 548-1022 x 5, or coa@leverett.ma.us.

WENDELL

Wendell senior activities have been canceled. The Wendell Senior Center is closed. The Wendell Council on Aging will continue to provide transportation for essential medical visits if volunteers are available. For more information or for rides, call Nancy Spittle at (978) 544-6760.

GROCERY SHOPPERS!:

Beginning Thursday, Stop & Shop will open only to customers age 60 and over from 6 to 7:30 a.m. daily. Green Fields Market is open from 9 to 10 a.m. for those over 60, pregnant, or immunocompromised.

Sex Matters

a sex-positive health column

by STEPHANIE BAIRD

I had the pleasure of providing a pop-up “Sex Matters / Sex Answers” booth at the Triple SSS erotic art exhibit reception on February 15 in Turners Falls. My table and chairs were set up in a nook in the Shea Theater lobby, across from fun glittery “boxes” and other erotica-themed crafts for sale.

Someone passed around erotic body part cookies (i.e. elbows, knees, earlobes, and brains – just kidding), and Federal Street Books brought their entire section of erotica and sexual health. I set up some posters asking, “Do you have questions about sex?,” put out a bowl of Hershey’s Kisses, displayed my favorite sex reference books (*Come as You Are*, *The Ethical Slut*, *Sex for One*, and *The Deep Yes*, among others), and waited for questions.

Two long conversations stick out for me. Both people identified as cis-women over the age of 60.

Woman A expressed her frustration in finding a similar-age male sex partner who was open-minded and capable of meeting her needs. We discussed ways for older folks to meet each other beyond the obvious online sites or senior centers. She specifically wants to meet an active, healthy man who is taking good care of himself physically and mentally, and who can engage in hot sex with her. We racked our brains together for a few minutes.

I thought of book groups, bowling leagues, volunteer activities, and perhaps certain spiritual affiliations. She wanted to know how to screen out men who were simply looking for a caregiver. My only advice at the moment was for her to be as specific as she could be when vetting potential intimate partners.

Openly and forthrightly stating one’s needs and interests might be a little risky, in that someone could be offended, but no one can read minds. And since she knows exactly what she is looking for, she’s got nothing to lose in articulating this to potential partners.

Woman A, if you are reading this column, you can also join the Older Adult OWL sex education program I will be co-facilitating in Northampton. This is a brand new, exciting curriculum for those 50 and older. It begins March 20, meeting monthly through June on Fridays from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. at the Unitarian Society of Northampton and Florence. You can attend one session or all four.

Our first topic will be “Attitudes About Aging,” dovetailing nicely into the topics discussed at the sex advice pop-up. (There is a small, sliding-scale fee per meeting for those who don’t already contribute financially to USNF. Please email the USNF DRE/coordinator at dre@uunorthampton.org to express interest.) The first session may be delayed to April or conducted via Zoom, in light of Coronavirus precautions.

Woman B asked about maintaining vaginal and vulvar health, noting “things don’t feel as great anymore.” Having been to a training by Northampton sexual health nurse specialist Evelyn Resh on “Hormones, Health, and Love: Helping Couples Remain Intimate in Mid-life and Beyond,” I was able to validate that sensation can change.

Resh noted that 40% to 60% of post-menopausal women experience atrophic vaginal symptoms. Resh reported seeing symptoms such as labial fusion, or even that “labia minora completely vanish.” Many women don’t report these genital changes, and may not receive a gynecology appointment as often as they did earlier in life, missing opportunities to bring it up to health professionals.

The average age of menopause is 51. Peri-menopause can start from two to ten years before menopause (usually age 45 to 55) and can bring many difficult symptoms, including vaginal dryness or other changes.

Luckily, just as I felt concerned by what might be coming down the pike for me, Resh offered a list of possible solutions to help maintain vaginal elasticity. Most of the solutions involved topical creams or suppositories that contain estrogen or other vitamins. Hormone replacement is also an option, and will be elaborated on in next month’s column. Consider contacting a health professional with expertise in sexuality and aging to develop a strategy for your own personal vaginal health if you have concerns.

Resh also emphasized using the “almighty vibrator” to help maintain orgasmic quality and elasticity. Just like we need to walk our legs and perform regular strength training to maintain good flexibility and strength, we need to stimulate our genitals regularly to keep good health. If you don’t use it, you lose it. Putting a good ol’ Hitachi Magic Wand (one of the most powerful vibrators in existence) to our vulvar and clitoral areas will help keep them spry. For vaginas that want to maintain comfortable vaginal-penis intercourse, using non-latex dilators, with professional instructions, can also help.

There are also some places in the valley that advertise treatments that can help reduce or eliminate vaginal/vulvar discomfort. I will be researching these for April’s column, and will provide detailed information, along with hormone replacement information.

Lastly, to wrap up March’s column on aging and sexual health, check out the “Our Better Half” podcast facilitated by Dr. Jane Fleishman. I love the title of this podcast about aging, which joyfully asserts that folks 50 and older can hope for a hot and heavy sex life. She and her co-hosts have recorded 93 episodes to date, looking at topics such as BDSM, HIV updates, lube and safer sex for over 50, and asexuality. They have interviewed sex positive folks such as Betty Dodson (a champion of solo sex), Beverly Whipple (a g-spot promoter), and Bill Stayton (who looks at sex and religion).

Stephanie Baird is a certified OWL facilitator and an EMDR psychotherapist and consultant who encourages her clients towards thriving sexual health. She welcomes feedback and suggestions at sexmatters@montaguereporter.org.

Profile: Courageous Strides

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

GREENFIELD – I went to the 2019 Festival of Trees, and one of the sponsored Christmas trees in the festival was from a group called Courageous Strides. It seemed like a cool idea to do an article. I had once wanted to write about a similar program, which is called Heroes, Hounds and Horses. So this therapeutic riding program for veterans caught my interest.

Courageous Strides is at Stoney B. Acres in Bernardston, a riding school on 180 acres. I talked to Joanne Brown, one of the directors and riding instructors. Her business partner Sandy Sayers is a director too, as well as a riding instructor.

Joanne told me the program is “going into our second year,” and that she has been a director for that long. Their mission statement on their website said, “Our mission is to provide equine-assisted therapeutic riding programs to individuals with special needs in order to promote healing, health and happiness through the use of horses.”

“We may use up to three horses,” I was told by Joanne. “Last year, we helped about seven participants. We are a small program. We are still growing.”

Their small program consists of an indoor riding area, with an outdoor one, too, and three round pens for them. In the program, they do basic horsemanship: haltering, bridling, grooming, and groundwork, which includes walking and leading. They offer sessions that are customized, which you could get when you do private and semi-private lessons.

The programs go on from May to October. The *Recorder* has written about them a couple of times.

One branch of veterans they help is Army vets.

I asked Joanne her opinion of the place. “It’s wonderful,” she said. “It’s a very unique, special and beautiful place. We are very lucky and happy to host our program at Stoney B. Acres.”

Speaking of their being at the Festival of Trees as a sponsor, Joanne said, “We’re having a fundraising event in May: Hope & Olive is hosting Soup and Games night. We are going to have a booth again at Scarecrow in the Park in Bernardston.”

The fundraising, in general, is through local donations. They tell people to go to their website or Facebook page to donate. The website address is www.courageous-strides.org. I learned that a donation of \$25 would buy a bag of grain for a horse.

I asked Joanne if she thought Courageous Strides will be around for a long time. “Yes, we are hoping to serve the need of our clients for years to come,” she said. “There is so much to gain from interacting with horses. The horses teach us so much.”

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OBITUARY

Gertrude “Gert” Woodard

11/9/1918 – 3/13/2020



REPORTER FILE PHOTO

Gertrude G. “Gert” (Stanley) Woodard, 101, formerly of 62 Crocker Avenue, died peacefully on Friday morning, March 13, 2020 at the Charlene Manor Extended Care Facility, 130 Colrain Road, Greenfield, following a period of declining health.

A native of the Town of Montague, she was born in Turners Falls on November 9, 1918 to George W. and Sarah A. (Haigis) Stanley. She was educated in Montague Public Schools and a graduate of Turners Falls High School in the class of 1936. Following her graduation from high school, Gert went to work for the former John Russell Cutlery in Turners Falls and later accepted a position with the Montague Rod & Reel Company. She then went to work as a bookkeeper for the former Harold B. Allen International Sales & Service, followed by Art’s Tire Service, and lastly the former Franklin Auto Supply, all in Greenfield, and retired following 38 years of service in 1981.

As a lifelong resident of Turners Falls, she joined the First Congregational Church of Turners Falls in April of 1933. A staunch member of the church, she served in numerous capacities which included the Board of Directors, the Board of Deacons, church Treasurer, the church’s Mission Committee, the Board of Trustees, church Moderator, Sunday School teacher, the finance committee, past president (as well as secretary and treasurer) of the Women of the Church Fellowship, and lastly as the clerk of the church Diaconate. She also served as past president of the United Church Women’s Association of Western Massachusetts.

Gert was active in the Turners Falls Chapter #181 of the Order of Eastern Star since 1967 and served as past Matron of the chapter, receiving her 50-year pin in 2017. She also served as past Matron of the Grand Representatives Association of the Eastern Star.

Gert was an active member of the Republican Party, having served as a past State Republican Commit-

tee member. She was a member of the former Clarence Allen American Legion Post of Turners Falls, as well as a past member and president of the former Daly Solomon VFW Post #123 in Turners Falls.

Gert was presented with the Boston Post Road Cane as the oldest resident of the Town of Montague in 2014.

She married Charles H. Woodard on October 23, 1942 in the Robbins Memorial Church, Greenfield. They celebrated nearly 70 years of blissful marriage together, residing at 62 Crocker Avenue for 50 years of their marriage prior to his unexpected passing in April of 2012.

Gert is survived by several nieces and nephews who adored her who include, Gordon Stanley and his wife Doris, Laurie “Launie” M. York, Linda Herrera, Lorraine Shippee, Leonard Gould, and Lawrence Gould.

She was predeceased by her parents, George and Sarah, her beloved husband Charles, and her siblings Earl Stanley, Herbert Stanley, Rose J. (Stanley) Allen, Mildred (Stanley) Riel, and Frederick Stanley, who was killed in action during WWII as a member of the United States Army in the European theater of conflict. Additionally, she was predeceased by her nieces Marion (Riel) Castine, Barbara Danforth, Mildred Allen Morell, Barbara Allen Hawkins, and Dorothy Allen “Sarah” Malloy, and lastly by her beloved dog “Sam.” Funeral services in celebration of her life and many gifts took place at the Congregation of Grace Church, 148 L Street, Turners Falls, on Wednesday, March 18, 2020 at 11 a.m., with Rev. Verne Williams, Pastor officiating. Rites of committal and burial followed in the Springdale Cemetery, Turners Falls. Visiting hours will be omitted at the request of the deceased.

Expressions of affection in the form of charitable contributions are suggested. Guest book and condolence message available at www.mccarthyfuneralhomes.com.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Residents, Undaunted By Coming Pandemic, Continue To Bug The Heck Out Of One Another

Saturday, 3/7

2:25 p.m. 911 caller from Unity Park reporting that there was a fight, and there is a kid with a bloody nose. Report taken.

4:19 p.m. Caller from Avenue C reports that a black two-door truck with a male driver and female passenger was following her while she was walking home from Sheffield Elementary. Made it home safely and is currently waiting for her parents to get home. Area search negative. Officer spoke with caller; advised of options.

Sunday, 3/8

9:51 a.m. Report of subject on a motorized bike with loud exhaust that has ridden up and down Fifth Street between K and L streets several times; caller concerned vehicle may not have an exhaust system due to the noise level. Area search negative.

12:01 p.m. Report of overturned kayak off Newton Street. Believed to be same kayak previously checked upon; FD will be retrieving same once weather allows.

12:07 p.m. 911 call from Bridge Street reporting intoxicated male in front of the Pub trying to fight with people; may now be trying to get in the Pub via the rear door. Officer advising one detained; pepper spray deployed. A 32-year-old Millers Falls man was arrested and charged with disorderly conduct (subsequent offense); resisting arrest; and two counts of assault and battery on a police officer.

4:40 p.m. Caller reporting five adults smoking in the skate park; they have been there for a few hours. Officer reports no parties were smoking when he arrived. He did speak with somebody wearing orange who agreed that they would not smoke in that area anymore.

5:02 p.m. Walk-in wants it on record that they were just skating at the skate park and accidentally bumped into another kid. They had a friendly exchange with the kid about the situation, but were then threatened by a male party that if the reporting party had done this to his child there would be serious problems. Reporting party left scene after

being threatened.

5:17 p.m. Caller from Family Dollar states that an intoxicated male vomited in front of this location, then moved some of the products that they are selling onto the vomit. Party’s pants are falling down. Caller reports party walked away, but then came back when he saw she was calling the police and started to yell at her. Male party returned home.

Monday, 3/9

2:04 p.m. Caller from Eleventh Street requesting officer come to her house to view footage from her personal security cameras; states a male party drove up, went on the porch, and then left. Officer advises it appears that the subject was trying to evade a cruiser and wanted to appear to be going into a house; has surveillance photo.

3:44 p.m. A 65-year-old Putney, Vermont man was arrested on a default warrant.

7:04 p.m. Caller from Randall Road reporting two kids on a red ATV riding up and down the road being very loud. Area search negative.

Tuesday, 3/10

7:58 a.m. Caller from Fifteenth Street complaining about loud noise from a neighbor using his chainsaw shortly after 7 a.m.; inquiring about noise ordinances. Officer advises this is not prohibited under the noise ordinance. Advised caller of options. 1:40 p.m. Caller from Turnpike Road reporting a party leaf-blowing debris into the roadway. Caller concerned for motorcyclists who may drive through this area. Officer reports party was gone on arrival and that it was sand that was blown into the road left over by the DPW, not debris.

Wednesday, 3/11

9:45 a.m. School resource officer reports two-vehicle accident at Franklin County Technical School; truck backed into car, causing extensive damage to car. Operator issued verbal warning for failure to use care when backing. Report taken.

11:26 a.m. Caller from East Main Street reporting another tenant gained access to her res-

idence this morning, took her coffee and \$60, and opened her windows. Caller states this is an ongoing issue; she has reported it to the building owner, but states he did not do anything for her. Caller also reports that the other residents in the building smoke despite there being a no-smoking policy. Officer had a long conversation with caller; she did not see the person enter her residence; she just believes that is what happened. Officer also spoke with building owner, who came up with a few ways to help secure caller’s apartment better.

11:35 a.m. Caller reporting four or five male parties cutting down large pine trees on Randall Wood Drive and dropping them in the road; states they have multiple burn piles. Caller states this has been going on for a few days and that yesterday they almost dropped a tree on her husband’s truck. Officer advised; confirmed with TFFD that this site has a valid burn permit. Officer spoke with involved parties; reports there is some debris in the roadway, but the involved parties are removing it. Advised parties of complaint and of their options.

12:37 p.m. 911 caller reporting a three-month-old baby and another young child unattended in a car with all the windows up in the Food City parking lot. Caller reports that he has been with the car for over 15 minutes. While on the line with the caller, the operator came out to the vehicle, at which time the caller started to get into a verbal argument with the operator. Caller was advised to let the officers handle it and not to continue speaking with the operator. Officers reporting vehicle was gone on arrival. Checked residence where vehicle is registered; not there. Father of children later called requesting to speak to an officer about the incident. Officer returned party’s call.

12:46 p.m. Caller from Greenfield Savings Bank requesting an officer for a belligerent male party,

possibly intoxicated, who is yelling at customers and employees. Officer reports subject has left the scene. Was a misunderstanding about an account. GSB advised of options regarding trespassing the male party.

3:48 p.m. Caller from Family Dollar reporting a female party just took a bottle of perfume from the store. When confronted by an employee, party stated that her husband had purchased the perfume for her, but employee states that their inventory list shows one missing. Female just took off toward Walgreens.

Involved female trespassing from property. 6:49 p.m. Owner of Between the Uprights requesting officer respond to assist with a customer who came in with a dog and is refusing to comply with staff requests to keep dog on leash. He is letting the dog run around inside and letting him on the bar itself. Customer and dog left prior to officer’s arrival.

Thursday, 3/12

2:25 a.m. Caller states that his neighbors have a black and white horse that has gotten loose and is running around the area along Route 63. Officer advises nothing found in area.

3:12 a.m. Caller from Fifth Street who is trying to get to sleep states that his neighbors have been crushing pills since midnight and stomping around, causing a lot of noise. Unfounded.

5:34 a.m. Caller requesting assistance getting bus unlocked.

5:27 p.m. Walk-in reporting that her son was just beaten up by an older kid at Unity Park. Report taken.

Friday, 3/13

9:28 a.m. Officer speaking with party who is in the fenced-off area on the Railroad Salvage property. Moved along without incident.

5:49 p.m. Caller states that a female Irish Setter has been hanging around his property. Dog is friendly. Caller will let the dog hang out in his fenced yard for a while in case somebody calls in about her. Owner of dog called. Dog returned home.

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PERSONAL INJURY, WILLS & ESTATES, WORKER’S COMP

VALLEY VIEW from page B1
rode off into the sunset in 1984.

By 1970, the 51-year-old Salinger would have been nearly 20 years into self-imposed literary exile and seclusion at his Connecticut Valley home nestled high atop a Cornish, NH hill. The last work ever published under *his* name was *Hapworth 16, 1924*, which appeared in *The New Yorker* in 1965. After that, total silence and secrecy right up to the 91-year-old author’s peaceful death at home on January 27, 2010.

To call Salinger a fascinating enigma would be a gross understatement. His eccentricities only added to his allure.

English professor Mark Phillips was the first writer to suspect Giles Weaver was a Salinger pseudonym. The seed of inquiry was sown when Phillips interviewed for a job in 1978 at Cooney’s Morning Star Press. Eager to work for an interesting radical intellectual who had “discovered” Henry Miller and Anais Nin and published such literary luminaries as D.H. Lawrence, Jean Giono, Robert Duncan, Derek Savage, and Kay Boyle, among others, Phillips applied for an advertised *Phoenix* job.

Somehow in the course of the interview, the topic briefly turned to Salinger, who Cooney said had experienced “some type of mental crisis.” Then, after imparting additional information that Salinger had once corresponded with his young daughter and had met his wife at her Smith College library workplace, Cooney asked Phillips if he had read Giles Weaver in *The Phoenix*, and abruptly dropped the subject.

This Weaver tease stirred Phillips’ curiosity, and likely continued spinning his cranial wheels for days. Was Cooney trying to tell him something? Was he firing a starter’s pistol to ignite a chase? Hmmm?

Phillips reviewed Weaver’s *Phoenix* prose and found many clues that he believed fit the Salinger *oeuvre* stylistically, philosophically and spiritually. When he revisited Cooney to further pursue the Weaver/Salinger mystery, the publisher refused to discuss it, telling Phillips that Weaver was a mental patient who vanished as fast as he had appeared. The exchange did nothing to diminish Phillips’ curiosity.

Out of the Phillips inquiry eventually came a speculative, four-page paper making his case that Giles Weaver was most likely a Salinger pseudonym. Soon respected biographer Kenneth Slawenski came forward to agree, despite never mentioning a word about Weaver in his acclaimed *J.D. Salinger: A Life* – widely accepted as *the* definitive Salinger biography.

To this day, Slawenski believes Giles Weaver was Salinger. On his website *www.deadcaulfields.com* he opens a post on the Weaver question with: “Here, I risk being tarred and feathered by Salinger purists who recoil in horror over the mere suggestion that Salinger may have been the secret author of the Giles Weaver entries.... The entries (exploring the possibility) were once carried on this site but were removed due to a thunderstorm of recrimination. Since then, I have come to the careful conclusion that Giles Weaver and J.D. Salinger were, in all likelihood, the same.”

Having myself grown up in South Deerfield at the time of Weaver’s visit, I was long ago intrigued by his 1970 *Phoenix* ramblings, live from the Hot’l Warren. When I recently reviewed the entire Weaver package on a sunny-afternoon whim, the reading triggered online keyword searches about the Cooneys, *The Phoenix*, Giles Weaver and – Bingo! – I found the Phillips and Slawenski material

exploring the Weaver/Salinger question.

In September 1970, I was walking and driving the South Deerfield streets as a senior in high school. It seems very likely to me that I would have passed this stranger in my travels, be it on the sidewalk or at Billy Rotkiewicz’s Frontier Pharmacy restaurant counter.

Even though 50 years have passed since then, I thought maybe I could solve this hometown riddle with a little detective work.

I knew I had a clearer understanding than either Phillips or Slawenski of all Weaver’s local references: from Brattleboro and Putney, Vermont to the Warwick Commune, Wendell Depot’s general store, Connecticut River boat cruises, the railroad tracks from South Deerfield to Northampton, Coolidge Bridge, Forbes Library, Childs Park, and Miss Florence Diner (incidentally, on the road between downtown Northampton and the VA). Plus, I was familiar with the Cooneys, their West Whately neighborhood and stately Federal home. I even shared a few mutual friends.

Because Cooney and Salinger have been dead for years, I thought old confidentiality issues may have passed and could now be ethically broken. Maybe Cooney’s grown children would be willing to disclose a long-held family secret.

When feelers I put out to a source who maintains a close relationship with the Cooneys were not pursued after a few weeks, I decided to take the bull by the horns. I reluctantly telephoned Cooney’s son, Gabriel, a well-known local photo-artist. What did I have to lose? If Weaver was indeed Salinger, Cooney may after all these years be willing to let the cat out of the bag.

Although we had met briefly some 45 years ago in front of his Poplar Hill home, I knew he would not remember me. Still,

he picked up the phone and seemed willing to talk. Maybe he recognized the Caller-ID from my newspaper days in Greenfield. Maybe he was familiar with my name for another reason. Perhaps my surname’s deep Whately heritage did the trick.

When asked if he had ever met and could confirm or deny that Giles Weaver was J.D. Salinger, Gabe Cooney paused for a moment and asked if I could hold while he spoke to his wife. When she didn’t respond to his call, he suggested that I call back in 10 minutes. OK. Sounds good.

When I called back, he answered on the first ring and admitted, yes, he had met Weaver, but he was not J.D. Salinger. I tried to deftly pursue the conversation, but he politely cut it off, reminding me of that old Phillips conversation with his father. Like father, like son? Maybe. A convincing denial? Hard to say. Why did he want to speak to his wife?

Whether or not he was being truthful, I respect Gabe Cooney, *especially* if he’s still honoring a solemn vow of confidentiality between Weaver and his father. I see dignity in such a decision, if that’s how it played out. I’d say Phillips nailed it when he praised Cooney’s dad as “the kind of man Salinger could count on to protect his identity and be faithful to his wishes to be left alone.” How could a faithful son interfere with that?

Oh well. What can I say? I gave it my best shot. Did my homework. Now, unless new information comes to light, I will accept Gabe Cooney’s gracious answer. Which doesn’t necessarily mean I and others view it as *the* final word.

“I hope it was Salinger who stayed here,” said Hot’l owner Shea. “So cool.”

Agreed. Cool indeed. I too hope so.



UNEARTHING from page B1
properly. Local Tod Beall met us on our tour; he had spent the morning painting walls in the cellar while his wife Elinor helped with exhibit displays in the genealogy room upstairs.

“Everybody does what they can do,” Tod tells me. “Three volunteers created hiking trails, another made a garden on the property.”

“It just feels good to be in an old house that has so much history. It is a personal lens and look into our town,” Elinor chimes in.

Most collectors seem to prioritize their existing catalogue of objects and those waiting to be accessioned into it, rather than the art of sharing existing findings with a public audience. Myra Keep, the last lineal descendant of her family, bestowed the estate to the town in 1988 as long it would be preserved the way she left it and turned into a public museum. She wanted her and her family’s individual collections to be maintained long after her passing, leaving private cabinets of curiosities for random strangers’ delight.

All That Was Kept

The foyer leads to the dedicated button exhibition room, with glass vitrines spanning the whole perimeter, and intricate mosaic buttons from Florence and Rome taking center stage in the middle of the room. Magnifying glasses are littered about, useful to view the intricate 500 to 1,500 pieces of broken malachite, carnelian, and glass shards packed into one of these micro-mosaic scenes. Miniature renderings smaller than a fingernail reveal iconic Italian landscapes like the Vatican, the Colosseum, and the ruins of Pompeii; others are of portraits, bugs, birds, and flora.

Only a small fraction of Myra Keep’s entire button collection is on display here. Most are packed away in closets and storage spaces around the house, only circulating

seasonally. They span 150 years of button design, from Revolutionary War buttons, to tintypes of loved ones from the Civil War era, to Art Nouveau, Satsuma, pottery, gold lustres, gemstones, porcelains, iridized glass, Jerusalem pearls, black glass, enamels, and plastics.

Myra would hunt for button cards at button shows, auctions, and flea markets all over the country, and during her international travels. A dedicated member of the National Button Society, she started her own chapter in Monson, which still meets at her house on a monthly basis.

A box on display holding a few of the family’s strands of buttons has an inscription from 1899: “This box is nearly or quite 100 years old. Brought from Bakersfield, Vermont by J. H. Williams.” Many labels like this one are scattered around the house and were written from the early 1800s onward, as if generations of Keeps had the intention to catalog and organize their objects for future audiences.

A nearby room holds the family’s collection of shells, rocks, and minerals, along with copperplate scripted labels made in the 1840s describing where these naturally-formed materials originated from and which family members brought them here. Myra continued her great grandfather’s, uncle’s, and father’s tradition of specimen collecting. They called themselves “rock hounds,” and the varieties here originate from Australia, the South Pacific Islands, India, and their very own quarries on the estate.

The rooms are covered with the whole maternal line’s needlework productions displayed on chairs, sofas and walls. The dining room is complete with a 144-piece set of china, purchased in the 1890s, with only one cup missing; the second kitchen holds displays of ancient coffee grinders, ice pickers, sugar chippers, ice cream scoopers, and butter molds.



From the Keep Homestead Museum, clockwise from top:
Just a few needlework pieces made by women of the Keep family.
Wallpaper from Charles and Pearl Keep’s maintained 1893 bedroom.
The cellar water well, built in the 1740s.
An assortment of shells from the shell, rock, and mineral room.

The second floor has a genealogical room holding the Keep Family Society’s records, and books on the family’s deep Massachusetts history. Next door is a room full of Myra’s teaching implements and students’ coursework. Some locals who visit can point out their own handwriting, or that of siblings who were pupils of Myra’s.

Across the way is an untouched 1893 bedroom designed just after Myra’s parents Charles and Pearl’s September wedding. It has never changed, and still has its original beige and brown lace wallpaper, furnishings purchased from Springfield,

a 127-year-old flat-woven carpet, and a crazy quilt covering the bed.

Each generation of Keeps seemed to live up to their name. Preservation and recycling is a part of everyday survival. But when does the utilitarian hoarding of these objects transition into a conscious effort to collect and catalogue them? When does a group of objects become a collection? Every home seemed to have a jar of buttons, but why did Myra decide to multiply it into a number in the thousands?

This family’s income can be traced back over 200 years, all derived from working- and mid-

dle-class occupations. They were generations of well-respected farmers, teachers, and ministers. The Keeps did not need money to make a collection – just like they did not have to be of a certain socio-economic status to have their personal effects live on in a coveted museum.

The Keep Homestead Museum is located on 35 Ely Road, Monson, MA. It is open April through December on the first Sunday of the month. For questions or appointments, the museum can be reached at (413) 267-4137.



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The COVID-19 pandemic is unlike anything anyone has ever experienced. While things may get worse before they get better, we are fortunate that we live in an area that has some of the best and brightest and most caring people anywhere. We have social service agencies for almost every human condition. We have dedicated and professional public safety people and civic leaders. We have a brain trust of experts at our local institutions of higher education. And, we have excellent health care facilities.

Everyone is making sacrifices

More than anything, all of us need to remain calm and do our best to help in this emergency. For many people that means staying or working from home. For others, it means implementing new procedures that make it safe to continue to operate essential services such as food stores, banks, utilities, social services, and medical care, to name a few. Right now, most of our local business owners have had to face the unthinkable: having to make the sacrifice of having to temporarily close their business until it is safe to reopen.

We all have a duty to help

We all owe it to everyone to pull together and do our part, in whatever form that takes, to be part of the solution. This includes keeping calm, and showing patience, understanding and support for the people working at businesses and essential services that are operating under these difficult conditions.

Here's what we are doing

Operationally, social distancing is now standard procedure. "Six degrees of separation" has morphed into "Six feet of separation." We have even taken the precaution in certain departments of separating staff to different locations, such as working from home or other office locations, to prevent one member of a department from infecting others in their department.

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Here's how you can help us if you are our customer: Sign up for and use our remote banking services, such as Mobile Banking and Online Banking, as much as possible to reduce or eliminate your need to come to the Bank.

I believe that times such as these will bring out the best in people. This is when we can show the world how resilient and caring a community we really are. I can say, without reservation, that I have faith in the people of the Valley, that we are all going to do our best to work together, and that together we can overcome any challenge we face.

Thank you,



John H. Howland
President and CEO



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The Children's Page


The Children's Page wants to learn what you know! Please write letters to Montague Reporter 117 Avenue A Turners Falls, MA 01376

Learning About CORONAVIRUS

Words and pictures by Hannah Brookman
Info sourced from: Professor Lucy Rogers & The Live Science Staff more at livescience.com/coronavirus-kids-guide.

in a bowl, mix together:

- Oil
- Water
- black pepper



* Most viruses are held together with fat.

Put a finger in the bowl.



What happens?

NOW get your hands all soapy!

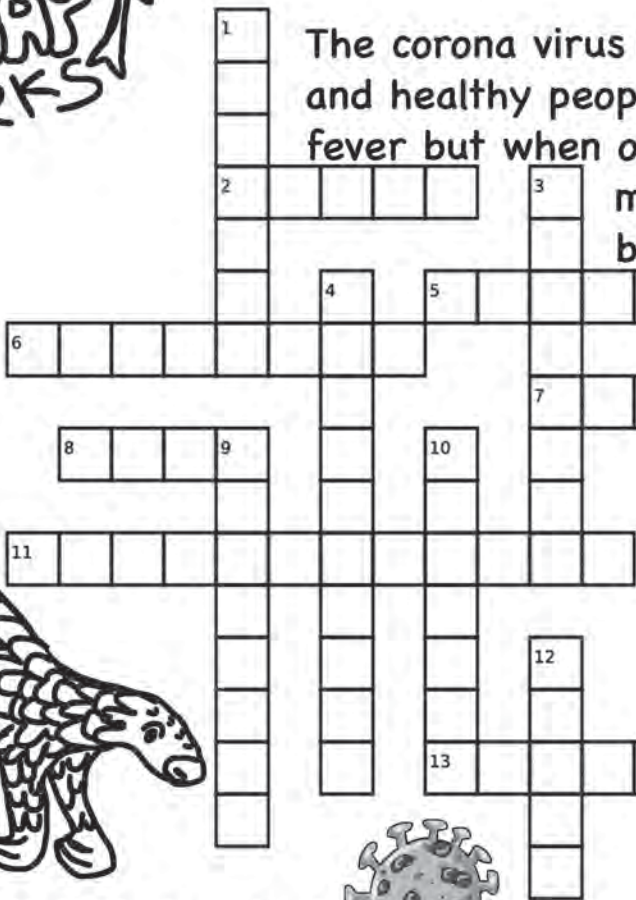
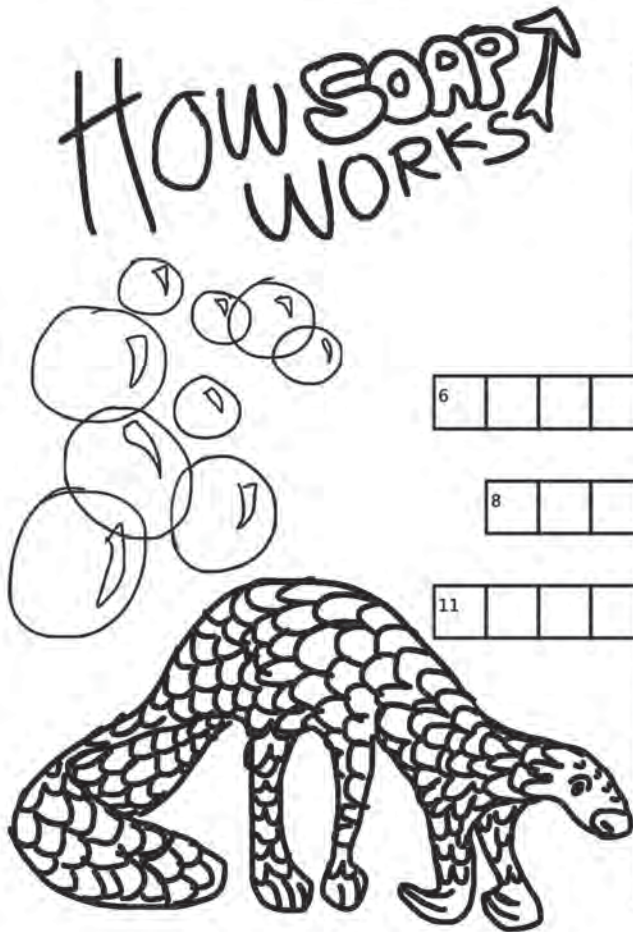
Soap breaks down the fat that holds a virus together, so it can no longer survive.



Put your soapy finger back in the bowl



What happens?



The corona virus causes a disease called COVID-19. When children and healthy people catch the virus, they might have a cough or fever but when older or sick people encounter the virus, it can be more serious. Researchers are working on a vaccine, but until one is found, we all need to keep killing whatever germs find us with soap and water, and making sure germs don't travel to the homes of people with compromised immune systems.

THANK YOU FOR DOING YOUR PART!


- Across:
- 2. The basic structural unit of all organisms.
 - 5. Latin for "crown", name of new virus.
 - 6. Tiny, one-celled creatures that get nutrients from their environments in order to live.
 - 7. Ways your body reacts to sickness, can include coughing, sneezing and fever.
 - 8. Bubbles of this dissolves the fat membrane that holds a virus together, causing it to fall apart and die.
 - 11. A complex network of cells and proteins that defends the body against infection. You can help the team by eating citrus which has Vitamin C.
 - 13. Tiny organisms, or living things, that can cause disease.

- Down:
- 1. A shot of a weakened form of the disease germ that is injected into your body for disease prevention
 - 3. A plant or an animal organism that lives in or on another and takes its nourishment for itself
 - 4. Germs and cells and viruses are so small that we need to use one of these to see them.
 - 9. A scaly animal that eats ants, suspected to be the animal source of the coronavirus
 - 10. An easy way to prevent the spread of germs.
 - 12. The most common biological entity on earth. Needs to be inside living cells to grow and reproduce.

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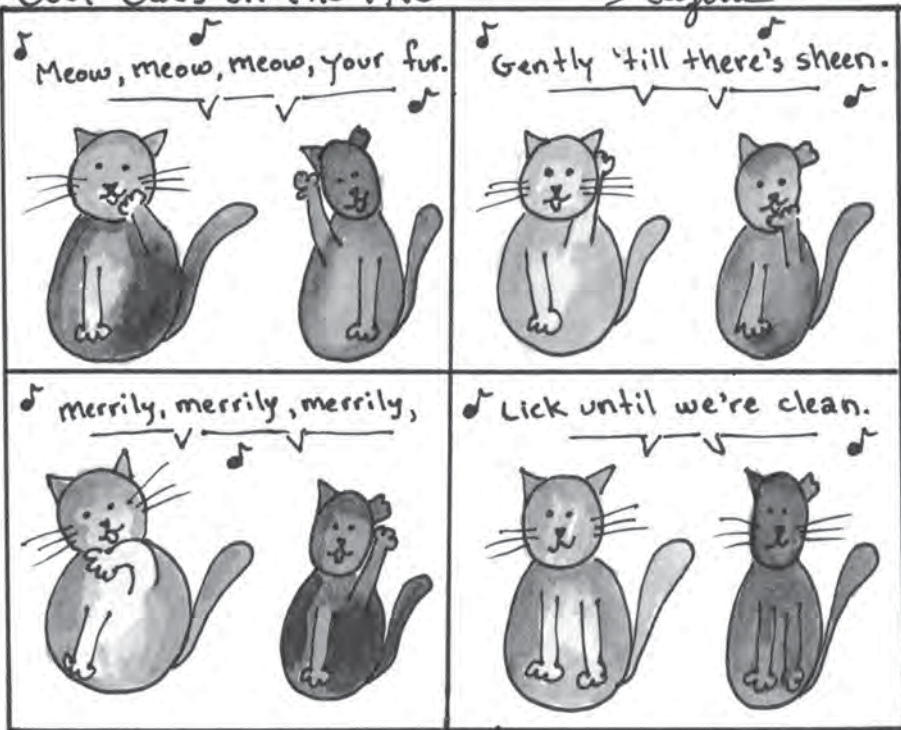
T-RUMP

by denis f. bordeaux



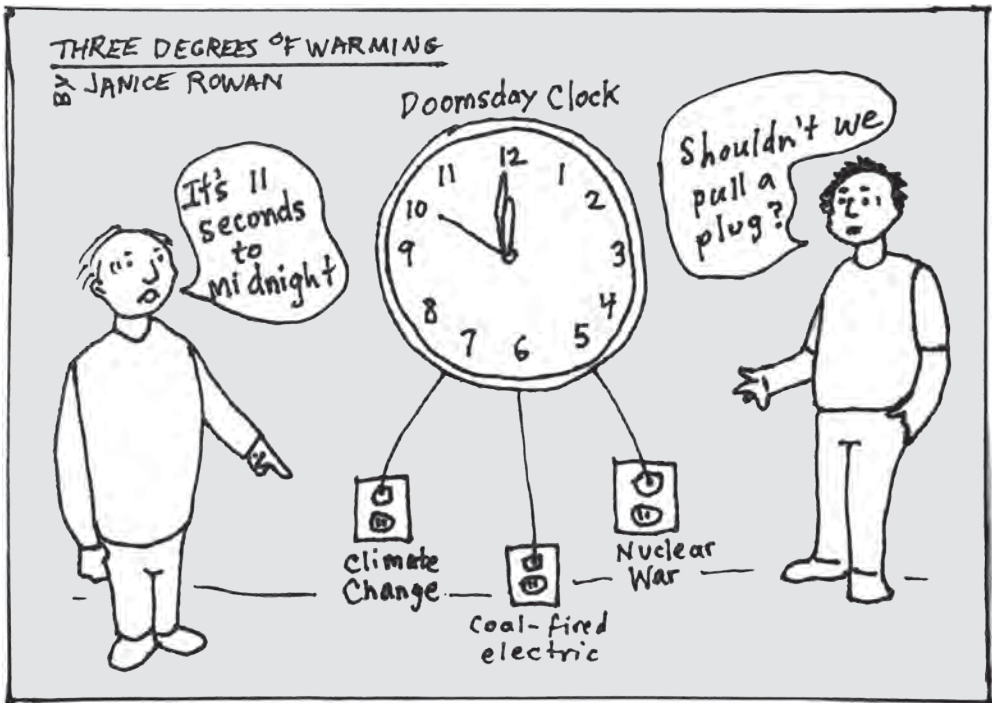
Cool Cats on the Ave

Reggie



THREE DEGREES OF WARMING

by JANICE ROWAN



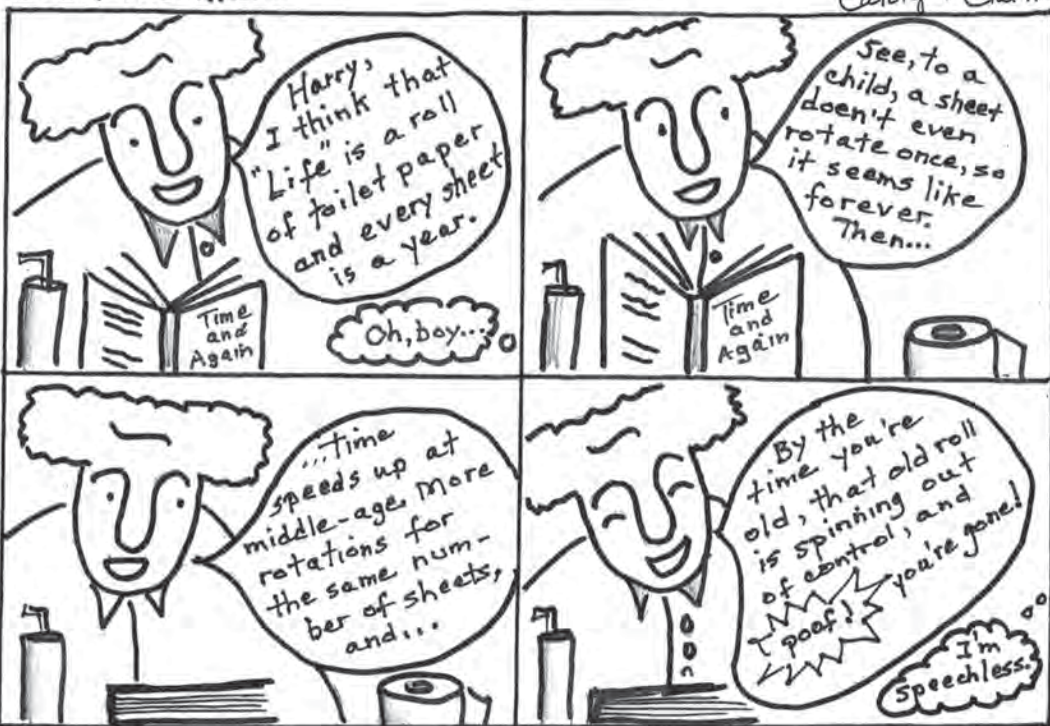
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Montague Community Television News

Let's Catch Up on Local Cable!

By MICHAEL SMITH

Due to the coronavirus outbreak, MCTV is battenning down the hatches.

Keep an eye on our Facebook page for any changes in station hours, and keep an eye on our website, montaguetv.org, for the latest public meetings.

Under "Latest Videos" you can watch Sunday's emergency joint meeting of the Montague selectboard and board of health, as well as the latest regularly scheduled Montague and Gill selectboard meetings. Find out how our community leaders are handling this crisis, and how you can help.

Some say "quarantine" while others say "stay-cation"! Stay safe and indoors, and

choose from MCTV's extensive video collection to help pass the time.

Whether it's foot-stomping music from the Great Falls Discovery Center Coffee House performances, or watching videos from the first Barbès in the Woods music festival, we have everything you might have missed! Catch up on what's been going on in your own backyard... and stay safe.

Something going on you think others would like to see? If you get in touch, we can show you how easy it is to use a camera and capture the moment. Contact us at (413) 863-9200, infomontaguetv@gmail.com, or stop by 34 Second Street between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., Mondays through Fridays.

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ARTBEAT from page B1

he means “down to the centimeter scale.”

“So you can tease out features of the landscape that you couldn’t before,” he says, enthusiasm evident in his voice. One of the things that excited him when he first encountered LIDAR data was that “you could look at river floodplains in exquisite detail.”

Flood plain details are normally subtle, Kopera says, and can be hard to distinguish in the field. “But with this LIDAR technology, they really stand out.”

LIDAR data helped him to locate ledge in the woods, and old woods roads that weren’t on any maps. Before that, he says, “We just wandered around in the woods, looking for outcrops. But with this data, we knew where all the outcrops were before we went to look for them. It saved so much time.”

Kopera describes his job back then as making maps of “what the bedrock geology was doing under all the dirt.”

“Rock has grain to it, like wood,” he says. “I mapped out that structure.”

The kind of information Kopera gathered might influence how foundations for buildings are designed, or help to locate mineral deposits for mining, or have public health implications such as the discovery of radon. Kopera was most interested in finding and mea-

suring fractures in bedrock in order to locate new sources of groundwater.

“Those cracks are basically the plumbing for groundwater,” he says, explaining that the work is important because in Massachusetts, “all of our traditional sand and gravel aquifers for water are at capacity.”

Around 2016, Kopera and his colleagues had been preparing to publish maps that made use of new LIDAR data for the state of Massachusetts, including the Connecticut River Valley, when the project ran out of funding, and Kopera was laid off. It was during this period that he came up with the idea of using the data to make more abstracted maps that also satisfy his artistic inclinations.

Kopera makes the maps “using GIS and image-editing software, plus a little bit of coding/programming” to create digital images that can be printed on canvas or paper, or for some consignments, on plexiglass or metal. He’s quick to credit another geologist, Daniel Coe, a cartographer for the Washington Geological Survey, for the technique he uses. Coe had created some artistic maps that caught Kopera’s attention, and Kopera contacted him to ask for permission to use the technique.

“The big thing is that, for me, these maps are a way to really show people the beauty of their landscape, focusing on the rivers. This is



Joe Kopera, self portrait using digital timer.

where you live,” Kopera says. “You’re looking at about 15,000 years of geologic history, all laid bare for you to see. Even after all these years of being a geologist, seventeen of those as a professional, it still blows my mind.”

“Rivers and their flood plains are very ephemeral things, on a geologic timespan,” Kopera continues. His art brings that scientific truth to light.

Because of his training, Kopera says it’s almost impossible for him to walk through a landscape without becoming fascinated, even distracted, by the geological implications of its history.

“It’s like the landscape is shouting its history at you, and you can’t turn it off,” he says. He says this as if it’s a nuisance, but it’s clear how much he loves geology, and maps.

In fact, Kopera has loved and collected maps since he was a kid. He laughs as he says that he even asked the staff at his church for a layout of the church’s interior.

“They gave it to me, and I just loved it,” he says.

He adds, “I grew up in suburban Baltimore, a very typical suburban space, and maps were a way for me to explore and have adventure. I really loved exploring things and maps were a way to do that in my head. Maps opened up a much broader world for me, even maps of places I knew.”

Now, Kopera’s artwork can do that for us. Looking at Kopera’s maps gives me a sense of pleasurable vertigo – as if geological time had been fast-forwarded and then frozen. I’m seeing the Connecticut, or the Green River, and I’m also seeing all of its ghosts. It’s like seeing a snapshot of time.

Or seeing time itself.



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