

# The Montague Reporter

YEAR 18 – NO. 24

also serving Irving, Gill, Leverett and Wendell

\$1

EDITOR@MONTAGUEREPORTER.ORG

THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

APRIL 16, 2020

## Arthur Challenges Nelson For Montague Selectboard



Seven-year selectboard incumbent Michael Nelson faces a challenger for his seat on June 22 in downtown restaurant owner Ashley Arthur.

By MIKE JACKSON

**MONTAGUE** – For the first time in five years, Montague has multiple candidates on the ballot for a seat on the town selectboard. Ashley Arthur, owner of the Five Eyed Fox restaurant in downtown Turners Falls, has submitted papers to challenge Michael Nelson in his bid for a third full term on the board.

The election has been postponed until June 22, the same date chosen by the town of Gill, which means that the Gill-Montague school district election will still be held simultaneously in both towns. However, according to the district’s executive assistant Sabrina Blanchard, no candidates have turned in papers for either of two open seats on the school committee for the town of Montague.

Montague town clerk Deb Bourbeau reports that besides David Harmon, who is running for re-election as a library trustee, and six candidates for town meeting, only Arthur turned in signed nomination

see **CHALLENGES** page A6

### MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

## Carpenters’ Safety Stoppage Delays DPW Construction

By JEFF SINGLETON

The state carpenter’s union has pulled all of its members off of construction jobs, and Montague town administrator Steve Ellis informed the town’s selectboard Monday night that the stoppage could have a major impact on the construction of the new public works facility on Turners Falls Road.

The company that pours the concrete, Ellis said, employs carpenters to “put forms in place, and things of that nature,” and their absence “is likely to back the project up for a period of a few to several weeks.” Ellis told the board to “stand by for more – we’ll know more in the next couple of weeks,” but that the delay could lead to “budget impacts.”

“Obviously the carpentry people just kind of left,” said selectboard member Michael Nelson. “Are there any things that they left in process that are detrimental if they don’t get completed in the next few months?”

“No,” responded Ellis, “our assessment this morning was that there is no situation of that type there.”

The department of public works facility, scheduled to be completed this summer, is one of a number of Montague construction projects allowed under Governor Baker’s recent emergency order. But the state carpenters’ union and painters’ union, whose leaders ordered their members off of public jobs on April 6, dispute the state’s findings on the safety and emergency nature of the work, according to the *Engineering News-Record*.

“We have had members who have been asking for this and who do not feel they are safe on job sites and don’t understand why construction workers are being sent to work while everyone else is staying home,” said Bob Durand, a spokesman for the North Atlantic States Regional Council of Carpenters. The union has allowed members to

see **MONTAGUE** page A7

### LEVERETT SELECTBOARD

## Leverett Holds Off Scheduling Town Meeting

By JERRI HIGGINS

As COVID-19 has barely begun to peak in Massachusetts, the Leverett selectboard voted Tuesday night to extend the official due date for second-half property tax payments from the regular May deadline to June 1. Penalties and interest are also waived for late payments made on all bills due between March 10 and June 29, including motor vehicle excise taxes and property taxes.

The board will wait until Governor Charlie Baker lifts Massachusetts’ state of emergency to set a date for town meeting. “Until we know what the governor’s going to do, it doesn’t make much sense for us to try to pick a date now,” said board chair Peter d’Errico.

Concerned about the potential impact to the town’s coffers, board members Tom Hankinson and Julie Shively queried town administrator Marjorie McGinnis, who said she had spoken with tax collector Jason Noschese about these extensions for those who might be struggling due to the virus’s impact. “He’s already getting quite a bit of tax payments in,” said McGinnis, “so he’s not worried about cash flow at this point – even if we do postpone these.”

Fire chief John Ingram reported on his and the police department’s COVID-19 quarantine plans. While the Econo Lodge in Hadley has made space available for first responders who might need to quarantine away from home, the Hampden County Sheriff’s Department also has offered space in Ludlow for officers and firefighters who might contract the virus on the job.

Ingram said he favors using the Ludlow accommodations, based on “good things” he’s heard from other first responders who have quarantined there. While Ludlow is further away, it’s free of cost, while the cost at the Econo Lodge will ultimately depend on how many departments quarantine there.

“The [fire] department is currently in good shape with supplies,”

see **LEVERETT** page A8

## An Important Note From Our Business Manager



ANNABEL LEVINE PHOTO

BY ANNABEL LEVINE

**MONTAGUE CITY** – Hello, readers. I write this to you from my home office, a.k.a. dining table, looking out my window onto the wilds of Montague City Road. The wind is howling, and rain is coming down sideways. A lone daffodil in the garden bed below my window has chosen today, of all days, to bloom. A little beauty in the swirling chaos.

This letter is not about plants – you can look to this month’s Great Falls Apple Column for that – but I feel that there is a fitting analogy between that solitary daffodil and this newspaper. Nonprofit, independent papers stand fewer and farther between these days. But even alone, amidst the pelting rain and winds, a daffodil can bloom.

The storm is not yet over. The weatherman said the winds are only set to get stronger as the day goes on. Due to COVID-19, a handful of longtime advertisers, who have generously supported us for years, have had to suspend their advertising. We can only hope that once the storm passes they can once again grace our pages. In the meantime, our financial foundation has grown wobbly.

Pleas for financial assistance are not unheard of in these pages. We’ve always run a razor-thin margin, relying on our community of subscribers, advertisers, and small donors to keep us afloat. While there has been some movement from the federal government to offer small businesses, nonprofits, and coops through the CARES Act, see **BUSINESS** page A2

## A Tank of Gas, and a Full Heart



WOOD PHOTO

Jackie Wisotsky (left) and Tracy Liddell (right) offered some help Wednesday.

By SAMANTHA WOOD

**GREENFIELD** – Tracy Liddell stood on the sidewalk in front of Cumberland Farms on Federal Street Wednesday holding a big sign. It read “RN, CNA FREE GAS,” and hospital workers were rolling in to fill up.

Jackie Wisotsky, Tracy’s mother, stood by the pumps, helping people gas up. When asked what prompted them to come out to make this spontaneous gesture, Wisotsky, wearing

a homemade face mask, began to speak, but her voice caught with emotion, and she turned away to compose herself.

“My wife was a certified nurse midwife at Baystate Franklin Medical Center for more than 20 years,” she explained. “Her name was Susan Liddell. This is for the nurses she worked with.” Wisotsky’s eyes were damp and shining, a smile evident beneath her mask.

“I walked into the store, and told

see **HEART** page A4

### GILL-MONTAGUE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

## Schools Adjust to Online Learning

By MIKE JACKSON

**GILL-MONTAGUE** – Schools are closed statewide at least until May 4 due to the pandemic, but teachers began meeting online with their students this week in an attempt to support them in retaining concepts they learned in the classroom.

Last Thursday, as negotiations over the new “learning plan” were being finalized, the school committee held a special meeting by video conference to discuss whether to cancel April vacation week.

Local districts have been split on the matter, and it was reported that Gill-Montague teachers were also divided on the proposal.

Superintendent Michael Sullivan said 91 parents had replied to a request for comment, with 58 recommending the district “forget about the April vacation, and build on whatever momentum we’re getting” and 10 asking to keep the break.

“If we work through April vacation with remote learning, then the school year ends four days earlier; see **GMRSD** page A6

## Farren Prepares; No Confirmed Cases



NINA ROSSI PHOTO

The facility, which houses a particularly vulnerable population, is on guard.

By JEFF SINGLETON

**MONTAGUE CITY** – One of the well publicized tragedies of the coronavirus pandemic has been its impact on nursing homes and other facilities which care for the elderly. The disease can spread quickly in

these relatively crowded settings, often visited frequently by friends and family members. It can be particularly deadly, due to the higher risk borne by those with pre-existing conditions.

One of the first COVID “hot spots” in the US was a nursing home

north of Seattle where, according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), 81 residents, 34 staff members, and 14 visitors were infected. (These were cases confirmed by tests, which may understate the level of infection.) 23 persons died from the outbreak at the nursing home.

Nearly a month later, a major COVID outbreak struck the Soldiers’ Home in Holyoke, where 44 residents have died as of April 14.

*USA Today* reported this week that in response to a survey, 37 states reported COVID cases in 2,300 nursing homes. (Florida did not respond to the survey.) The paper estimates that there are currently 15,600 nursing homes in the country, housing 1.3 million people.

The Farren Care Center on Montague City Road in Montague

see **FARREN** page A5

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# The Montague Reporter

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The Little Red Hen bakery crew at Upinngil Farm on Wednesday morning consisted of Sorrel Hatch, Clifford Hatch, and Jodie Stafford.

# Neither Snow Nor Rain Nor Heat...

What we think of as the motto of the United States Postal Service, the carriers' pledge to deliver the mail under even the most adverse conditions, is adapted from the ancient Greek historian Herodotus's description of the communication system which held together the First Persian Empire in the fifth century B.C.:

"According to the number of days of which the entire journey consists, so many horses and men are set at intervals, each man and horse appointed for a day's journey. These neither snow nor rain nor heat nor darkness of night prevents from accomplishing each one the task proposed to him, with the very utmost speed...."

This system of riders, the *angarium*, was essential to the geographically vast system of distributed power established by King Darius I. They facilitated trade – and governance – along a nearly 1,700-mile highway stretching from one end of the cradle of civilization to the other.

Empires, as it turns out, fall. The United States Census, an official head count mandated by the nation's Constitution, has been held every ten years, like clockwork, since 1790. According to the Census Bureau, only 49% of households have sent in their census forms as of this week; in 2010, the response rate as of mid-April was 64%. The next step, visits by census takers to all non-responding households, has been delayed indefinitely, though the Bureau still vows to complete the task by the year's end.

Primary elections in 17 states and Puerto Rico – representing 30% of the nation's population – have been rescheduled until June or July or postponed indefinitely. It is unclear what they will look like, but very likely that they will depend heavily on mail-in ballots. And there is no consensus among scientists as to when the threat of the coronavirus will pass. The World Health Organization reported this week that it appears that not everyone who recovers from the disease associated with the virus develops antibodies capable of protecting them from getting sick a second time, putting the idea of a slowly-acquired "herd immunity" into doubt.

Even after we flatten the curve, then what? And we are told it may be 12 to 18 months before a vaccine

is rolled out on a mass scale.

Over the last several decades, with global advances in automation (however unevenly applied), a wide gap has opened up between the amount of work essential to ensuring a baseline of human survival, and the amount necessary to feed an ever-growing system of profit. This month, everywhere on Earth, people gained an important object lesson about that gap.

Who can stay at home, and who must work to prevent a grave material collapse? If all the central banks on planet print enough money to keep the ledger books in the black, isn't it enough to simply hold the creditors at bay while the rest of us figure out how to make sure everyone is fed and sheltered?

The battle lines are being drawn. The president's proposed "Council to Re-Open America" is comprised of, in business terms: Mark Meadows, a real estate developer from Florida, one of the richest members of Congress; Steve Mnuchin, a hedge fund manager from New York; Larry Kudlow, who lost his job as a senior managing director at Bear Stearns over a coke addiction and became a political pundit; Beltway corporate lawyer Robert Lighthizer; Wilbur Ross, a notorious bankruptcy raider and billionaire; Ivanka Trump, a daughter; and Jared Kushner, a son-in-law.

Our country has been through some nasty times before, but this one might be terminal.

The United States Postal Service is one of the great material pillars of our society. USPS is funded entirely by the purchase of stamps, and has been struggling since being intentionally hobbled in 2006 by a law that requires it to pre-fund 50 years' worth of retiree health benefits, a standard to which no other public or private entity is held.

Competing with private logistics firms on the market, USPS also directly subsidizes them with fixed-rate last-mile package delivery in rural areas. It employs veterans at three times the national rate, and provides one of the last remaining paths into middle-class stability.

In a slightly better world, the post office would be figuring out how to provide banking services to all Americans in this crisis, but instead it is under direct attack by sordid corporate ideologues who smell blood in the water. At Mnuchin's urging, the president

# Letter to the Editors

## Rabbit Driver Grateful

Hundreds of families throughout Montague came out to wave to Peter Cottontail during his "Socially Distant Drive-by Tour" on Saturday, April 11. While these times are challenging for us all, the community spirit that was exhibited along the tour route was truly inspiring.

We appreciate Chief Chris Williams of the Montague Police Dept., Chief John Zellman of the Turners Falls Fire Dept., and Chief David Hansen of the Montague Center Volunteer Fire Dept. (and their respective crew members) for the coordination of escorting Peter throughout Montague. Special thanks also goes out to Jay Fritz of Montague for his critical involvement. This truly was a team effort, and it was clear that those afore-

mentioned added that extra ingredient.

We would also be remiss if we didn't acknowledge Peter Cottontail himself! Everyone appreciates Mr. Cottontail for setting aside time from his busy schedule to take the tour through town.

Finally, we still hope to conduct the egg hunt at some point this summer to make sure our 5,000 eggs find a few good homes. We'll be sure to get the word out when that time comes, but until then, we hope everyone stays safe and healthy.

Sincerely,

**Jon Dobosz, CPRP, CPO**  
**Montague Director of Parks & Rec**

threatened to veto the entire \$2 trillion Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act over a \$13 billion dollar grant for USPS. He agreed to sign it when it was replaced with a \$10 billion loan.

Six thousand Postal Service employees are currently in self-quarantine; nearly a thousand are either confirmed or presumptive COVID-positive cases. At least 19 have died. Many report insufficient personal protective equipment (PPE), and as of this week, over 600,000 people had signed a petition to give them hazard pay for the duration of the pandemic.

Three weeks ago the *Montague Reporter* halted delivery of our paper out of concern for the safety of our volunteers, carriers, and readers. We'll be back in print next week, and under our new temporary plan, sending papers out to all subscribers via the US Mail. They've always been there for us all, and we're happy to buy the stamps.

But in the longer run, things won't ever go back to normal. It's right out in the open now, just how little this ruling class values our lives – and how much their system depends on our endless, pointless labor.

### BUSINESS from page A1

our 501(c)4 status excludes us from accessing this help. We must continue to rely on local support.

Since our March 26 edition, we have been publishing in digital format only, in order to ensure the safety of our staff, volunteers, and readers. We understand that not having a printed newspaper has been a hardship for some of our readers.

Next week, April 23, we intend to try a new system: continuing to offer the paper for free in digital form, while mailing physical copies to all subscribers and placing them on limited newsstands. If you would like to opt out of this mailing, please email us (*see below*).

Eventually we hope to return to regular home delivery.

We are grateful for our subscribers who have renewed their subscriptions, or even purchased new ones, without the promise of a physical copy being delivered to their door; our advertisers that have continued supporting us in our temporarily digital form; and all the community members who have chosen to donate time and money to help our endeavor succeed. We can't do it without you.

Thank you all for your support, be well, and stay safe!

**Annie Levine**  
**Business Manager,**  
**The Montague Reporter**

## To Opt Out Of Mailing:

We will be mailing next week's edition to all subscribers, while still providing PDFs online for free. We are not sure how long this "Phase II" of our coronavirus response will last, but we do know that it will cost us more to mail to subscribers than our regular weekly delivery. If you are a subscriber who would like to opt out of receiving a mailed edition, please email your name and address to [info@montaguereporter.org](mailto:info@montaguereporter.org).

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LARKIN-ROSSI ILLUSTRATION

Compiled by NINA ROSSI

While the wind today sweeps the yard clean and I'm wishing the rain would cleanse away all the COVID-19 out there as well, I'm craving a store-bought chai latte instead of the tea bag variety cooling in my cup. Memories of the sounds of restaurant kitchen hubbub backing up the murmuring of coffee-shop patrons actually brings tears to my eyes, because I miss "us."

Instead of participating in public spaces, I am overly in touch with all things "me," and I'm bored with the constraints of my cupboard and fridge. I hop on and off my bicycle desk and forage handfuls of nuts and dried fruit while thinking about ideas for *Local Briefs*.

At the same time, I'm grateful to have a home, to have food, to feel safe, as I read stories from elsewhere: stories about people working in healthcare and emergency services, stories about the Guardian Angels in NYC handing out food and alcohol wipes to homeless people living in Penn Station, stories about firefighters removing bodies from apartments to store them in refrigerated trailers parked in the streets. I feel like I am not really comprehending the enormity of loss from here in Turners Falls.

More immediately, what's happening this week? Since filling this page with items from 100 years ago for our last edition, a few notifications have accumulated that I will share here.

But first, **how are you doing?** What do you miss most right now? Are you, like me, wondering what will not come back into the new normal, wondering if this is the end of handshaking, of the friendly peck on the cheek, of hugs and hand slaps with strangers? Is it the end of crowded concert halls, contact improv and contra dances, sardine-packed planes, trains and buses?

Libraries have been closed, of course. Websites for our local libraries are comprehensive compilations of links to useful information about the virus, things to do in isolation, online reading materials, and activities and learning resources for kids.

The **Leverett library** is sending out a weekly e-newsletter and encouraging "book-spotting" as a way to keep interaction going between readers and the library, even though their doors are closed and lending materials are not circulating.

The idea is this: take a photo of a book out in the wild, or in a home setting, with a stuffie or a favorite pet, and send it with a caption to [leverett@cwmars.org](mailto:leverett@cwmars.org). It's also fine to use your imagination and make up a book title and illustrate the cover yourself! The entries may be posted on the library Facebook page and e-newsletter.

The **LAVA Center** in Greenfield has been working hard to find ways to continue providing a participatory platform for local theater and arts online. In addition to hosting online open mics every other Tuesday,

which consist of showcases of short videos contributed by local creatives – read a poem by yourself or someone else; perform a skit; do a piece of music; and so on – they are now looking for people who would like to be part of **an online play** about college students in the 1960s.

Playwright Rich Orloff wrote the script for *Days of Possibilities* based on letters and interviews with students at Oberlin College about the college's response to the Vietnam War. The play has been adapted for use on Zoom and other platforms, and the LAVA Center is looking for readers for the script. Nothing needs to be memorized, and most scenes involve one or two people at a time.

The online performance is scheduled for the anniversary of the Kent State shootings on May 4. Find out how to participate at [info@localaccess.org](mailto:info@localaccess.org) or (413) 512-3063.



JOE R. PARZYCH PHOTO

Contributor Joe R. Parzych of *Gill* sent this photo: "A friendly, curious cat takes a peek at the Montague Reporter's front page. Hoping and praying for positive news of sickness to be over soon, so everyone can get back to normal and enjoy the fresh air."

Are you an artist or performer impacted by the COVID-19 shutdown? Mass Cultural Council has announced they will be awarding **at least 225 grants of \$1,000** to applicants chosen *randomly*. That's right: if you meet the qualifications and fill out the application, winners will be drawn from pooled applications from each of six geographic regions in the state.

You must be a resident 18 years of age or older, and have reported at least 25% of your taxable income on your most recent return from working as an individual artist, humanist, or scientist. You must also demonstrate at least \$1,000 of income loss not recoupable through unemployment benefits.

There are no stipulations on how the money may be used. The deadline is April 22; fill out applications at [www.massculturalcouncil.org](http://www.massculturalcouncil.org).

This is a nice time of year to be outside, especially if you're lucky enough to have a yard. The grass and the weeds have not started growing yet, and the impulse to plan more plantings is very strong while things look so tidy and under control.

It's also the time of year when you can sign up for **your very own farm share**, or CSA. Find local farms who offer shares at [www.buylocal-food.org](http://www.buylocal-food.org). There are several farm stands listed that are open right now

where you may buy local veggies, dairy, meat, baked goods, eggs, etc in Franklin County: Hager's Farm Market in Shelburne; Atlas Farm in South Deerfield; Upinngil, in Gill; and Sweet Morning Farm in Leyden.

The website also lists farms and farmstands in the Valley who offer curbside pickup and delivery options.

**Great Falls Books Through Bars**, an organization working to provide reading materials to incarcerated people, writes to say that they are still continuing their mission during this crisis. The collective has been working to safely respond to an ever-growing backlog of letters. They hope to begin sending out packages soon.

"Each package will contain a letter from us regarding our status, one requested book, and information on protecting themselves from COVID-19," reads their latest announcement. "All steps in the process will be done with precautions taken to ensure everyone's safety. We truly miss seeing folks during volunteer days! We hope you are all doing well and keeping safe."

Keep in touch at [www.greatfalls-booksthroughbars.org](http://www.greatfalls-booksthroughbars.org).

**Neighborhoods are coming up with some creative ideas** during this time of sheltering at home, including teddy bear and rainbow scavenger hunts. Simply agree about a "theme" and stick items on porches, in yards, or in windows so that others may spot them on a walk or a drive through a certain neighborhood or town. It could be as simple as a drawing or other image in a window.

Another idea I've seen suggested on sites like [www.signup.com](http://www.signup.com) is having everyone dress up in some sort of a costume to take the trash and recycling out on that day of the week. It could become a contest for best, weirdest, or most original costume. You could also decide to make a contest out of decorating front doors, mailboxes, or sidewalk chalking.

The CityLab website, though hardly "local," features interesting reporting and visual narrative exploring metro areas and neighborhoods, with an eye on the future of these spaces. Their latest newsletter includes a callout for **submissions on the theme of neighborhood mapping**.

They are asking readers to create a map of "your community as you experience it under coronavirus. Your map can be as straightforward or subjective as you wish. You might map key destinations or beloved neighbors, a new daily routine, the places you miss, the future city you hope to see, or anything else that's become important to you. It might also be a map of your indoor life."

To participate, see their website at [www.citylab.com](http://www.citylab.com). Maps may be featured in future articles. You will also find other interesting articles about these times, such as "The Power of Parks in a Pandemic," "How Infectious Disease Inspired the American Bathroom," stuff about weirdness between roommates during quarantine, and much, much more.

Also from a little farther afield, the Boston Rape Crisis Center sent us news about their **Virtual Walk for Change**, scheduled for April 26 at 10 a.m. The group's annual fundraiser walk usually raises hundreds of thousands of dollars to support confidential services survivors rely on, including hotlines, counseling, legal advocacy, housing and other crucial assistance.

Due to COVID-19, they are moving online. Participants who register and pay a \$40 fee will have access to online live streaming activities and other exclusive content associated with the "virtual walk" event.

The rape crisis center was founded in 1973, and all of their services to survivors are provided for free. Find out more at [www.barcwalk.org](http://www.barcwalk.org).

The climate change activist group Extinction Rebellion Western Mass invites folks to join them in a **"conversation in art" on Earth Day**, April 22.

"Create art with messages of healing for people, communities, and the Earth," they write. "Any time between now and April 22, leave your art at central community locations [TBA] or along trails or in front of your home where people can encounter them." Find out more at [www.xrwesternmass.org](http://www.xrwesternmass.org).

Got news to share? Recipes, resources, even rants? We want to help **get the word out**.

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**HEART** from pg A1

the manager I would like to buy gas for nurses, and they told me to go for it.” Wisotsky said she spent hundreds out of her own pocket.

Susan Liddell died of cancer in 2011. According to a Baystate Health webpage, her career spanned 25 years, during which she helped deliver more than 2,000 babies.

A new birthing room at the Greenfield hospital was dedicated in Liddell’s name in 2018, with a portrait of her beaming at a newborn in her hands. The painting, “Hello Sweet Baby,” takes its title from the first words Liddell spoke to each child.

A woman pulled up beside the pumps in a small sedan and rolled down her window. Wisotsky turned to greet her. “I don’t even need gas right now, but I had to stop and thank you,” the driver said. “I work on the frontline in Northampton, at Cooley Dickinson, on a COVID unit.”

Tracy Liddell, still holding the sign on the sidewalk, said, “This reminds me of my mom. Now it is a memory about her.”

When asked how it would have made her mom feel if she could know they were out there buying gas for nurses, Tracy smiled broadly: “It would make her very happy.”

To read more about Susan Liddell, see [www.baystatehealth.org/news/018/08/new-birthing-room-at-baystate-franklin-medical-center-in-dedication-of-midwife](http://www.baystatehealth.org/news/018/08/new-birthing-room-at-baystate-franklin-medical-center-in-dedication-of-midwife).



GUEST EDITORIAL

By NINA GROSS

**GREENFIELD** – “Okay, I’ll take Woodstock and frogs,” I say after deliberating at the post office window. My favorite postal worker has been holding up all the choices of stamps. He smiles and tells me I’ve made a good choice. It calms me down.

When he asked how I was a moment earlier, I felt my heart racing. I didn’t know what to say. “It’s odd.” I sighed the words against the plexiglass barrier separating us. Part of the new normal. I’m not usually at a loss for words.

I feed my credit card into the reader, holding it between gloved fingers. I take my stamps and put on a smile. “Thank you,” I tell him, and in case that’s not enough, “I’m really glad to see you! It’s always good to see you!”

It’s not the first time I’ve told him this. But it feels fresh. I have enough stamps to make it through this thing, to pay the bills that aren’t set on autopay. I vow to write to family members. A few days go by, and I’m avoiding Main Street altogether, walking to the river with a folded napkin held in place with two hair ties over my ears – facemask on. When I get to a wooded area I sit down at the base of a tree and recharge, like my cellphone. Breathing fresh air, facemask off.

When this is over, my aikido buddies and I will celebrate by throwing one another around on the mat. My martial arts class had been getting me through the week. But mostly things aren’t all that different for me.

I’ve lived alone for a while; I spend too much time on the internet and thumb-texting my friends. I can go a long time without face to face contact, though it’s not my preference. I’m still teaching classes every day – well, only one on Friday, now.

Some of my students couldn’t continue. One suddenly has a full house and more responsibility. Her son lost his job with all the shutdowns. She’s facing new shortages of time, space, privacy, and money. Others don’t have internet connection, or they’re just too overwhelmed.

But most of my students are continuing their music lessons online. We look at each other through our screens. I play, they play – we can’t quite get it together to play in unison; nobody has that much bandwidth. I get tired from animating my face and making hand gestures at the camera when I want my little ones to stop playing. I get tired from focussing my attention in only one direction.

But things are going well, for the most part,

# Jail Reports Two Cases of COVID-19 Among Employees

By SAMANTHA WOOD

**GREENFIELD** – Franklin County House of Correction learned of a second employee with COVID-19 in recent days. The first was detected among kitchen staff, and the second worked in close proximity to the first.

As of Wednesday, there were no known cases among the incarcerated population, and none of the inmates had symptoms of COVID-19, according to Sheriff Christopher Donelan.

The employees who have tested positive were sent home to heal, and won’t return to work until they are cleared by a doctor, Donelan said in an earlier interview.

Kitchen staff and all guards wear face masks when they are working face-to-face with the people incarcerated at the Greenfield jail.

Donelan said in an interview Wednesday that after the second



The sheriff’s office has been working to keep the virus out of the building.

case was detected, other employees who were in close proximity or were concerned about exposure were sent for testing as well. “Anyone who came to us who was worried they had been exposed, got tested,” Donelan said.

The testing was made possi-

ble by the new testing facility for first responders and medical personnel at The Big E fairgrounds.

Any first responder with an ID who wants testing can get it there, regardless of whether they have symptoms.

# Considerations for the Future



Image courtesy of the RISD Museum, Providence, Rhode Island.

Building More Stately Mansions by Aaron Douglas (1944) is a cornerstone painting of the Harlem Renaissance. It symbolizes the achievements of humanity (celebrating the African diaspora) from ancient Egypt toward a Utopian ideal.

despite the starts and stops. And parents tell me that I’m playing an important role, like my postal clerk, in making this thing feel okay. This new normal.

For years I’ve been thinking about all the things that are wrong with the old normal, way before the coronavirus made us stop to reconsider. When I was in college, I wrote about the Western mindset – building fences around our little properties, staying cloistered in nuclear units, bringing water and entertainment into the house through pipes and radio waves. Wiring the landscape to bend to our will.

The focus seemed all wrong, even back then. Narrower and narrower. Our culture of isolation. And though I was involved in activities that brought us all together, they too were mostly compartmentalized. Nothing like the Woodstock festival my sisters attended.

It’s only gotten worse as the internet brings us closer together; it also puts the world in our hands one more degree of separation, as we rely on it for everything. Sometimes, I respond to people’s personal posts on Facebook. A sad emoji, sad stand-in for my compassion about their grandma dying, or children separated from parents at the border.

The truth is, we’ve been practicing social

distancing for centuries, distancing ourselves from what we are doing to the earth, to other nations, to the poor, with our policies of greed. This standard makes it possible to divorce ourselves from the outcomes of our actions: when we hit the send button, when we eat a chocolate bar, when we mindlessly purchase cardboard-encased plastic and throw it all out the next day. Out of sight, out of mind.

Even in our global conflicts. We drop bombs to get our way by a touch of a button. Someone does this in our name. Anyone who takes a life should have to look into the eyes of the other person or the other animal for that matter. There shouldn’t be a middle man. At the very least, we should be grateful – or horrified. But we aren’t. We hardly give it a thought, until death could come for us.

It’s a comfort to know that the whole world is stopping to take a break right now. And while we do, the air is clearing. And we can see the unsustainability of the lifestyles we’ve been living. If we continue, we’ll poison the planet until we all need respirators all the time.

But what’s the alternative? Revolution is for dead people, isn’t it? – real people who lived long ago before we became truly civilized. We, their replacements, plastic replicas of humanity thinking on its feet, we don’t really have free will; we don’t really think we can step off the treadmill, do we?

I look around and wonder. Are we still capable of innovation? Can we build new communities? Can we redeem ourselves? Heal the planet? With all our know-how, can we “Build More Stately Mansions?”

Maybe this will teach us something, while we hunker down to prevent deaths of strangers and loved ones. If life is sacred, isn’t every life so? If saving these lives is a collective task involving mindfulness and sacrifice, then isn’t the planet that gives life also sacred?

Combating this virus necessitates a kind of reverence. And not the kind some of us reserve for church once a week. We must be mindful in new ways. We must think about and care for one another in new ways.

Employing some of the same considerations, couldn’t we create that better future? Community building, respect for science, securing health care for all! Maybe these lessons from the virus can stay in our system.

Nina Gross is a poet, violist, and composer who lives in Greenfield.

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NOTES FROM THE GILL SELECTBOARD

# June 22 For Election; Bridge Name Question

By GEORGE BRACE

At their April 13 meeting, the Gill selectboard followed suit with other area towns responding to the COVID-19 situation, moving town elections forward to June 22, changing the due date for property taxes and exemption-filing to June 1, and waiving late fees and penalties on payments for town bills with due dates between March 4 and June 29, if paid by June 29.

The steps were made in accordance with a recent law signed by Governor Baker allowing towns leeway in these matters. The board also began discussion on what to do about town meeting, normally held on the first Monday in May.

The meeting began with a COVID-19 update. Members of the town’s emergency response team said there was not a lot to report. Fire chief Gene Beaubien said members of the department were taking “all the precautions needed” when out on calls, and supplies ordered from the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) continued to be delivered by the National Guard.

Town administrator Ray Purington said that on the town hall side, things were holding steady, “a lot better than things getting worse.”

The board discussed the spring election with town clerk Doreen Stevens and decided to move it to June 22, with hours and the set-up of the polling station to be determined later. Stevens said that Montague had moved its elections to that day, and that Gill doing the same would eliminate any confusion in the Gill-Montague regional school committee elections.

Stevens and the board also discussed ways to increase voter and election worker safety, including the use of absentee ballots, and how the polling station might be set up to achieve social distancing, such as a drive-up window or outdoor tents. Stevens said the state had authorized early absentee voting, which would also help.

Board member Randy Crochier asked how quickly Stevens could have the ballots ready, and she replied she had everything she needed, and once the warrant was posted, she could have the ballots printed and available. She also suggested ads could be taken out in both local newspapers, along with postings on the town’s website and newsletter.

Crochier agreed, adding, “Both newspapers would be good – they both need the advertising!”

The board thanked Stevens, who was hired as town clerk just last year and is administering her first town election. “You’re getting your feet wet past your knees,” said Crochier.

The board held off on setting a date for town meeting, but Purington said it “certainly won’t be May 4.” He recommend holding off on making any decisions.

### Signs and Symptoms

The board decided to send a letter in support of the Gill historical commission’s request to the MassDOT to take down the “Gill-Montague Bridge” sign at the north end

of the bridge, due to it being inaccurate and conflicting with the “Turners Falls-Gill Bridge” sign on the south side of the bridge, which uses the original name.

Board member John Ward expressed a general desire to remove the name of a “war criminal” from signage, but said he didn’t think this was the right opportunity, and was in full support of the historical commission.

Purington suggested the letter could indicate Gill’s willingness to discuss changing the name, and the board agreed.

Claire Chang and Alden Booth of the energy commission advocated for the installation of an electric vehicle charging station, hopefully with most of the \$8,000 cost being funded by a state Green Communities grant.

It was decided that it was a good idea, and that the Riverside district would be the best location, but the timing and the uncertainty of receiving the grant were concerns. The town would need to sign a license agreement with Eversource, binding Gill to payments totaling roughly \$600 to \$1,000 per year, prior to learning whether the grant will be awarded.

Booth said that he has been told that grant money is dwindling, and said the deadline for the application is also fast approaching. Board member Greg Snedeker noted that money for such projects may dry up for the near future due to the economic effects of the coronavirus on the economy.

The board decided to have the energy commission continue to pursue the matter, and take it up again at the next meeting.

### Other Business

The board approved the appointment of 10 members of the fire department to the board of fire engineers, and appointed Jake Whitney as a junior firefighter through June 30.

Crochier began to ask Chief Beaubien what junior firefighters were doing right now, suggesting someone underage shouldn’t be at the department, but an alarm sounded and the chief was off and running. Crochier said he’d follow up, but trusted the junior firefighters were not holding meetings or doing much currently.

The board approved a timeline for its municipal aggregated electricity program, authorizing Purington to sign a contract for the services on May 20, after another look at “rough draft” pricing on May 14.

Purington reported that the pump in the sewage transfer station in Riverside had been cleaned and repaired, but further work is needed on the sensors. The board approved a sewer commitment bill which Purington said was “pretty much in line with a winter quarter.”

The board regretfully accepted the resignation of Chet Kuzontkoski from the memorial committee and as a veterans’ graves officer.

Purington reported that bulky waste collection day had been put on hold, and the Franklin County Solid Waste District (FCSWD) was working on rescheduling and event parameters.

### FARREN from page A1

reports that, as of April 13, there were no “confirmed” cases of COVID-19 at its 120-bed nursing facility on Montague City Road. “We report this information to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health [DPH] on a daily basis,” said Christine Looby, the regional director for sales, marketing, and communications at Trinity Health of New England Senior Communities, which owns the Farren. Trinity’s parent corporation runs both nursing facilities and hospitals.

The number of “confirmed” cases in any facility, Looby agreed, is limited to those who have tested positive for the virus. She told the *Reporter* that the Farren follows the guidelines set by the DPH for testing. State guidelines target testing to those who are highly symptomatic, and do not list separate criteria for testing in nursing homes. The department cites federal CDC guidance which recommends that nursing facilities “identify infections early and take actions to prevent spread.” This recommendation also does not include criteria for testing.

Massachusetts has recently expanded its testing capacity for nursing homes by establishing a program for on-site testing, with samples collected by the National Guard and transported to the State Public Health Laboratory in Jamaica Plain. The results are said to be available in two days. According to the DPH website, this program can be accessed when a resident in a facility is “exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms,” but it is not specified how serious the symptoms need to be.

On the issue of personal protective equipment (PPE), Looby said that “Farren has sufficient PPE to handle projected infections.” When asked about the availability of ventilators, she explained

that “a ventilator is something that would be used in an acute care setting, not at Farren Care Center.”

Looby also said that Farren has a “designated isolation area” within the facility which may be used for “monitoring and treating residents who may show symptoms of higher-risk infectious diseases.”

Many facilities have restricted, and even eliminated, visits by family and friends, particularly when the virus hits a facility. This is no doubt an effective way to limit the spread of the pandemic, but it comes at a high cost for the elderly and their families.

**“Just to be clear, if a resident were at the end of his or her life journey, the resident would be permitted to receive visits from close family members – one at a time, and with each visitor being screened for COVID-19 symptoms.”**

*Christine Looby, Trinity Health of NE*

A *New York Times* article on the Washington state nursing home outbreak included a photograph of a woman peering through a window in an attempt to communicate with her dying mother.

The article quotes Melissa West, whose 95-year-old mother lives in a nursing home in Seattle free of the infection: “I’m concerned that the loneliness and helplessness will kill her quicker than the virus. I just think of her being there by herself. Just sitting in her wheelchair all day. Being trapped and waiting.”

On March 16, the state DPH significantly revised its guidelines, which had initially recommended no visitations to facilities

infected with COVID. The new recommendations allow for family visitation in “certain compassionate care situations, such as an end-of-life situation.”

Looby initially referenced the earlier state guidelines to the *Reporter*, but then sent a follow-up email. “Just to be clear, if a resident were at the end of his or her life journey, the resident would be permitted to receive visits from close family members – one at a time, and with each visitor being screened by Farren Care Center for COVID-19 symptoms,” she wrote.

The potential for a COVID invasion at Farren creates a significant risk for residents of a unique facility, which tends to serve a population with both physical and mental health challenges. Looby listed the “specialty populations served” there as including acquired brain injury, “AIDS/HIV, Bariatric, Huntington’s Disease, Mental Illness, Intellectual Disabilities, Multiple Sclerosis, Traumatic Brain Injury, [and] Younger Residents (21-65).”

One local resident whose partner works at the Farren, who spoke with the *Reporter* this week on the condition of anonymity, said their partner was “impressed” by management’s response to the pandemic and their communication with staff. “They have been very proactive,” the source said.

Turners Falls fire chief and emergency management director John Zellman gave Farren a similar evaluation. He said he has been in “constant contact” with the facility, and has reviewed its plan of action “in case it gets in there.”

“We need to look at all the mental health aspects of this situation,” Zellman added, moving from the topic of Farren to the overall crisis. “We’re staying at home, but pick up the phone and call someone you haven’t talked to in years.”



NOTES FROM THE WENDELL SELECTBOARD

# A Short, Extra, Selectboard Meeting

By JOSH HEINEMANN

On Wednesday, April 8, during its off week, the Wendell selectboard held an extra meeting by conference call in order to write a special town mailing to send out to town residents relating to the COVID-19 pandemic. They were joined by board of health chair Barbara Craddock, finance committee members Doug Tanner and Al McIntire, tax collector Penny Delorey, town clerk Gretchen Smith, fire chief Joe Cuneo, and emergency manager Lonny Ricketts.

Delorey said that property taxes, normally due May 1, should not be due until June 1, with interest accruing only after June 30. With almost no discussion board members approved that by unanimous vote. Smith said the news can go on the town website and posting places.

Delorey’s husband Phil, building inspector and chair of the highway commission, came to the phone and said WRATS operations have changed. The free store and deposit returnables shed are closed, and the recycling bin was moved to the back of the property in the open.

As of this Saturday, April 18, WRATS patrons will be required to wear a mask, as the attendants have started doing already. He suggested a temporary hazardous pay increase of \$5 per hour during the crisis.

Tanner said the money is there, because revenues are up (although so are tipping fees), and board members approved the raise.

The town election is postponed until June 4. Smith has recommended voting by mail to avoid citizens having to get close to each other and to election workers. Instructions, encouragement, and an application for a mail ballot will be included in the townwide mailing.

The month-long delay will allow time for that process.

Town meeting is postponed indefinitely, as the commonwealth has allowed. Talk of meeting on the common, with chairs at six- to ten-foot intervals, or remote meetings was met with skepticism, the complications judged to outweigh the benefits.

Massachusetts has allowed towns to operate on a 1/12 per month budget for FY’21, which begins July 1, until towns can hold a legitimate meeting. Tanner said both the school budget, up \$138,000, and insurance bill are due in full at the beginning of the fiscal year. He suggested a midsummer town meeting to set a real budget, but warned of a fall resurgence of infections.

Cuneo noted that directives still prohibit gatherings of 10 or more people.

Selectboard member Christine Heard said there is no urgency to set the town meeting date.

Town coordinator Nancy Aldrich joined the discussion of logistics for getting the extra newsletter mailed to Wendell households, including the cost.

Cuneo said the fire department is still well equipped with personal protective equipment (PPE) for first responders. He said Mark Kemsley is open to the use of Kemsley Academy buildings for holding patients as needed, but details have not been worked out yet. The emergency operations center in New Salem has had few calls so far. Craddock said that Wendell had no reported cases, as of April 8.

Heard said that the Massachusetts Broadband Institute and Westfield Gas & Electric are increasing internet bandwidth at the library and its parking lot, with no extra cost to Wendell. Other sites for increased bandwidth were mentioned, but rejected.

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# Basic Needs Station Opens on Third Street

By MIKE JACKSON

**TURNERS FALLS** – Anyone (that’s *anyone*) in need of supplies or support should be aware that a basic needs station is now open at the Brick House, 24 Third Street, from noon to 3 p.m. every Tuesday and Thursday.

“We’re not having any sort of intake process – folks can just come on down,” says AJ, a peer advocate with the Western Mass Recovery Learning Community (RLC). The organization has been engaged in basic needs distribution in Holyoke, Springfield, Greenfield, and Pittsfield in recent weeks, and is now extending its operations to downtown Turners.

Available supplies include breakfast snacks and sandwiches; personal hygiene products such as tampons, razors, and hand sanitizer; masks and foot warmers; bleach kits; phone chargers; and cellphones with prepaid SIM cards.

The Brick House has also extended the offer of a bathroom with a shower for those in need of one.

“We’re wearing masks, making sure to wash our hands frequently, and are wiping down anything that anybody touches as people come through,” Natan, another RLC staff member, says of the safety precautions the group is taking. “It’s harder than ever to get some of these things, and we want to have this station be a spot that’s available and easy to access. We trust people to take what they need from it.”

The RLC organizes a range of peer-led support activities throughout the region, but many regular groups are currently meeting online or by phone. (For a full listing, see [www.westernmassrlc.org](http://www.westernmassrlc.org).)

In addition to material supplies, anyone who stops by will find peers ready to listen, lend support, and help talk through whatever problems they may be facing. There is access to a printer and photocopier, and the advocates can help with accessing benefits and information.



A range of helpful supplies are available for those who need them, no questions asked.

“In Turners Falls we have a Community Development Block Grant that we’ve been using to support a kickboxing class and an Alternatives to Suicide group here at the Brick House,” Natan says. “Since those are on hiatus, we have a little bit of extra room under that grant contract to have people here, and buy some supplies.”

Still, they say, the RLC has been digging deep into its budget to support the basic needs distribution. “It feels really important that we use the resources that we have right now to support people,” Natan adds. “It’s definitely hurting us financially – hopefully we’ll be able to make up the difference later.”

AJ, who has been working in Pittsfield during the crisis ushered in by the pandemic, describes the situation in that city. “In Pittsfield there was a

really big need for food, and folks weren’t allowed to stay in the shelter during the day, so they were out in the rain and snow,” she says. “A lot of the supplies we were providing were to keep people warm and dry – socks, rain ponchos – and then as much food as we could possibly give out.”

Locals with resources to spare – “especially hand sanitizer, masks, food, phones, and toilet paper,” says Natan – are encouraged to drop off donations at the station, too. The organization can pass on supplies to other local groups, and has been encountering a lot of need in the region’s larger cities.

“I’m excited that we can do this, and I hope that we can sustain it,” says AJ.

Her phone number, (413) 824-8393, is available to the public for more information.

## CHALLENGES from page A1

papers by the deadline. The Montague Democratic Committee, which can nominate candidates directly onto the town ballot, indefinitely postponed its caucus in mid-March due to concerns over the novel coronavirus.

Nevertheless, Nelson indicated that he plans to campaign to retain his seat. “I’m thrilled, I must say, that I have an opponent,” he told the *Reporter*. “It’s a really great sign of democracy – I’m thrilled that another candidate has emerged with ideas and visions... We of course all have our different views, but I’m thrilled to hear that there’s someone else looking to bring their time and talent to the town of Montague.”

Arthur said she was running for the seat “as a means to give back” to a town that has been supportive to her business.

“I have first-hand experience of how much of a positive impact the selectboard can have for people and local businesses,” she said. “Working with the selectboard has been, across the board, beneficial to my staff and my business. This town as a whole has given me so much.”

Arthur moved to town in 2014 and opened the Five Eyed Fox later that year with two partners as a “café-bar,” though it shifted in focus toward dinner service. The Third Street eatery closed last May, reopening in February with Arthur as its sole owner.

“I’m a downtown business owner who has seen firsthand the drastic change in landscape that has occurred in the past five years,” she said. “More people are moving to town and filling up empty spaces, and creating the opportunity of new growth

for the town.”

When schools and restaurants alike closed last month due to the pandemic, Arthur reopened for delivery, and for several weeks prepared and distributed free lunches for children.

“New things are happening, and we as a community are growing for the better,” Arthur said, “and I want to be instrumental in the process of facilitating positive growth for our wonderful town.”

“I have not found myself feeling greatly at odds with previous selectboard decisions,” she added. “However, I believe a fresh voice and perspective could greatly benefit the town in progressing towards its full potential.”

Arthur’s candidacy comes after four years in which incumbent selectboard members have appeared on the town ballot unopposed. In 2015, Rich Kuklewicz ran a successful insurgent campaign against Mark Fairbrother, who had served on the board for two terms.

Michael Nelson, first elected in 2013 in a contested special election after Patricia Allen’s early departure, ran unopposed in both 2014 and 2017.

“I have been very proud to serve on the selectboard,” said Nelson. “It has been a team effort, and I’m really pleased to be part of that team. We’ve made incredible strides in everything from infrastructural improvements to aligned school budgets to downtown viability to park improvements.”

Nelson’s first foray into town office came in 2005, when he was elected to a seat on the board of health previously held by his late father, Mark Nelson, Sr. “My dad died in 2004, and when the election

came up for it, I decided to run, as I was entering into my public health career,” he explained.

He worked as a state contractor for eight years, and is now in his sixth year at the Department of Public Health as a regional coordinator at the Office of Preparedness and Emergency Management.

“Nothing exciting happening,” Nelson joked, before explaining that he has been working seven-day weeks in Metro Boston since early March helping allocate personal protective equipment to first responders and frontline public health workers.

“The stuff that we receive through DPH goes out to healthcare entities: hospitals, longterm care, EMS, and local boards of health,” he said. “When you see on the news that the Patriots have 300,000 N95 [masks] coming in, we go ‘oh, okay, we’re about to get even busier!’”

Nelson said the current selectboard “all seem to share a very similar vision for the town,” and praised town hall staff, singling out town administrator Steve Ellis and town planner Walter Ramsey as “ultimate go-getters, with great determination to make the town the best it can be.”

Both candidates said they were looking forward to the race as an opportunity for a public discussion about the town’s future.

According to Bourbeau, town meeting seats remain open in all of Montague’s six precincts. During his interview, Nelson called town meeting “a great stepping stone for folks to get involved in the community, get to understand how the town process works, how government works at the local level and find their voice.”



## GMRSD from page A1

if we take the vacation, it ends on June 18,” Sullivan explained.

“Is it our intention to pass children on to the next grade, regardless of whatever’s achieved here? Montague member Mike Langknecht asked.

“I believe so, yes,” he replied. Montague’s Thomasina Hall advocated for the vacation, pointing out that many teachers have also been taking care of children of their own at home. Sullivan agreed that the teachers were “living through this, like everyone else,” and suggested they could use the time to better acquaint themselves with distance learning software.

“I would advocate that we stop school now, and pay teachers through the end of the year to pay for next year,” said Langknecht. “Next year we’re going to have these same problems all over again.”

After a lengthy discussion, the committee voted 6-2 to cancel the vacation. Langknecht, fellow Montague members Haley Anderson, Cassie Damkoehler, Heather Katsoulis, and Jen Lively, and chair Jane Oakes of Gill cast the aye votes, with Hall and Gill’s Bill Tomb advocating to keep the break. Teachers will still have Monday, April 20 off for Patriots’ Day, then get back to distance learning.

When the committee reconvened for its regular meeting on Tuesday, it approved a memorandum of agreement with the Gill-Montague Education Association for the distance learning plan.

The plan is configured differently at different grade levels, but the basic structure is that students and teachers work separately on Mondays, and then meet each day

Tuesday through Friday for lessons and, at the secondary level, support of individual learning.

“Supporting everybody during this is more important than trying to recapture as much learning as we can,” Sullivan told the committee.

He reported that the district had distributed 139 Chromebooks to students at home the previous week and would be delivering another 45 on Wednesday and more next week. School resource officer Dan Miner planned to bring the schools’ new comfort puppy, Mack, with him to make “wellness checks” on households who had not been in touch.

Langknecht read a lengthy prepared statement at the end of Tuesday’s meeting asking for a discussion of “meta issues” raised by the crisis.

“We’re placing ridiculous and inequitable pressures on our students and their families with our learning plan while our end goal seems simply to graduate the class of 2020,” he argued. “We’re placing even more ridiculous pressures on our teachers.... Why, where are they going? The job market won’t be there for them!”

His fellow committee members agreed to set aside time during future meetings to check in about the big picture.

Sullivan announced on Thursday that Gill Elementary School principal Conor Driscoll would be leaving the district. “It’s a desirable position,” he said on Tuesday, outlining plans for a search and hiring process that included his own successor, Brian Beck.

Both meetings can be viewed at [www.vimeo.com/mctvchannel17](http://www.vimeo.com/mctvchannel17), Montague Community Television’s online video archive.



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**MONTAGUE** from page A1

work on a new intensive care unit in New Bedford.

Ellis told the *Reporter* that work on other aspects of the building not affected by the carpenters’ absence was continuing. “This does not mean complete cessation of the project,” he said. “But at some point, this critical piece of work will hold up other pieces.” Ellis said the project manager and construction firm in charge of the project were attempting to revise the “sequencing” of work.

On the other hand, Ellis announced, the Unity Park field house roof project, begun several months ago, is complete. “On a [rainy] day like today, we feel pretty good about that,” he said. Ellis noted that because the roof project was significantly under budget, there would be an “excess” in the town meeting appropriation that financed a portion of it. But he said that insulation on part of the building “ought to be relocated,” which could be financed by reallocating some of the roof money.

Other key capital projects, Ellis reported, are continuing as planned, including hazardous materials abatement at the former Strathmore mill.

Ellis said the town had received assurance from counsel that the cleanup fell under the state’s definition of “essential services” after the appearance of a news article “that suggested that another community in our area had determined otherwise,” a reference to cleanup at Erving’s former International Paper Mill. “I don’t know about the veracity of that article,” he said, “but I do know that our legal counsel stands by our assertion that the Strathmore abatement is an essential project.”

Finally, Ellis said that several high-profile projects funded by a state Complete Streets grant are “well under way.” These include sidewalk upgrades at First Street and Avenue A and a sidewalk re-

placement project on Main Street in Montague Center. “We’re really excited about the pace and quality of work being done,” he said.

#### Spit Shields and Playgrounds

The April 13 meeting began with a COVID emergency update by the board of health and its acting director Gina McNeely.

McNeely reported that all public businesses allowed to remain open during the emergency have complied with the board’s order, hand-delivered the previous week, to install see-through shields at check-out counters. The order was issued in the context of the state’s requirement that such businesses encourage “social distancing” of at least six feet.

Selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz asked McNeely about the availability of testing in western Massachusetts. McNeely said she had listened to the governor’s address earlier in the day, and “it seems to be eastern-Mass-centric.” She said she had heard there was a lack of “nasal swabs” to extract material for the test.

“I don’t think we have much out here other than medical facilities,” she said. “No broad testing.”

During the public comment period, finance committee chair Jen Audley suggested that the COVID information on the town website could be better organized by prioritizing key public concerns. She cited several other town websites that presented such information in a “simpler” way. McNeely said she would revisit the website’s presentation of COVID information.

In related decisions, the selectboard voted to extend the closure of town playgrounds and the Unity Park skate park until April 27. Nelson said the town may know more by then about any changes in state social distancing guidelines.

Kuklewicz asked parks and rec-

reation director Jon Dobosz if town residents were “doing okay” with the closures.

Dobosz said he had seen “six individuals,” who he believed were not residents, trying to use the skate park a few weeks earlier, but “I have been taking my tours around the playgrounds every few days, and I have not seen anyone.”

Ellis said the police chief had reported no “significant problems” enforcing the park closures.

#### Annual Town Meeting

The selectboard voted to reopen and extend the warrant for the annual town meeting until May 6. The warrant was originally closed in March, but the town meeting has now been rescheduled to June 13 due to the state of emergency.

The board also directed the town administrator to begin the process of obtaining special state legislation to allow Montague to conduct a “virtual town meeting” if need be. Ellis said the process would not require the town to hold a virtual meeting in June, but give it that capability if it was deemed necessary.

“As long as it’s not binding anything at all,” said Nelson, who noted that there might be technical difficulties conducting an online meeting with at least 80 people. “We had enough issues tonight with 12 people,” he said.

Board member Chris Boutwell said the town should consider dividing the meeting into several sessions. Kuklewicz said town officials might want to invite town meeting members to “test” applications like Zoom, and take a poll to see how many would be willing to participate in a virtual meeting. He also recommended other measures for achieving social distancing, including holding the meeting outdoors.

Ellis said the town moderator would make a determination about

the need for a virtual meeting, and request a vote by the selectboard.

#### Other Business

The board voted to award the contract for the Strathmore abatement and smokestack demolition project to Air Quality Experts, Inc. The motion said the project, which is to be completed by June 30, is not to exceed \$450,000.

Nelson asked about the “next steps” in dealing with the complex, which is slated for a partial demolition. Ellis said the demolition plan, developed by the engineering firm Tighe & Bond, will require a “significant amount of capital” – approximately \$2.4 million – that the town does not currently have on hand.

The board approved a lease agreement and performance bond with Kearsarge LLC for capping the burn dump at the end of Sandy Lane and constructing a solar field on the site. Ellis, as he has in the past, noted

that while the lease agreement provides little revenue, it would save the town the cost of capping the dump, estimated at over \$2 million.

Town planner Walter Ramsey added that capping the dump would also “open up” 40 acres of adjacent property for development.

At the request of the parks and rec department, the board added another date – July 31, from 4:30 to 10:30 p.m. – to the summer movie night series at Peskeompskut Park.

The board also voted to execute a grant agreement with the state Department of Environmental Protection for a “Fine Bubble Diffuser and Blower Replacement Project” at the water pollution control facility. This “repurposed” grant was originally intended to fund a solar array, abandoned due to the exhaustion of state solar incentives in the region.

The next scheduled selectboard meeting will be on April 27.



## LOOKING BACK: 10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

*Here's the way it was April 15 2010: News from the Montague Reporter's archive.*

### Montague Makes Plans for A Native American Park

The Montague selectboard voted two to one on Monday in favor of establishing a Native American Cultural Park, and to work with Native tribes to develop a cultural tourism program in Turners Falls under the auspices of the town’s arts and economic development RiverCulture project.

Town administrator Frank Abbondanzio outlined a ten-year plan for taking the plan from drawing board to ribbon cutting, beginning with a \$195,000 display of Native environmental practices scheduled for inclusion at the Great Falls Discovery Center in the coming budget year. Abbondanzio said the proposed park could make Turners Falls not only a regional, but also a national and international destination for tourism.

The vote comes nearly six years after the selectboard initiated a Reconciliation Ceremony with the Narragansett Indian tribe to recognize the tragic significance of the site of the massacre of Native Americans that took place across the Connecticut River on May 19, 1676.

### Controlled Burn Brings Down Beauchesne House

In the end, it was built stronger and lasted longer than many thought. But on Sunday morning, the multi-leveled architectural wonder that scrap material maven Rodney Beauchesne called home for many years burned to the ground, as firefighters from five communities looked on and learned.

“We started at the top, so it

would burn slow,” said incident commander John Greene, Montague Center fire chief, discussing the strategy for the controlled burn, the first in Montague in many years.

After members of the Montague Center fire department set fire to bales of hay on the third story (or was that the fourth story?) and left the building for the last time at 9:14 a.m. on Sunday morning, the glorified log cabin *cum* plate glass palace went up like a torch, with flames bursting through the roof in less than three minutes, sending billowing columns of black smoke towering into the village sky.

### Erving Takes Another Look At Proposed Senior Center

On Monday, the Erving finance committee met for a second time with senior center director Polly Kiely to discuss the proposed new \$2.4 million, 6,600-square-foot senior center planned to be built on town-owned land north of the elementary school off Route 63. Last week, the finance committee split 3-2 to recommend against the new senior center.

Kiely said fin com chair Stanley Gradowski came to the present senior center, located on the first floor of the former elementary school on Pleasant Street, in Ervingside, to talk over the proposal some more, and invited her back to meet with the full committee for a second time on Monday.

“Because of the importance of the senior center,” said Gradowski, “I felt we should have a further discussion with her. We went over the whole scenario again, in a little more informal setting.”

But the discussion followed the same lines as on the previous Monday, and the fin com again voted, 3-2, against the proposal.

#### NOTES FROM THE ERVING SELECTBOARD

## Erving Withholds Public Health Data, Holds To Property Tax Deadline

By KATIE NOLAN

On Monday night, the Erving selectboard approved the warrant for the June 17 annual town meeting, including a \$12 million budget for FY’21 and six proposed changes to the bylaws.

The FY’21 budget includes \$5.2 million for education (with \$3.3 million for Erving Elementary School), \$2 million for employee benefits, \$250,000 into the capital stabilization fund, and \$273,000 into the general stabilization fund.

The proposed bylaws include addition of a revolving fund for electric vehicle charging stations, reducing the town meeting quorum, establishing an electronic posting location, increasing several town clerk fees, amending the driveways and curb cuts bylaw, and changing the dates for the annual town meet-

ing and town election.

Copies of the warrant will be sent to each residence in town in the *Around Town* newsletter.

Regarding COVID-19 response, the board decided not to adopt the state program extending the due date for property taxes and canceling interest charges for payments made by June 30. Selectboard chair Jacob Smith said that the feedback from the town tax collector was that no residents have inquired about the program, and that the tax collector already has some discretion for allowing late payments. The board may decide to adopt the program in the future.

The selectboard also decided the town of Erving should not publish data regarding the number of cases of COVID-19 in town. Information about cases is provided to emergency responders when responding to


an emergency, and county-wide statistics are available from the state.

Town administrator Bryan Smith told the board that assistant Mariah Kurtz and highway superintendent Glenn McCrory attended a pre-construction meeting for the asbestos and hazardous materials cleanup project for the former International Paper Mill with Air Quality Experts, Inc. of Atkinson, New Hampshire. Work is expected to begin May 1.

Bryan Smith said that UMass-Amherst architecture students will present the results of their visioning study for the future of Erving Center later this month. The study focused on traffic and pedestrian safety, existing buildings and historic character, green spaces and recreation, and social and physical infrastructures.

The selectboard’s next meeting is scheduled for April 27.

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**LEVERETT** from page A1

said Ingram, also noting that it had received a donation of Tyvek PPE suits from an Amherst fire department co-worker, originally from an unnamed veterinary hospital in New Hampshire.

Former road boss Will Stratford, currently working part-time for the highway department, wanted to know who decided on a last-minute stay-at-home order he said he had heard from current road boss Matthew Boucher on Monday.

“Why wasn’t [Boucher] consulted before he got the email, and he saw it on Monday morning?” asked Stratford.

Hankinson asked him what

the board would have consulted Boucher about.

“It should be protocol,” said Stratford, “and just to give him a heads-up that he would know come Monday morning that was going to happen. He would have called me over the weekend to let me know.”

“It was a Friday afternoon,” McGinnis told him. “Matt wasn’t there.”

While Shively asked McGinnis to contact Boucher about only using basic staff during the pandemic, d’Errico added: “I also weighed in on that – and given the health history we’re dealing with, and uncertainty of what any of this might mean to someone with some prior immune issues, we thought it

would be the safest thing.”

**Marijuana Sales Tax**

The revenue committee’s Seth Seeger brought a recommendation for the town to vote on lowering the marijuana business sales tax from 3% to 2%, “sweetening the pot a little” to try to get a marijuana business to start in Leverett.

“I agree that this is by no means the magic bullet that’s going to draw people in,” said Seeger, responding to skepticism from Shively that reducing the rate would bring a marijuana business into Leverett, where challenges include a lack of town water. “But we’re looking at a broad range of ideas... this was an idea of lowering one of those obstacles.”

Hankinson said that offering a lower tax serves a larger purpose of “demonstrating that Leverett is business friendly.”

The board asked Seeger to draft a warrant item from the previous marijuana tax article passed by town meeting, explaining the proposed changes.



Rebecca Mae Bannasch took this photo of her “coworking space,” a parking spot outside the library and the town offices in New Salem. “I have discovered that I am not the only person wedged into my car with my laptop, trying to keep up with rapidly changing demands from my job,” writes Bannasch. “Every day, there are at least five other cars parked here, with folks doing the same thing I am. My housemate and I joked about the center of town becoming the hot new coworking spot, sooooo... I made a sign! Which makes it all official now, right?”

**CodeRED Contract**

The board moved to adopt the CodeRED mass notification system, after questions are answered concerning legal language about potential security breaches.

CodeRED requires clients to notify them of any breaches, but d’Errico said he would also like the company to inform Leverett if they become aware of a breach in the town’s system.

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“That’s where I imagine that their lawyers are going to think about potential liability,” said d’Errico.

Hankinson said that the police and fire departments are on board with using the system, and suggested that if CodeRED is reluctant to share such information with Leverett, the board could offer to sign a confidentiality agreement. D’Errico agreed it was a good idea, and the board authorized McGinnis to sign the agreement to use CodeRED, provided a mutual understanding is reached.

**Other Business**

The board has not yet heard back from the town of Amherst about a potential water-line connection that could address the problem of several wells on Teawaddle Hill contaminated by leachate from a capped landfill. Local naturalist John Root brought to Hankinson’s attention the need to protect pollinators, the many insects and animals such as bees, butterflies, hummingbirds, and bats that carry pollen from one plant to another as they collect nectar. A brief discussion resulted in an agreement to create a town resolution acceptable to Root, the board, and any affected town departments.

Tuesday’s meeting was again held over the Free Conference Calling service, with a few dropped calls, but not as many as several weeks earlier during high-call-volume hours. The board decided to try GoToMeeting, normally a paid video and audio conferencing service, that has given municipalities a 90-day free trial.

The selectboard will meet at 6:40 p.m. for their next meeting on April 28, and continuing until live meetings can once again be held.

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WEST ALONG THE RIVER  
SOMETIMES A DIAMOND,  
SOMETIMES A STONE

By DAVID BRULE

ERVINGSIDE – Sometimes these days, when you get up and out of bed, you wonder if it all is just a bad dream. Sometimes you can spend a little while away from the bad news, but other times it won’t leave you alone.

Out of doors, these first days of April have dawned grey and damp. The light rain falling is good for the wakening earth, but not so good for the soul. Looking out over a drab New England landscape, all is clutter and debris now exposed in the aftermath of winter.

Still, there are the birds that do the singing in the early morning, as if the world is just going right on turning. My friends Chris and Alys up in Wendell will be happy to note that my juncos are still hanging out down here in the valley, not yet decided to go upland to the pines around Ruggles Pond where they spend the summer. These slate-gray birds have a delightful spring song as do the song sparrows. They’re cheery as can be under the softly falling rain. Lucky for them, they are not aware of the death, sickness, and sorrow over here in the human world.

The family is sheltering in Brittany for the duration, caught up by the nationwide lockdown in France. For a hermit like myself, living alone is not so bad. Sometimes I think I could have been one of those early Irish monks living in solitude in the seascape on one of the pinnacle islands of the Skelligs off the coast of Kerry. I might have been able to stand the splendid isolation out there in the Atlantic, except for the fact that I could never have scaled those dizzying steps up the cliff side to my monk’s beehive hut at the summit. I certainly would have missed my wife and son, my coffee in the morning, and my glass of Côtes du Rhône at eveningtide!

So instead I dwell in this old house on the Flat along the Millers, the back porch looking out over the expanse of wood and rushing river instead of the stormy Atlantic.

But like the erstwhile monk, I do spend my days in endless watching, copying, reading, writing down my ruminations until suppertime, until it’s time to walk the dog.

You can come too, just keep your distance!

I find myself spending the evenings alone with my thoughts, out here when the sun goes down. Tonight the mosquitoes are out for the first time, and as if there weren’t enough annoyances to deal with, I picked up my first tick bite yesterday. Exploring a brushy path in the north meadows of Deerfield, one of those semi-visible buggers got lucky, hitched a ride, and later that night bit me on the inner thigh. Itches like the devil but I don’t seem to have any other symptoms.

I will have to remember to stay on the straight and narrow path from now on. That phrase brings to mind a book by André Gide called *La Porte Étroite*, something I read years ago when teaching with the Peace Corps in North Africa. A lifetime or two ago, it seems. My narrow path, Gide’s narrow door. I’m sure no one reads him anymore, but it does feel good to write his name here.

Such strange times and doesn’t it feel like there’s been some sort of cosmic click and things have irrevocably changed.

I’m glad I didn’t waste any time back in the good old days. I took advantage of every opportunity that came along, not having a real plan, just following my heart more than my head. Things seem to have turned out all right.

We’re all feeling a certain melancholy and nostalgia for the world that is so suddenly different. I would think that it’s much like what the preceding generation of WWII families felt, as beloved countries fell like dominos and family

see WEST ALONG page B3



Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) with rainbow trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*)

BOOK REVIEW

Roni Natov, *The Courage to Imagine: The Child Hero in Children’s Literature* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017)

By RICHARD ANDERSEN

MONTAGUE CENTER – So here we are: stuck at home with the kids, and no end in sight. Schools, libraries, movie theaters, restaurants, even the playgrounds are closed.

What’s a poor parent to do? What will teachers do after their students have been out of the classroom for so many months? What can we do to help kids learn to love learning while they’re still at home?

Roni Natov’s answer is to stimulate their imaginations, and she’s written a wonderful book to show us how. It’s called *The Courage to Imagine: The Child Hero in Children’s Literature*. Sounds a little “scholarly,” and in a way it is. But in all the important ways, starting with the writer’s writing style, it couldn’t possibly be better. Right from the very first page you feel as if Natov is speaking directly to you.

Children need courage to imagine? Well, yes and no. Children have no trouble imagining all kinds of things. It comes naturally to them. But most of the books they’re given to read are chosen for them by adults. Nothing wrong with that. How else are these books going to be sold?

The problem is many of these books encourage children to see the world in ways adults want them to see it. These adult views, more often than not, shy away from ambiguity. Instead, they develop in children ways of thinking that conform to viewpoints other than their own.

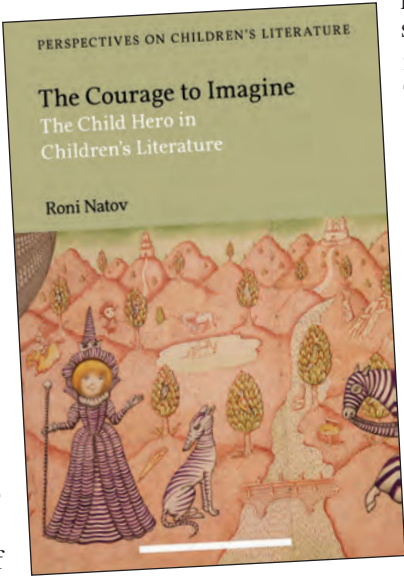
This, of course, is also understandable. With the world changing so quickly and so radically, it makes sense to search for ways to explain life in words and illustrations

that a child can readily understand. The result, however, is books that are often what Natov calls “binary.” Every complicated subject is reduced to black and white, right and wrong, old and young, cool and nerdy, etc. The child heroes who populate these stories triumph over their challenges, learn valuable lessons, and then serve as role models for their readers.

Unfortunately, even for a child, life is seldom so simple. And any adult raised to look for simple solutions to complex problems is going to be frequently disappointed. Think of the story of Cinderella, for example. Any young girl who thinks her Prince Charming is going to see through what his culture has determined is beautiful and valuable to the truly beautiful and valuable person that exists underneath the rags and ashes is almost surely going to be disappointed. Similarly, a Prince Charming who carries an idealized image of the person he hopes to meet and love – symbolized by the glass slipper – is going to set himself up with a set of unrealistic expectations that stand a good chance of leading to disappointment and possibly even resentment. No beloved is going to have an easy time living up to any lover’s image of what he or she should be.

So what’s the solution? Natov recommends introducing ourselves and our children to books that create safe places from which children can widen, in imaginative ways, the perspectives that have been traditionally narrowed for them by more conventional representations of what life is about. When she says her book is about the “courage to

see CHILD HERO page B4



GREAT FALLS APPLE COLUMN

By RACHEL LABRIE

TURNERS FALLS – April greetings, *Montague Reporter* community!

Life has slowed down for us humans all across the globe. In opposition, Nature is popping off and doing its thing regardless. It is quite lucky that we have been gifted an early spring this year – I sowed my peas and radishes in my Unity Park Community Garden plot almost a month earlier than I normally do.

It is a strange time indeed, and it is easy to feel helpless, hopeless, and defeated. But I believe that many people are finding hope in sowing seeds, starting gardens no matter how small, and looking to plants for guidance in resiliency. Now more than ever it is vitally important to have strong communities and a local food supply. We are very lucky to live in an area with an abundance of local farms; however, this is nothing like growing your own food and herbs and sharing the bounty with those you love.

Yet still, many people feel daunted by growing vegetables or starting a garden. They perhaps feel they don’t have a “green thumb” or do not have the knowledge or skills necessary to grow food. Well, we at Great Falls Apple Corps are here to encourage you that you do indeed have the skills; that growing vegetables is not an exact science, and that trial and error is the best way to learn when it comes to gardening.

One of our wonderful community garden members



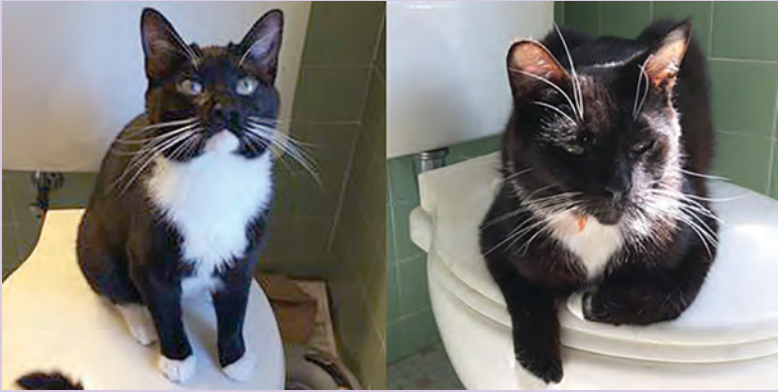
A U-Pick bed at the Unity Park Community Gardens, freshly weeded and sowed with carrots, lettuce, radish, and peas.

recently wrote up a lovely piece about her experience of beginning to grow food at her community garden plot:

Gardening is something that has always interested me, see APPLE CORPS page B7



# Pets of the Week



## “MARCI & CALLAN”

Callan and Marcie love each other and would love to continue living together.

Callan has significant medical issues: a heart murmur, enlarged lymph nodes, probable herpes virus carrier with permanent damage to his eyes and nose which can make him more susceptible to infections and cause him to sound “snuffy”.

Callan has proven to be a happy, thriving cat in foster care, but he will require more veterinary visits than the average cat and may require ongoing medications.

Marci also has special medical needs. She has a chronic viral upper respiratory disease that had been treated several times and may need eye medication daily for the rest of her life. She should be an indoor only cat to minimize risk of other illness. The estimated monthly cost of her current medication is \$50/month. She will require more veterinary visits than regular cats and her medication costs will change based on how she does and her new veterinarian’s recommendations.

All Dakin Humane Society animals available for adoption are at Springfield currently. The shelter is also running a COVID-19 emergency fund, and has been caring for animals whose owners are sick with the virus.

Animals are still available for adoption by appointment only. Please call (413) 781-4000 or see [www.dakinhumane.org](http://www.dakinhumane.org) for more information.

# The WMA Mutual Aid Network Needs You!

*As things get harder, we show up for our neighbors.*

Montague/Turners Mutual Aid is a network which has formed alongside the greater Western Mass Mutual Aid network, with the goal of connecting neighbors so that we can help one another in the time of COVID-19 and beyond.

Through a centralized website ([www.wmacma.com](http://www.wmacma.com)), people all over Western Mass can offer what they have, and request what they need. Neighbors may help each other with getting groceries, medication, or clothing, navigating unemployment, or even just emotional support. The network also has a financial aid fund which anyone can apply for.

Helping one another in these ways works best on a more local level, however, when we can get to know our neighbors and form lasting, mutually beneficial relationships with one another. This is how Montague Mutual Aid, and its individual neighborhood pods, were born.

“Pods” are hyperlocal groups of you and your neighbors. Each remain connected to the larger Mutual Aid network through a point person, so that everyone doesn’t need to be plugged in beyond simply getting to know those around them.

Since not everyone has access to online communication, we want to make sure everyone in our community can offer and receive aid by flyering and building these neighborhood pods.

Are you interested in being a Neighborhood Point Person? Please get in touch! Being an NPP is a great way to get involved in mutual aid and build community in your neighborhood, and it’s easy to do. NPPs reach out to their neighbors, set up a way for the neighborhood to communicate, and stay in touch with other NPPs to share resources and support one another throughout the network. We can help you get set up with everything you’ll need to make it happen!

If you’re interested in joining a pod, being a Neighborhood Point Person, or volunteering to help meet needs in our town, please get in touch with us at (413) 676-9337 or [montaguemutualaid@gmail.com](mailto:montaguemutualaid@gmail.com).



# Sex Matters

## a sex-positive health column

by STEPHANIE BAIRD

How is everyone handling life, sex, and love during this pandemic? “Love (and sex) in the time of corona” is on my mind for this month’s column. I thought I’d highlight some possible survival strategies for folks here.

Firstly, let me reassure you that we are in a state of emergency, which is *not* a normal situation, and that whatever reactions we are all having are completely normal. You are “normal,” how you are feeling and adjusting is normal, and never before in most of our lifetimes have we had to hunker down like this and live in fear of an invisible harmful virus. This time period *will* pass. Now that I got that out that way...

First of all, if you were single at the time of lockdown, and used to meeting potential dates in cafes and bars, then you are now into Week 5 of no interpersonal physical contact (unless you are lucky to be quarantining with roommates you also enjoy cuddling with). This physical isolation may feel extremely easy or difficult, depending on how dating was going beforehand, and how introverted or extroverted you consider yourself.

Those who were having negative dating experiences may be relishing a bit of “me time” to recharge, and to really envision ideal sex/affection/love partners. This is a great time for vision boarding, brainstorming ideal relationship and lover qualities. (Your list might now include “have always washed my hands for 20 seconds,” or “have a basement full of farm produce canning jars.”) Watching the HBO series *Mrs. Fletcher* offers some great ideas on how a person can explore and play sexually on one’s own.

Those who were enjoying plentiful skin-to-skin contact may suddenly be experiencing “skin hunger,” a.k.a. “touch deprivation.” The skin literally hungers for another person’s touch, to feel connected; one may notice increased depression, loneliness, or even feeling a little ill. Just know that all this is all okay, you are okay, and that eventually in-person body contact will resume, and we will be able to schedule massages and other bodywork appointments again.

In the meanwhile, those who want to continue dating still have all the regular dating apps to explore: Bumble, Hinge, Facebook Dating, Match, Plenty of Fish, etc. These apps have seen an increase in messaging and video calls since quarantine, reinforcing the notion that humans are social animals and will find ways to explore and connect.

I’ve heard of many cute video dating ideas, such as each person eating or drinking the same foods and beverages together, playing the same music playlist in the background, serenading each other, watching movies together, and playing board or video games online – Battleship, chess, and strip poker come to mind.

Of course, once you feel comfortable with someone, whether a new love or sex interest or someone you were already getting to know, good old phone or video sex could certainly help pass the time and make things interesting. Make sure everyone is of age, agrees on ground rules, has privacy, and is enthusiastically consenting.

Many folks – especially those who identified as “role enactor” from November’s column – will enjoy the playful nature of video sex. It’s a great opportunity to bring in costume elements, show off your sex (or regular!) toys, read erotic writings to each other, or simply share a corny love letter and see how it gets the blood flowing. Perhaps wearing pandemic masks could increase the mystery! If the imagination is somewhat lacking – which is totally a real thing during Pandemic Depression – you can always watch the sex scenes from *Outlander* or *Tales of the City* together.

The one downside of all this screen time with potential lovers you may not meet IRL for some time is that you don’t get to accurately assess chemistry. Some people are venturing out to go walking together – staying at least six feet apart, and enjoying a Namaste bow at the end – or making appointments to be at grocery stores at the same time. On the Internet I saw a fellow zip himself into a plastic bubble to court another person. A *High Fidelity*-style boombox serenade could be quite endearing.

Now, what about those who are already together, and are now forced to be together *all the time*? Those partners are facing other challenges. I heard one person coin the term “Coronavirus bed death.”

You might have FOMO about wishing you were quarantining with someone else – or at the very least, in someone else’s better-stocked house. I’ve heard others say they predict a ton of babies will be born nine months from now.

Remember that column I wrote in October about our sexual brakes and accelerators? Well, it turns out a pandemic is a great illustrator of this concept. For some humans, this pandemic pulled the emergency brake pretty hard.

Worries about the world’s, friends’ and family’s health, incomes and retirement funds, foraging for toilet paper, getting fresh eggs, and bleaching all surfaces may have understandably annihilated any erotic energy. Add to that deficit home-schooling kids that are clearly meant to be in school (thank you teachers and school buildings for regular life!), plus working from home in yoga pants, and any erotic energy has probably vanished, like we wish COVID-19 would.

I suggest these tired partners try and set aside time when the kids are asleep, or engrossed in watching a movie, to at a minimum brainstorm how to decrease the Pandemic Brake, and any other brakes. If brainstorming yields fruit, then make an action plan for the coming weeks.

Ensuring each person has some alone time in the house during the week can go a long way to easing the brake. Perhaps, after the kids are in bed, partners can shower and dress up for each other. Maybe there is a favorite food or drink folks can share, to set the stage. Starting off with massaging and pampering each other could help. Figuring out which chores to de-prioritize on “sex date” days might help preserve erotic energy for later.

During a pandemic, patience, understanding, and empathy for ourselves and others are key. We will come up for air, hopefully by summer solstice or thereabouts, and then we can all get as busy as we want again, not coming up for air until we have to.

# Senior Center Activities

## APRIL 13 THROUGH 17

**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](mailto:coa@montague-ma.gov) by email.

**ERVING**

Erving Senior Center director Paula Betters writes that the Center is closed until at least May 4:

“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@erving-ma.gov](mailto:paula-betters@erving-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](mailto: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.

# Local Supermarket Senior Accommodations

*Supermarkets in Massachusetts are now required to provide special hours for seniors and immunocompromised shoppers. Call ahead – this information is accurate as of April 8; hours and accommodations are still changing.*

<b>Big Y:</b>	Senior hours from 7 to 8 a.m.	(413) 772-0435
<b>Foster’s:</b>	Senior hours from 7 to 8 a.m.	(413) 773-1100
<b>Food City:</b>	Senior hours from 7 to 8 a.m.	(413) 863-9591

**Green Fields Market:** Senior hours from 9 to 10 a.m. Curbside pickup available. Order by 8 p.m.; order ready for pickup between 1 and 6 the following day. Delivery also available. \$6 per delivery inside Greenfield. \$8 outside Greenfield. (413) 773-9567

**McCusker’s Market:** Only six customers allowed in store at a time. Curbside pickup available. Order between 12 and 1 p.m. for pickup the following day. Delivery available. \$10 per delivery. Email [pickup@franklincommunity.coop](mailto:pickup@franklincommunity.coop) (413) 625-2548

**Stop and Shop:** Senior hours from 6 to 7:30 a.m. (413) 774-6096

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EVENT RETROSPECTIVE

St. Patrick’s Day with Karl and Mr. Drag

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

**GREENFIELD** – I loved seeing Karl and Mr. Drag in two of Eggtooth Productions’ Christmas shows. I’ve been to other ones that weren’t Christmas shows, and didn’t care much for them. But when I spotted an ad for a St. Patrick’s Day show they were doing at a club called 10 Forward in Greenfield, I got excited and decided to go see it. I thought seeing them in a St. Patrick’s Day show might be really funny, and fun to watch.

I was right about that. The show was called “Morning Vodka and March of Tunes.” It started with Karl and two other individuals, getting ready for the show. Then Mr. Drag came up and sang a song while dancing behind him with a cane in hand.

When I saw them in *The Grinch Who Stole Karl*, Karl went out into the audience and asked people questions. They basically did that here, only Mr. Drag was asking the questions. It was a fun little segment to watch. The questions included one about a Jewish holiday and treating the Black Plague. I once saw Mr. Drag do a hilarious rendition of “All I Want for Christmas.” I don’t know the name of the song he sang next, but there were some big feathered fans involved. Karl also did a big dance number to the song. That was nice, too. The audience certainly enjoyed it.

Besides singing, Mr. Drag also told stories and jokes. One involved that saying about March – you know, about coming in like a

lion and going out like a lamb.

Karl didn’t only dance to a song, either. At one point he acted out a meeting that involved someone from the audience playing Ernest Hemingway. Another segment involved Karl going into the audience and having people tell jokes to Mr. Drag. “This is a joke, not a guessing game,” Mr. Drag pointed out, which got laughs.

Karl’s silent reaction to something was a fun sight to behold. So they didn’t repeatedly interact with the audience in the same way. Karl, in fact, did a dance number with three audience members, which was a fun and amusing sight, too, and certainly got more laughs from the audience. He even did a little sword fighting with one of the three.

The audience also enjoyed the song Mr. Drag sang after that. Green is Mr. Drag’s color, and he looked good in the green suit he did that song in. Mr. Drag commented that someone said he sang like a whale, and we actually heard a whale song for a minute during the show.

The show made it seem like Karl and Mr. Drag have been around since a certain era – as Mr. Drag told it, since during the Donner Party affair. He also spoke of one of Karl’s parents being Sigmund Freud. Talk about them having interesting lives and backgrounds!

These guys never seem to be boring when it comes to these shows. People have clearly started to give them a bit of a following. This show made me wish to continue following them myself.



WEST ALONG from page B1

members went off to war. There’s that feeling that things will never be the same.

Given the current circumstances I also think of the Native Americans whose family members and friends fell to the epidemics brought to the shores of the New World by European settlers. They had no idea why people were dying all around them, and then there was no one left to bury the dead. Just try to imagine what it was like in Indigenous life in the 1600s and ever since. Given what we are going through you might just get a vague idea of what it was like for them.

Sometimes dark thoughts like that are unavoidable, but tonight I manage to find peace in the setting of another day’s sun in the southwest. There’s the constant spring sound of water rushing around river rock over yonder, audible and singing through leafless trees. Robins call in the dusk, maple trees glow their reddish hue as the horizontal rays reach the hilltops of my valley.

Another spring is on the way and will not be denied, neither by capricious weather nor stealthy plague. The goose couple calls out their clamorous trumpeting over the neighborhood rooftops as always on their evening flight, making the rounds of their domain. It’s likely no one notices but me, the lone would-be impressionist out here trying to capture light, sound, color as the night closes in.

It was only yesterday that one of the first bats of the season flew her erratic

antics just over my head. Back and forth, up and down and turning upon herself, she gleaned invisible insects from the sky over the garden.

I always greet these little flying mammals by name. I call out hello Little Sisters! My voice rises into the path of their flight. The dog looks up to quiz me, to see if I’m all right and not finally losing it. I have a feeling they can sense the vibrations of my voice through the air. I’m probably only imagining it. At any rate, we do know they have pretty sensitive radar and would likely interpret the tone of my voice as non-threatening, even welcoming, after a long winter.

Maybe they know I’m pleased to see them after all this time of five months of cold. Then again, maybe it’s just me and my imagination, passing the evening away with a lot of time on my hands.

When Good Friday came around, the day was gray and overcast as it should be. The spirit of my Irish grandmother lingers here in these rooms. She lived in this house for 50 years with all her holy water and crucifixion images on the walls, and would have had Good Friday no other way. She would not have been alone in imagining that day on Calvary as being dark, covered in menacing clouds. Older Christians still believe that Good Friday is almost always dark and mournful, and should be. They never mentioned snowflakes to me, though.

I had no sooner sat down out here than the first passing flakes drifted down, be-

fore swirling and being caught up in a brief squall. It didn’t last long, and no one noticed but me. Life went on all around: jays yodeled over the cracked corn, song sparrows piped away, white-throats whistled their “*Sam Peabody, Peabody*” call, everybody talking and singing resurrection at the same time. Winging out of the wind over the river came a magnificent osprey clutching his morning catch, watchful that the robber baron eagle has not spotted him and his prey.

Sometimes you’re the fish hawk, sometimes you’re the fish.

There’s a glimpse of the medieval sky-blue of Mary’s veil before vanishing behind the clouds moving quickly overhead. Everything is metaphor, isn’t it.

Easter Monday brings the beginning of the fifth week of solitude. Mother Nature may well be taking her revenge on the human race. We modern humans with our machines have proven to be such an annoyance to her. With our shutdown, revival and resurrection are going on outside our doorsteps and beyond. City dwellers can hear the street urchin sparrows – *les piafs* – again in the neighborhoods of Paris, smog has lifted from the skies of Athens, London, New York, Los Angeles. No jetliners leave their trails in the heavens over my house.

Will we have learned any lessons at all from all this? Some days I think not, yet sometimes I do think we’ll find the diamond in these days of stone.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Wandering Cows; Speeding Cars; Stabbing Arrest; Tormented Neighbor; Puppy Scam; Giggling Teens

Sunday, 4/5

11:47 a.m. Caller from Montague City Road states that the upstairs neighbors are being too loud, too often. Advised of options.

6:08 p.m. Caller from Green Pond Road states that she heard what sounded like six gunshots coming from the area of the Plains. Officer drove through area and did not locate anything.

6:58 p.m. Caller states that a small dark-colored sedan with four younger people in it drove through the area where they are doing construction on First Street and took out a few traffic cones.

9:49 p.m. Report of a large number of cows crossing the road in the area of South Prospect Street. Caller called back stating that they found the owner and were able to get the cows back in their pen.

11 p.m. Caller would like to speak to an officer about his ex-girlfriend threatening to ruin his property. Officer spoke with both parties.

Monday, 4/6

12:51 a.m. Caller states that his mom just knocked on his bedroom door and asked him to call the police because someone just stole all her stuff. Officer states caller was advised to have his mom call the police in the morning when she is sober if the purse is really missing. Caller doesn’t think anyone was in the apartment,

and is unsure whether the stuff is really gone.

8:17 a.m. Caller states that someone has marked the Bridge of Names with offensive graffiti. Report taken.

1:12 p.m. Caller from Canal Street states that their dryer caught fire. They pulled it out of the house, but it is still burning. FD responding.

5:31 p.m. Anonymous caller reporting a male and female yelling and pushing each other outside of a residence on Griswold Street. Female has gotten into a sedan parked out front, and the guy is trying to get in it. Verbal argument only. Parties advised of complaint and advised of options.

Tuesday, 4/7

11:19 a.m. Caller reporting a road rage incident across from Freedom Credit Union; states that a male in a red truck was out of control and tried to hit another male party in his dark-colored sedan. While officers were being dispatched, caller stated that both parties were pulling out to leave.

6:45 p.m. Report of people inside the fenced-in area at the skatepark.

Wednesday, 4/8

9:16 a.m. Burglar alarm activation at Silvio O. Conte Anadromous Fish Research Center. Officer advises one person exiting building upon arrival. FirstLight employee advised they are setting up a crane, but did not go inside the building. Em-

ployee called advising he set off the alarm; can see the officer, and will speak with him to advise.

9:47 a.m. Greenfield PD took a report of erratic operation; a silver Toyota was reportedly going 100 mph at one point on Route 2, and just crossed the bridge into Turners Falls. Area checked; unable to locate.

3:32 p.m. Caller requesting to speak with an officer about her options in handling an incident with her upstairs neighbor. Caller states she is being harassed, tormented, and feels threatened. Advised of options.

3:53 p.m. Caller requesting to speak with an officer about his options regarding an incident that happened last night with two downstairs neighbors. Advised of options.

4:08 p.m. Caller from Franklin Street requesting officer to respond for a report of a party traveling up and down the road threatening to harm people. Area search negative.

4:31 p.m. Caller from West Mineral Road requesting officer to respond for a report of a vehicle driving extremely fast towards Millers Falls Road. Caller states vehicle almost struck his wife and six-month-old child who were walking down the road. Referred to an officer.

8:13 p.m. Caller from School Street reporting that her CO detector is sounding. She did contact her landlord, who advised her to contact MPD. Caller states she is not feeling ill at this time and has taken the batteries out of the alarm. Shelburne Control advised.

Thursday, 4/9

1:44 p.m. While monitoring DPW’s radio, copied report of cable wire down on Montague City Road. Placed call to DPW to inquire; DPW stated that the homeowners were contacted and are taking care of the issue themselves. While on the phone with DPW, took another call from a female party who stated she just drove by and saw the wire down. Took another call from a male party who states the wire is still down, is going across the road, and cars are driving over it. Took third call from a male party stating the same as both previous callers but added that it is in the area of the Farren and the golf course. Placed call to TFFD, who advised they were unable to locate the wire the first time, but will go back out and try again with the updated location. Verizon is responding.

3:58 p.m. 911 caller reporting that a male party in an East Main Street

apartment was just stabbed in the chest by someone. Caller was not a witness so could not provide information about the suspect. AMR contacted by dispatch; FD responding. Officer reporting wounds are minor. On-call detective responding; officer requesting Erving PD respond to assist with an active disturbance at this location. MPD and Erving officers located suspect, who was arrested and charged with assault and battery with a dangerous weapon.

Friday, 4/10

2:08 a.m. Caller from Newton Street states that he saw on his security cameras that someone is walking around this area with a flashlight. Caller is responding as well to check the area. Unfounded.

12:28 p.m. Caller reporting a large amount of glass in the road on Central Street; said it was caused by the recycling truck. Caller attempted to contact DPW with negative success. Officer reports that amount of glass in road can wait until DPW is able to take care of it; no major safety issue at this time. Officer located Republic Service truck in area; party stated he has the necessary equipment to go back and clean up the glass. Left message with DPW to advise.

2:52 p.m. Caller calling on behalf of her husband to report an accident around 1 p.m. today; states her husband was driving on the Gill side of the Turners Falls-Gill Bridge when two other vehicles were racing each other. In order not to get hit, the caller’s husband drove off the road into the side of the bridge. Described as two light-colored sports cars. No injuries at this time. Caller referred to Shelburne Control.

6:52 p.m. Officers attempting to locate a male party with two active warrants. Party taken into custody.

8:32 p.m. Caller states that she sent money via Western Union for the purchase of a puppy. She never received the puppy, and now the person she was corresponding with won’t return her call. Advised of options.

10:53 p.m. Caller from Federal Street states that two girls, most likely teenagers, are hanging out on the edge of the property across from his house. Caller states they have been there the past few nights and he can hear them talking and giggling. Their behavior seems suspicious. Area searched; nothing found.

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# Franklin County Food Access Resources

full list available at [www.bit.ly/FCFoodResourcesList](http://www.bit.ly/FCFoodResourcesList)

TURNERS FALLS

**Franklin County Community Meals Program:** Our Lady of Peace Church, 7th Street, Mondays, 5 to 5:30 p.m.: Giving out bag lunches until further notice.

**Shady Glen Diner:** 7 Avenue A, Turners Falls (picnic table outside) Saturdays in April, 1 p.m., giving out bagged lunches for kids while supplies last. See [www.facebook.com/ShadyGlen/](http://www.facebook.com/ShadyGlen/) for more info.

**Five Eyed Fox:** 37 3rd St, Turners Falls. This program has been suspended until further notice.

**Franklin Area Survival Center:** 96 4th Street. Food pantry is open from 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Mondays through Fridays. Call for updates: (413) 863-9549.

GREENFIELD

**2nd Helpings Meal:** The Episcopal Church of Saints James and Andrew, 8 Church St., Greenfield. Mondays, 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. Hot meals to go from a takeaway window accessible from the church’s parking lot.

**Sunday Sandwiches:** The Episcopal Church. Sundays, 12 to 12:30 p.m. Sandwiches to go from a takeaway window accessible from the church’s parking lot.

**Whitney’s Pantry:** The Episcopal Church. Essentials pantry: toilet paper and other goods. Last Monday of each month, 4:30 to 5:30 p.m.

**Franklin County Community Meals Program:** Second Congregational Church, Court Square. Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 5 to 5:30 p.m. Giving out bag lunches until further notice.

**Salvation Army:** 72 Chapman Street. Bag lunches 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., Monday to Friday. Food pantry: 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Monday to Friday. Call first for intake to use food pantry: (413) 773-3154.

**Stone Soup Café:** All Souls Church, Hope Street. Saturday meal, take out. Noon to 1:30 p.m. Saturday afternoon delivery in Greenfield, Bernardston, Deerfield, Montague/Turners, Shelburne Falls/Buckland. RSVP to help the chefs know how much food to prepare:

[www.bit.ly/need-meals](http://www.bit.ly/need-meals). Stone Soup is welcoming donations of money; see the link above.

**Cathedral in the Light,** Greenfield Common: Canceled until future notice.

**Bread of Life Kitchen:** Beacon Field, off of Beacon Street, Greenfield. Saturdays, 10 a.m., grocery distribution. People are welcome to drive up the first base side of Beacon Field with their trunks open so volunteers can safely load bags of food. The volunteers will ask people how many bags they need and the effort will operate on an honor system. For information, contact Donna at (413) 498-5065.

**Dial/SELF Food Pantry and Drop-In:** Changes in hours to our food pantry and drop-in. Mondays 1 to 4 p.m., Wednesdays 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Friday 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. See [www.dialself.org](http://www.dialself.org).

**Center for Self-Reliance Food Pantry:** Federal Street Elementary School on 125 Federal St. Every Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Premade bags of groceries, dairy, meat and produce items for curbside pickup; diapers available for families with diaper needs. If you are unable to get to us, please call us at (413) 773-5029 to see how we can help.

LEVERETT

**North Leverett Baptist Church Food Pantry:** 70 North Leverett Road. Open on the first and third Monday of every month from 7 to 8 p.m. For questions, contact (413) 367-2619 or [office@nlbcma.org](mailto:office@nlbcma.org).

MEALS FOR KIDS

See [www.meals4kids.org/summer](http://www.meals4kids.org/summer) for info about meals provided for children by public schools across Massachusetts during school closures.

**Greenfield Public Schools and Gill-Montague Schools** both distribute meals Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. For full drop-off schedules, see the link above ([www.bit.ly/FCFoodResourcesList](http://www.bit.ly/FCFoodResourcesList)).

**CHILD HERO** from page B1 imagine,” she’s talking about adults as well as children.

Natov’s reputation as an esteemed scholar, an award-winning teacher, and a loving parent and grandparent is evident just from her book’s table of contents. It could easily serve as a life syllabus for raising our own, as well as our children’s, levels of consciousness, and her recommendations range from illustrated books to graphic novels to creatively narrated young adult novels. There are even a few postmodernist texts. Who would’ve guessed?

The individual chapters cover such issues of socialization as difference and diversity, fear and trauma, bullying, racism, immigration, and domestic violence, but the treatment of these subjects is neither depressing nor despairing. Just the opposite. They tap into children’s imaginations in ways that allow them to safely understand and empathize with people whose experiences may or may not be similar to their own.

Our Own Monster

Let me give you an example, one that has particular relevance to our present-day struggle against the coronavirus: the death of a child’s mom. The book that Natov analyzes in this regard is entitled *The Monster Calls*, written by Patrick Ness with illustrations by Jim Kay.

In this novel, a monster appears in Connor’s dreams as his mother is dying of cancer, but the monster doesn’t scare Connor. The real monster is in the real world.

As Connor comes closer and closer to recognizing and understanding and accepting his mom’s death, the monster starts to look more and more like a human, and Connor comes more and more to recognize the monster as a form of his inner self – the part that harbors his guilt in the role he feels he’s played in his mom’s dying, a guilt he assuages

by beating up a bully at school. (It’s not uncommon for someone who has suffered the loss of a loved one to engage in a violent activity.) And what does Connor feel guilty about? Not wanting to let his mom die and, at the same time, wishing she would.

That’s not all. Ness complicates this already complicated story by introducing three tales told by the monster. (Did I mention that Natov chooses stories that resist simple solutions to complex problems?) Through the monster’s tales, Connor is able to connect what is happening at home and in school with the dreams he has subconsciously created to explain to himself what he needs to know, but hasn’t been able to consciously understand, accept, or articulate: how the world isn’t divided into good guys and bad guys; how some stories that seem like lies are, in fact, truths; and how believing is the beginning of healing.

The ending of the novel is sad, but hopeful. The monster cannot cure the cancer raging in Connor’s mom, but he doesn’t try to give the boy false hopes, and he doesn’t spout worn-out clichés such as needing to get on with his life when his mother dies. He tells Connor the truth: *No one can save your mom*. This truth frees Connor to begin the process of addressing and resolving the many complex feelings that emerge not only when someone close to us dies, but when we face our own inevitable end.

What a story! And there are 30 more of them, each presenting complex issues in ways children of appropriate ages and varying levels of reading skills can understand and appreciate. They have in common child heroes who, like Connor, don’t triumph over their challenges in ways that set them up as unrealistic role models. These new kinds of heroes embrace ambiguity and, through stories that stimulate their imaginations, develop qualities that allow them to

navigate the adult world with a more encompassing and mature set of sensibilities than those gained from many traditional child narratives.

Perhaps the most important of these qualities, one especially needed during these troubled times, is empathy. More than sympathy, empathy teaches us to lead with our hearts as well as our minds. To engage emotionally, not only with people we may never know, but with characters in stories who are sometimes not even human.

Think, for example, how willingly children can suspend their disbelief when they read stories about animals, and how easily some of them can form actual relationships with fictitious characters.

Heroic Forgiveness

The hero of Kate DiCamillo’s *The Tale of Despereaux*, beautifully illustrated by Timothy Basil Ering, is a mouse, but his is not the only tale. There are two others: that of Roscuro, a rat, and Mig, a servant girl.

Despereaux is the smallest of mice. Not much is expected of him. But what he lacks in physical ability he makes up for in ways that are not usually associated with traditional heroes. He’s unconventional in his thinking, clever in his behavior, and likes to read.

“Get your head out of the clouds and hunt for crumbs,” his father tells him. But Despereaux doesn’t listen. Because he is true to his nature, he almost can’t help himself: not even a dungeon can force him to deny his impossible love for a princess. Is he the world’s wisest fool or its most foolish wise mouse? Either way, we respect and admire him, and delight in the adventures of this new kind of hero.

No rodent could be more different from Despereaux than the rat Chiaroscuro. The first half of his name means “light” and the second part means “dark.” Roscuro, for

Montague Community Television News

Share Your Videos With Our Viewers!

By MICHAEL SMITH

TURNERS FALLS – The MCTV office is closed to the public due to coronavirus. But the station is still running, and we would love to hear from you!

If you have any videos you would like to share or something we can film, please contact us at (413) 863-9200 or [infomontaguetelevision@gmail.com](mailto:infomontaguetelevision@gmail.com).

Town meetings will not be broadcast live, but will be posted on our Vimeo page, found at [montaguetelevision.org](http://montaguetelevision.org), and scheduled in our programming the following day via online video meetings.

Thanks for your cooperation, and please stay safe!

April 22: Earth Day Celebration

WESTERN MASS – Please join Climate Action Now for a virtual, and joyous, Celebration of Earth Day from 6:30 to 8 p.m. on Wednesday, April 22. Because of the COVID-19 crisis, the event will be online via Zoom.

Joining the Celebration will be Jo Comerford and several other Pioneer Valley legislators, as well as activists from the Sunrise Movement, Environment Massachusetts, Mass PIRG, the Springfield Climate Justice Coalition. We wish to inspire and energize everyone, including our state government, to work toward a 100% clean and renewable energy future.

The Celebration will include short presentations, a Q & A session, and – most excitingly – a Kids of All Ages Art Show, which will showcase children’s art and drawings depicting a green future for this world that is 100% based on renewable energy.

The registration invitation to this event is in the link below, and because the platform is Zoom, all who wish to engage must RSVP. Once you confirm, you will be emailed a link for the event. On the day of Celebration, click the link and you’ll be in – simple as that!

Please forward the invitation link to all you know who may be interested, especially to any and all of our artistic children (of any age or ability), for whom this event, and the art, will be engaging and thought-provoking in envisioning a sustainable and just world:

[www.eventbrite.com/e/50th-earth-day-anniversary-celebration-for-100-renewables-tickets-101916509022](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/50th-earth-day-anniversary-celebration-for-100-renewables-tickets-101916509022)

short, was born into a dungeon, but one day he saw a light and no longer wanted to live in the darkness. Like Despereaux, he becomes enchanted by the princess, but when the queen calls him a “rat” and banishes him back to the dungeon from which he came, he understands the word to be a “curse, an insult, a word totally without light.” He then reinvents himself as a villain.

The author DiCamillo, talking directly to the reader (when was the last time you saw that rhetorical device in a work of fiction?), asks us to look at and feel for Roscuro from a different point of view. Imagine, she says, how you would behave if you were born into a dungeon of filth and horror and then, one day, you were denied light and love for no reason other than you happened to be a rat. Maybe you, too, would start to think like Roscuro, who finds a different kind of light in the beauty of revenge.

Some hearts, once broken, never mend, DiCamillo tells us, and those that do often “heal themselves in a crooked and lopsided way.” That’s Roscuro.

Then there’s Mig, the servant girl who, sold by her father for some cigarettes, a tablecloth, and a hen, wants to be a princess. But when her turn comes to be sent to the dungeon, she meets You Know Who and agrees to participate in a plot to kidnap the princess and trade places with her. The idea is absurd, but hope, like love, is a powerful emotion, and it’s Mig’s hope that Roscuro is taking advantage of. The plot doesn’t succeed, but Mig and the princess, whose name is Pea, bond empathetically because they both lost their mothers at early ages.

Do Despereaux, Roscuro, and Mig all live happily ever after? No, but they are no longer motivated by unrealistic expectations and have learned valuable lessons from their adventures, one of the most important of which is the healing power of

forgiveness. Despereaux doesn’t get to marry the princess, but his father asks for and receives forgiveness for treating him unfairly. Mig doesn’t get to be a princess, but she becomes reunited with her own repentant father, who treats her like one “for the rest of his days.” Despereaux doesn’t forgive Roscuro but, when given the opportunity, decides against killing the rat whom he has come to understand and feel compassion for.

Roscuro, of course, doesn’t change his behavior, but he’s alive and, though his life hasn’t turned out to be fair in any fairytale sense, its darkness is still better than death. And besides, as Despereaux tells us, “Would killing the rat really make the darkness go away?”

Despereaux forgives his father, Mig forgives her father, and Roscuro, though not exactly forgiven, is spared. Empathy has many names, DiCamillo seems to be telling us: forgiveness is one of them.

An Indispensable Guide

When I contacted Natov for specific recommendations for books to read during this shut-in time, she suggested two stories for children that are not discussed in her book: Judith Viorst’s *The Tenth Best Thing About Barney*, which is about the death of a cat, and Arnold Lobel’s *Frog and Toad are Friends*, which is set in an emotional place where friendship and compulsion meet.

The stories Natov analyzes in *The Courage to Imagine* help children to create perspectives they might not otherwise have been able to imagine. They also inspire children to act in considerate and compassionate ways that they might otherwise have never known.

In short, it is an indispensable guide for every teacher and parent who cares about the human condition and genuinely wants to improve it. Read it. Enjoy it. Learn from it. Pass it on.



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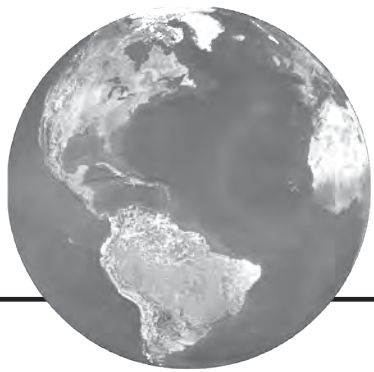
TURNERS FALLS

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# Aquí se habla español

Esta es la nueva página en español del Montague Reporter. Aquí podrá encontrar cuestiones acerca de la comunidad hispana en el área, eventos de interés, curiosidades, y noticias mundiales en español. Si quiere participar o compartir alguna sugerencia, envíenos un correo electrónico a: [spanish@montaguereporter.org](mailto:spanish@montaguereporter.org).



## ¡Quédate en casa!: El lema para esta pandemia en España

Por VICTORIA MAÍLLO DE AGUILERA

A la hora de escribir estas líneas el número de personas contagiadas en el mundo por el virus del COVID-19 son 1.810.230, entre ellos el número de fallecidos es de 114.000 y la cifra total de personas curadas es de 410.000.

España es el segundo país del mundo detrás de Estados Unidos en número de contagios, superando a Italia que hasta hace unas semanas fue el país europeo con mayor número de personas infectadas. Estados Unidos, España e Italia han superado en número oficial de contagios a China, el país en el que se generó la epidemia.

España registra el 13 de abril la impresionante cifra de 169.500 personas enfermas del COVID-19, un total de 17.500 fallecidas y 64.800 curadas. Estas son las cifras oficiales ya que debido a la falta de pruebas no se consideran cifras fallecidos por el virus si no han dado positivo en la prueba y no se realizan autopsias.

El primer positivo en España fue confirmado en enero de 2020, aunque no fue hasta principio del mes de marzo que las cifras aumentaron exponencialmente y fueron tomadas en serio por el gobierno. Las primeras pruebas en España se empezaron a hacer a finales de febrero ya que existían muchos pacientes con una neumonía de origen desconocido. El 14 de marzo de 2020, el presidente Pedro Sánchez declaró el estado de alarma.



En ese momento solamente había en España 120 fallecidos y unos 4.100 contagiados. El estado de alarma pudo ser declarado por el gobierno por un período de quince días, pero su extensión debía ser refrendada por el Congreso de los Diputados. Las medidas excepcionales del estado de alarma implican limitar el movimiento de todas las personas que no se consideren trabajadores esenciales, así como la movilización de todos los recursos del estado, públicos y privados, para el bien común.

Quince días más tarde el presidente Sánchez amplió el confinamiento otros quince días con el voto de apoyo del congreso. Los



trabajadores que tuvieron que parar sus actividades recibieron una compensación económica y la recuperación de las horas no trabajadas al finalizar el estado de alarma.

Los trabajadores que fueron despedidos por el cese de actividad de la empresa pudieron a cogerse a un régimen especial de ayuda al desempleo (ERTE) y los desahucios fueron eliminados durante un periodo de seis meses. Nadie podía salir de casa si no era para hacer una compra de alimentos más de 30 euros o medicinas. Estaba prohibido salir a correr o hacer deportes y por supuesto desplazarse a otra localidad.

Uno de los resultados del estado de alarma más difíciles de soportar para la población es que las personas fallecen solas en los hospitales ya que no pueden ser acompañadas por ningún familiar y no se realizan funerales ni entierros en los con más de tres personas para evitar la propagación del virus.

El 13 de abril en España los trabajadores no esenciales pudieron volver al trabajo, aunque no todos tuvieron acceso a bienes sanitarios de prevención como mascarillas y desinfectantes. Aun así, los trabajadores no esenciales que pueden teletrabajar deben hacerlo desde sus casas, por ejemplo, abogados, oficinas del gobierno. Los trabajadores no esenciales que no puedan ejercer su trabajo desde casa, por ejemplo, empleados de la construcción servicio doméstico, pudieron volver a sus puestos. Los bares, restaurantes y hoteles no se consideran esenciales por lo que permanecen cerrados.

Las universidades y centros escolares siguen dando clases a distancia. Todos los trabajadores que salgan de sus domicilios para cumplir con sus labores deben llevar mascarilla y guantes y desinfectar los objetos que hayan llevado consigo como el teléfono celular, las gafas o el reloj. Se recomienda que al llegar a casa te quites los zapatos antes de entrar y desinfectes la suela. La ropa debes lavarla a una temperatura de 60° C y si tienes síntomas no puedes acudir a trabajar.

Los partidos de la oposición han mostrado su desaprobación a la forma de actuar ante la crisis del COVID-19 del gobierno de coali-

ción formado por el PSOE y Unidas Podemos. Acusan al gobierno de haber reaccionado a tiempo, de no hacer lo posible para comprar test, aparatos médicos como respiradores, o material de protección para los trabajadores sanitarios como guantes, batas y mascarillas. Las cifras indican que antes de la orden de confinamiento total una persona podía infectar de 3 a 6 personas, mientras que durante la época de confinamiento el ritmo de contagio es de solamente 1:1.

En España las competencias de salud están transferidas a las comunidades autónomas, así que el gobierno central no tiene toda la responsabilidad directa sobre los hospitales y residencias de ancianos.

Citando como ejemplo mi comunidad autónoma de origen, Castilla y León, en la que el Partido Popular lleva gobernando desde el año 1987 sin interrupción, y que tiene un total de menos de 2.500.000 de habitantes, al ser una de las zonas más despobladas de España, las cifras de personas que han muerto como resultado del COVID-19 es de unas 1.230 personas. El número de personas contagiadas es de 12.650. Es decir 526 contagiados por cada 100.00 habitantes.

Castilla y León es la cuarta autonomía en número de personas contagiadas en España, solamente superada por Madrid, Cataluña y Castilla-La Mancha. Es un dato interesante porque Andalucía tiene el doble de población, pero mucho menor número de personas contagiadas. Se asocia este dato no a la densidad de población, sino también a las medidas de prevención sanitaria tomadas en cada autonomía por el gobierno regional y a los recortes sanitarios en personal médico y número de camas por hospital.

El gobierno central cree que la salida de los ciudadanos a la calle debe ser escalonada y posiblemente los mayores de 70 años tengan que permanecer en casa gran parte del verano. La resolución de la crisis depende de la llegada de pruebas de anticuerpos que el gobierno intenta comprar en China y la realización de test a toda la población. Por el momento, todos estos tan necesarios resultados van a tener que esperar.



## Datos en el mundo hispanico

Datos del 13 de abril de 2020. Fuente: True Project.

País:	Infectadas:	Fallecidas:	Curadas:
Peru	7.519	193	1.798
Ecuador	7.446	333	501
Chile	7.213	80	2.059
México	4.661	296	1
Panamá	2.974	74	4
España	169.496	17.489	64.727
Colombia	2.776	109	85
República Dominicana	2.620	126	0
Argentina	2.142	90	468
Puerto Rico	788	42	0
Cuba	620	16	0
Costa Rica	558	3	0
Uruguay	512	21	231
Honduras	392	24	0
Bolivia	275	20	0
Venezuela	171	9	0
Guatemala	137	3	0
Paraguay	134	6	12
El Salvador	118	6	0

## “Tu casa es el mejor sitio para estar”

Por SAMANTHA WOOD  
(Traducido por Victoria Maíllo de Aguilera)

**GREENFIELD** – El nuevo Coronavirus que produce la enfermedad conocida como COVID-19 se ha extendido en la comunidad y en mayor medida entre la población que no sabe que es portadora del virus. Las personas asintomáticas quizás nunca lleguen a estar enfero solamente tener síntomas leves y por ello no den señales de alarma.

Esto significa que algunas personas que creen no estar enfermas han estado infectando otras personas con las que hayan estado en contacto. Y esto es algo cierto para todos.

Según la trabajadora sanitaria Lisa White: “tenemos que asumir que cada persona con la que entramos en contacto en portadora del virus”. White es enfermera de salud pública en *Franklin Regional Council of Governments*, y desarrolla su trabajo en 17 pueblos durante la crisis del COVID-19.

Incluso cuando alguien cae enfermo, la incubación puede haber tenido lugar en las dos semanas anteriores. Para White, “la clave está en la prevención,” y quedarse en casa que es el mejor lugar para poder pararlo: “Tu casa es el mejor sitio para estar.”

### Mascarillas

El Centro para el control y prevención de enfermedades de EEUU (CDC) adaptó sus pautas para reducir el riesgo de transmisión del virus. El CDC aconseja ahora que todos llevemos una mascarilla de tela en lugares donde haya posibilidad de estar cerca de otras personas fuera de nuestra casa, como por ejemplo un

supermercado.

El virus puede extenderse entre personas que estén interactuando en proximidad, por ejemplo, hablando, tosiendo o estornudando, incluso aunque no muestren síntomas. El CDC recomienda el uso de mascarillas de tela en lugares públicos como tiendas, farmacias, supermercados, donde sea difícil mantener la distancia de seguridad especialmente en áreas de transmisión comunitaria significativa.

Este es un cambio de línea de actuación del CDC que hasta entonces había sostenido lo contrario. La mayoría de la gente en los EEUU no ha aceptado el uso de la mascarilla para contener las cifras de contagio y las pautas respecto a este tema han sido contradictorias.

En algunos países el uso general de mascarillas durante la pandemia es requerido para todas las personas en lugares públicos como parte del protocolo básico de higiene, y se cree que ha jugado un papel importante en relación con el freno del contagio de la infección.

En una entrevista en *Science Magazine* publicada el 27 de marzo de 2020, George Gao, director general del Centro de Control y Prevención de Enfermedades en China, recomienda el uso de mascarillas. Gao participó en algunas de las primeras investigaciones de la nueva cepa del coronavirus y es el coautor de estudios recientes en *The New England Journal of Medicine* sobre la identificación del virus y su transmisión.

Gao se muestra directa e inequívocamente a favor del uso de mascarillas. “En mi opinión, el mayor error en los Estados Unidos...

Para leer más, haga clic aquí:  
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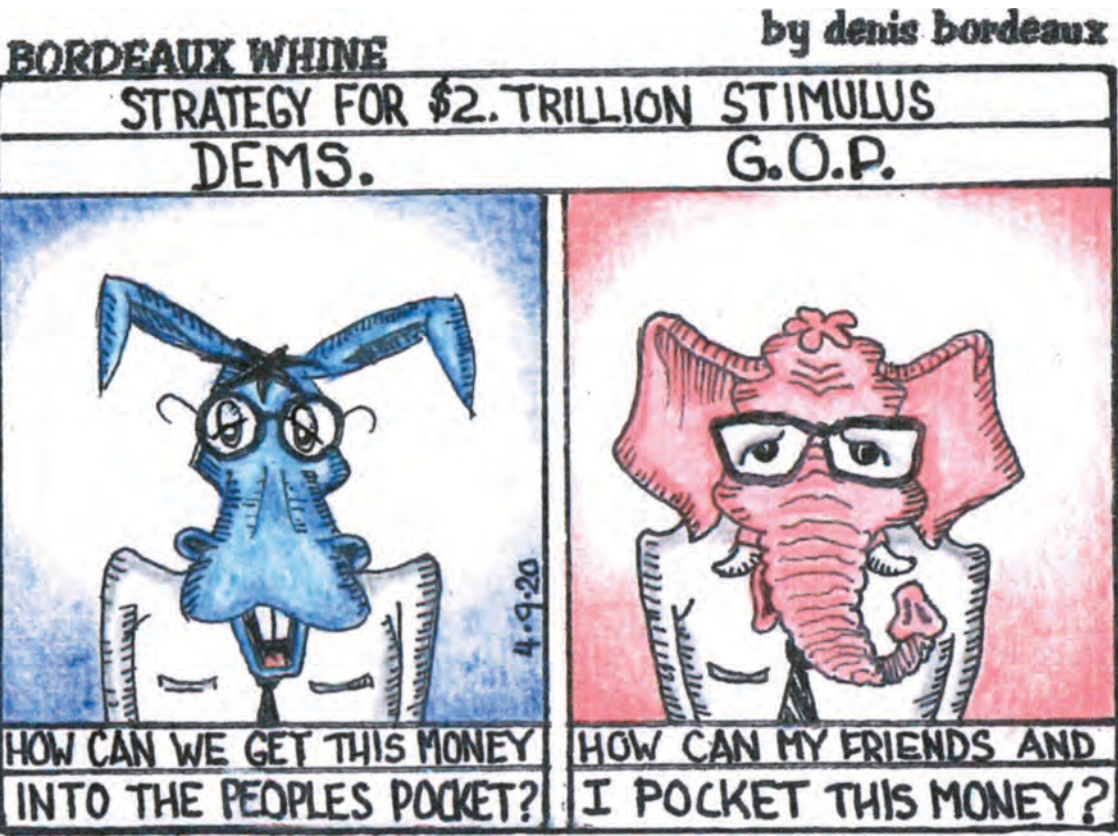
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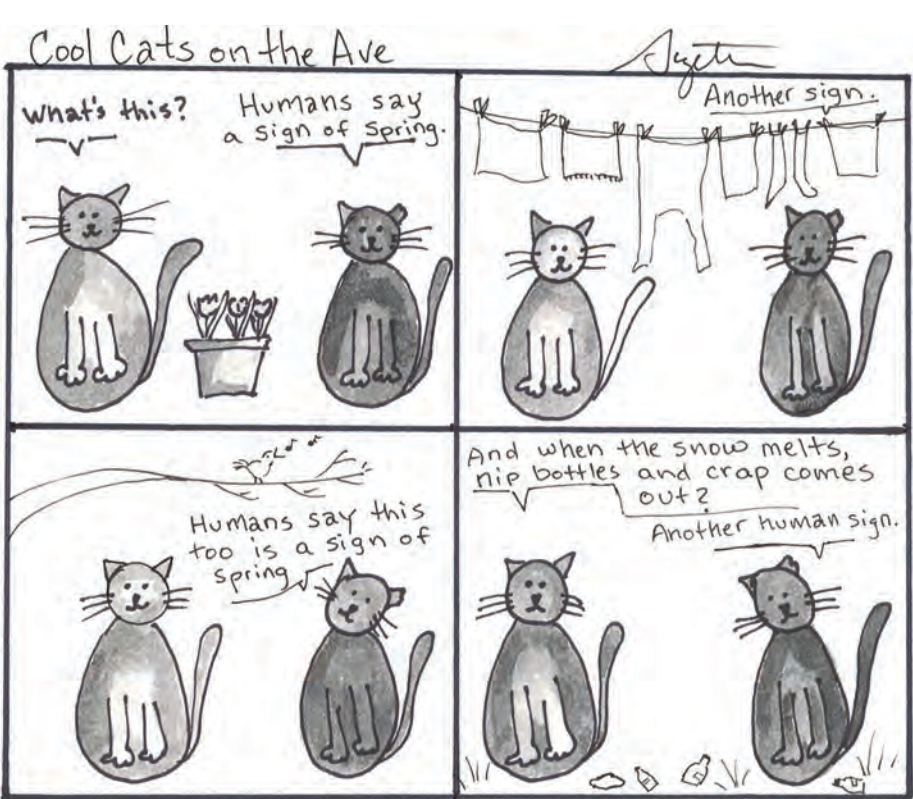
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# Comics and Puzze

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**STRATEGY FOR \$2. TRILLION STIMULUS**  
**DEMS. G.O.P.**  
**HOW CAN WE GET THIS MONEY INTO THE PEOPLES POCKET?**  
**HOW CAN MY FRIENDS AND I POCKET THIS MONEY?**



**Cool Cats on the Ave**  
What's this? Humans say a sign of Spring.  
Another sign.  
Humans say this too is a sign of Spring.  
And when the snow melts, nip bottles and crap comes out?  
Another human sign.



**THREE DEGREES OF WARMING**  
JANICE ROWAN  
It's my prototype solution for climate change  
Will it come in different seasons?



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**OVER THE HILL**  
Carolyn Clark  
Thelma, when may we expect Tank to go home?  
I don't know, Sport. Anne's helping out at the hospital.  
He tried to push me out of bed last night. I got very little sleep!  
Okay, it's just you and me tonight, Tank. Harry gets the guest room.



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**APPLE CORPS** from page B1 but somehow, I've never really "nailed it." Gardening and planting on the other hand, require more planning, knowledge and organization – or at least I thought!

Three years ago I connected with Annie Levine of GFAC Unity Park Community Garden, her relaxed approach to planting and maintaining a garden really changed my mind about things... I let my son choose the seeds he wanted, and quickly I realized that a small forest was about to bloom in my 3x6 raised bed! I started to feel stressed about how pumpkins, sunflowers, kale, cucumbers, tomatoes, beets, cauliflower and ground cherries were all quickly growing out of control and felt embarrassed about my unwieldy garden plot.

One sunny afternoon I bumped into Annie at the garden, she looked at my bed and smiled. Nervously I expressed how other folks told me I was crazy to grow so much in such a small space. Annie shrugged and basically encouraged me to just let it go and let it grow, see what happens! Wow, what a liberating concept!

This was a game changer for me. Wanting so badly for my space to look like Monet's garden paintings, I forgot all about how special it was to see everything spring to life and witness the process. Yes, things were out of control, overcrowded and difficult to harvest at times but things grew, we ate and I learned.

It was especially fun to see my son joyfully rooting around in our small jungle looking for delicious treats,

he was delighted – it was an adventure instead of a chore.

This will be my third year at the community garden, and I totally encourage others who might feel intimidated by the prospect of growing their own food to go ahead and give it a try this season. I definitely scaled back the production at our little space, asking the advice from other knowledgeable folks and trying to explain to my seven-year-old that we have a garden bed, not a farm to work with!

I appreciate Annie and all the other friendly gardeners in town for encouraging my planting endeavors to remain creative, fun and relaxed – I encourage you, too. Happy planting!

This is our third year coordinating the Unity Park Community Gardens, and we have plans to up-scale our ten public "U-Pick" beds with many easy-to-pick and tasty veggies. We will have much better signage indicating which beds are open for picking.

We encourage families to come over from the playground and check out the gardens, pick some strawberries and tomatoes, and get inspired for your own gardens at home – whether they are container gardens in your windows or on your porch, or a large backyard garden.

Of course, all of this is in hope this crisis abates, and we are able to gather again. We will plant seeds in hope for the future – a better future, for all beings.

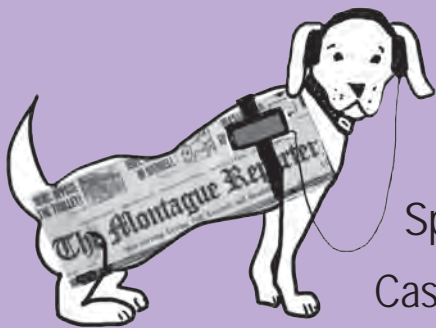
Please like and follow us on Facebook for our upcoming events!

In honor of Earth Day, we have put together a **Social Distance Trash Pick Up Day** this Sunday, April 19 in Turners Falls. We will have trash bags and sanitary gloves available, and you can choose whatever part of town to pick up trash you would like.

Our Annual Spring Clean Up has been "canceled" as we will not have people gather at the gardens, but there are still tasks to be done to prepare for this season. If you are interested in contributing your efforts, please email [greatfallsaplecorps@gmail.com](mailto:greatfallsaplecorps@gmail.com).



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# A Great Time for Mail Art

**GREENFIELD** – Local artist Trouble Mandeson reached out to the *Reporter* to let us know about a mail art project she started doing during the past few weeks of isolating herself at her home. Mandeson has been exploring watercolor painting and has completed dozens of small pieces – some of them only three by four inches or so – that feature *objets d'art* from around her home.

Mandeson is a veteran pen pal to many, so the idea of mailing off her little portraits to people she knows occurred to her right away. Soon, she started receiving little things in her mailbox in return. "I love the idea of someone opening their mailbox and receiving this little surprise, this little gift fluttering out at them," she said. "I hope other people use this idea and start sending art out."

Concerned about creating any additional burden on postal workers at this time, she asked her carrier if adding extra mail would pose any problem. According to Mandeson, the carrier assured her that she loves her job and definitely wants people to use the postal service so that she can keep it!



Examples of Trouble Mandeson's mail art "Pandemic Series."

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