

The Montague Reporter

YEAR 18 – NO. 25

also serving Irving, Gill, Leverett and Wendell

\$1

EDITOR@MONTAGUEREPORTER.ORG

THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

APRIL 23, 2020

Schools to Remain Closed, With Classes Now In Session

By SAMANTHA WOOD

FRANKLIN COUNTY – This week Governor Charlie Baker announced the much anticipated news that Massachusetts school buildings would not reopen this school year.

“All public and private schools will remain closed through the end of the school year,” Baker said in his daily news briefing on Tuesday. “Remote learning will con-

tinue in all districts.”

Reflecting on the closing of the schools and the jump to remote learning, Gill-Montague regional school superintendent Michael Sullivan said, “It’s been a little crazy. It’s been a lot of work. It’s been challenging, and also rewarding, to try to adapt.”

Districts face the immediate challenge of providing an equitable see **SCHOOLS** page A8

Pandemic Adds New Twist To Village Co-op’s Saga



A plexiglass shield and a homemade face mask divides Leverett Village Co-Op volunteer Roxanna Normack from customers at the checkout counter.

By ISABEL KOYAMA

LEVERETT – “Toilet paper is here!” reads a handwritten sign on a set of shelves stocked with cleaning products, and a few remaining rolls of toilet paper, at the Leverett Village Co-op. “Limit: 1 4-pack or 2 singles.”

All around, shelves are bountifully stocked with items including produce, dairy, snacks, cosmetics, wine, and beer. In contrast, the café section of the store is unlit, closed off with red tape in accordance with social distancing guidelines.

“We’re doing the best we can,” says Roxanna Normack of the coop’s safety practices around COVID-19. Normack, a 20-year member-owner who served on the organization’s board of directors during the early 2000s, has recently been volunteering for three-hour shifts behind the register three times a week.

Normack says she and other volunteers try to bleach surfaces around the store regularly, and maintain a six-foot distance from customers. A plastic barrier now separates the register attendant from see **COOP** page A4

SCENE REPORT

Local Earth Day Activists Adjust to “Double Crisis”

By ANNA GYORGY

FRANKLIN COUNTY – Wednesday was Earth Day, and the 50th anniversary of the first mega-environmental demonstrations in the US. People couldn’t gather as in years past, but there was still activity, some outside as well as online.

That first Earth Day was big. On

April 22, 1970, 20 million Americans rallied to protest the state of the nation’s environment. The power of that public expression led to nationwide legislation. The Environmental Protection Agency was created, and major bills were passed. Among them were a strengthened Clean Air Act; endangered species protection; the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 for workplace safety; and the Clean Water Act, passed in 1972 to improve the polluted state of national waterways.

Much remained to be done. And often it wasn’t. Over the years, an international Earth Day network developed. Although corporate sponsors took advantage of good publicity through their support, awareness of environmental problems and urgent needs continued to grow – as did the climate crisis.

Denis Hayes, an original organizer and since head of the Earth Day Network, recently told the host of NPR’s “Living on Earth” that:

“The core purpose of the 50th anniversary of Earth Day was to finally take the climate emergency

see **EARTH DAY** page A5

NEWS ANALYSIS

The Problems With the Town COVID Data

By JEFF SINGLETON

FRANKLIN COUNTY – The rate of confirmed coronavirus cases in Greenfield, reported on the state Department of Public Health (DPH) website last week, was four times that of Montague, when controlled for the population of the two towns. (Greenfield has approximately twice the population of Montague.)

Longmeadow, an affluent community of about 16,000 residents, was reported to have twice the COVID rate of neighboring Springfield, the second largest city in the state with a large low-income population.

The *Boston Globe* reported this week that the per-capita COVID numbers for New Bedford (165) and Fall River (167), both of which have large minority populations, are significantly below the state average. Meanwhile the city of Chelsea, also with a large minority and low-income population, had a COVID rate of 1,890 per 100,000, the highest in the state.

The DPH’s decision to publish city- and town-level data, implemented on April 15, was a controversial one in part due to the uncertainties and complexities of the data itself. Previously, the state had recommended that localities only publish countywide data, a recommendation that was justified in terms of privacy concerns.

Despite the state’s recommendation, cities and towns were allowed to reveal local data, which they could obtain through a data source called MAVEN, an acronym for the Massachusetts Virtual Epidemiological Network. MAVEN was created in 2006 to serve local health boards as an “integrated, web-based disease surveillance and case management system” for infectious diseases,

see **DATA** page A7

Company Knew of Acid Leak Days Before Spill

By SARAH ROBERTSON

COLRAIN – The state Department of Environmental Protection says an investigation is still underway into a sulfuric acid spill into a tributary of the North River that reportedly killed tens of thousands of fish last Labor Day weekend. Employees at the Barnhardt Manufacturing Company discovered a leak in a chemical storage tank six days before the spill, according to a December report. At least five times more acid was released into the brook than the company originally reported, and cleanup efforts have continued for months afterwards.

“MassDEP is reviewing enforcement options with the Massachusetts Attorney General’s Office,” Catherine Skiba, deputy regional director of MassDEP’s Springfield office, told the *Reporter* this week. “Once the investigation is complete, we will be able to provide additional information.”

In the early morning hours of September 1, approximately 60 gallons of sulfuric acid were released into

BACK IN PRINT!



MIKE JACKSON PHOTO

This edition of the Montague Reporter is being mailed to all home subscribers after the paper spent four editions – March 26 and April 2, 9, and 16 – as a digital-only publication. PDFs have been posted online for free on our website, and for the time being, this practice will continue. Mailing the paper is costly, and we ask subscribers to consider “opting out” and reading us online until we are able to return to regular delivery. For more information, see page A2.

Opioid Network Checks In

By SAMANTHA WOOD

GREENFIELD – Dozens of community agencies participated in a Zoom meeting of the Opioid Task Force on Wednesday, and even as the meeting was focused on the courts during the COVID-19 shutdown, it illustrated both the collaborative work the task force has been doing for the past six years, and the way that the crisis is touching every corner of life in Franklin County.

From concerns about it spreading in the jail, to mental health and the stress of isolation, to increased food insecurity, the virus lights up a map of vulnerability – and of the

community’s responses.

The Franklin County House of Correction currently has no cases of COVID-19 among the incarcerated population. This was the first point Sheriff Christopher Donelan made in his update to the group.

The jail has been largely closed off in response to the threat of the novel coronavirus. “We pretty much shut down all external operations on March 13,” Donelan said in Wednesday’s meeting. “When we saw what was coming and the information we were receiving – I felt our number one priority was to seal our place off to keep the virus

see **OPIOID** page A7



NINA ROSSI PHOTO

A Colrain bleachery has not yet been fined for a leak that killed thousands of fish.

the environment from an outdoor storage tank at the Barnhardt facility, with 25 to 32 gallons making its way into the Tailrace Brook, a tributary of the North River. The company determined a corroded weld joint to be the cause of the failure.

These details were revealed in December in a 217-page report compiled by Omni Environmental Group (OEG), a consultant hired by Barnhardt to write the company’s immediate response action plan

after the incident. The report described how Barnhardt employees discovered a leak on August 26 on an outdoor chemical storage tank containing sulfuric acid.

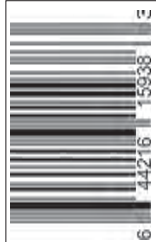
“[T]he drip was believed to be from a flange connection (or seal thereof) and determined to be small, slow and being entirely held within the concrete containment dike,” OEG’s report read. The employees applied baking soda to neutralize

see **LEAK** page A6

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Unable to hold a rally due to social distancing, activists put up colorful posters on the Canalside Bike Trail in Turners Falls and other locations.

FERD WULKAN PHOTO

The Montague Reporter

"The Voice of the Villages"

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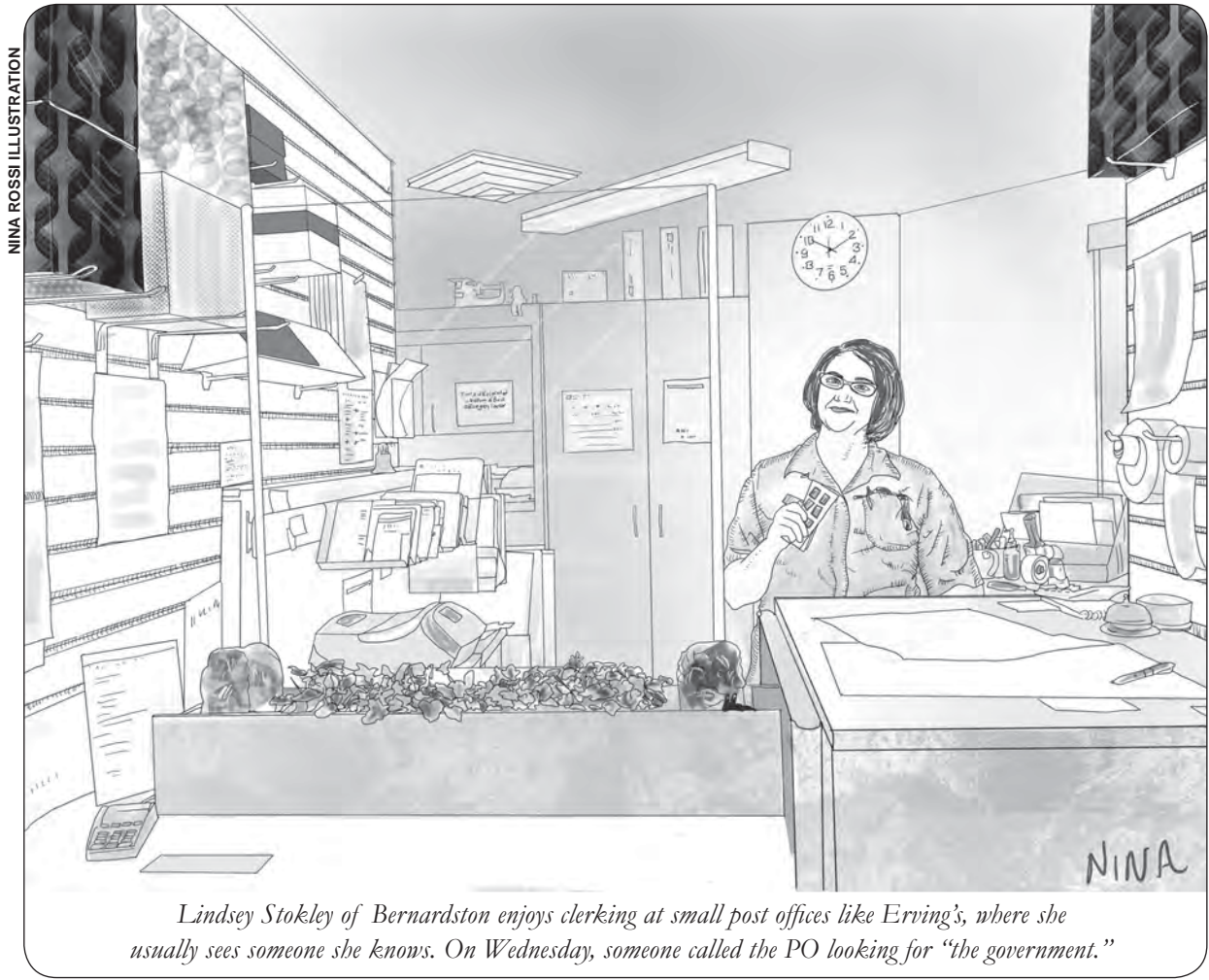
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Technical Administration

About Face Computing

Founded by
Arthur Evans Harry Brandt David Detmold
August 2002



Lindsey Stokley of Bernardston enjoys clerking at small post offices like Erving's, where she usually sees someone she knows. On Wednesday, someone called the PO looking for "the government."

Want People to Stay Home? Pay Them.

"A record 26 million Americans likely sought unemployment benefits over the last five weeks, confirming that all the jobs created during the longest employment boom in US history were wiped out in about a month as the novel coronavirus savages the economy."

That's how Reuters summarizes the jobless situation in this country.

As the initially exponential curve in reported coronavirus cases – and deaths – appears to be flattening, the argument about "reopening the economy" is beginning in earnest.

The governors of six South-eastern states – South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and Tennessee – have banded together in a "coalition" to call off social distancing practices. Georgia governor Brian Kemp has announced that this weekend, his state would be permitting gyms, massage therapists, bowling alleys, nail salons, tattoo parlors, and movie theaters to reopen.

"We're probably going to see our cases continue to go up," Kemp acknowledged, but said he felt it was the "right time."

Here in the Northeast, hard hit by the virus, leaders are being much more cautious.

On Wednesday, Las Vegas mayor Carolyn Goodman gave a CNN interview about her intention to reopen casinos on the Strip. "Let the businesses open, and competition will destroy that business if, in fact, they become evident that they have disease," she argued.

Given that the virus largely spreads asymptotically and can incubate for up to two weeks, Goodman's proposal is guaranteed to spread infection in other states as tourists to the city, already generally those who get off on taking risks, carry it back to their homes.

And for the last week, a rash of protest rallies have been staged around the country against closures and state stay-at-home orders.

These rallies have been small, but have garnered massive press attention – and outrage and anger by those invested in slowing the spread of the virus through the human population.

Many critics have focused on their "astroturf" nature, claiming they don't represent a true grassroots populist movement. There's plenty of credence to this accusation. One of the first rallies was organized by the Michigan Freedom Fund, whose chairman and

founder is also chief operating officer of the Windquest Group, a vehicle for managing the investments of right-wing billionaires Dick and Besty DeVos.

The call to intentionally kick-start business as usual even though it is certain to result in more illness, and ultimately more death, is unsurprising. But Team Quarantine will have to do better than mocking the participants of these rallies and accusing them of being dupes of the ultra-rich if they want to win the debate and keep non-essential employees home this spring.

The fact is, most people in this country are directly, dangerously, dependent on the month-to-month health of the market for their survival. Last year a study showed that 40% of Americans have less than \$400 socked away in case of an emergency, a shocking and widely-cited stat.

Well, this is the emergency.

The federal stimulus efforts, though massive by historical standards, are mostly aimed at keeping big business solvent. A forgivable loan program run through the Small Business Administration already ran out of money; businesses are only eligible for forgiveness if they spend much of the loan on payroll. How is a restaurant or nail salon supposed to pay its workers if it is closed?

They can certainly find a way to disburse that money to workers at home, taking care of their at-home children – but how many will?

An extra \$600 per week unemployment benefit will supposedly be paid retroactive to March 29, but most states have not received the money. State websites for filing claims are overloaded, and many out of work have been unable to file and are not included in the 26 million figure mentioned above. This benefit will only last through July.

Meanwhile, the most direct payment promised to most Americans – a one-time \$1,200 disbursement to most American adults – has been slow to come for most. Direct deposits have begun, but those poor suckers hoping to get a paper checks could be waiting until August or September.

And in many states (thankfully not Massachusetts), banks where these payments are deposited are allowed to seize them to pay consumer debts.

While there have been some efforts to stave off mass homelessness

– Massachusetts this week passed a four-month moratorium on evictions – calls for freezes on rent have largely been unsuccessful. Average US rent is \$1,200 for a two-bedroom apartment, which means April, May, June, and July rent will total \$4,800. Two out-of-work Americans with \$1,200 checks and \$400 in savings each are only going to be able to make 2/3 of that, if they forgo buying food.

It is true that the rallies on the state house steps are so far largely attended by conservative activists; it is true that they are calling for the sacrifice of human lives on the altar of the market. And epidemiologists are fairly unanimous that the coronavirus will be persistent; that it may return with a vengeance in the fall; that canceling social-distancing measures now will result in a catastrophic upswing in its spread later this spring.

But what alternative, exactly, is Team Quarantine offering so far? Generally speaking it is the more privileged employees who have been able to relocate their production to the safety of their homes.

Congress is currently debating a fourth stimulus bill, which would mostly replenish the SBA loan program and fund testing for the virus. Democrats originally said they wanted to include an extension of the unemployment bonus, hazard pay for essential workers, and a second direct payment, but that's off the table.

And battle lines are being drawn over a fifth bill, with Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell commenting that he sees "no good reason" states shouldn't go bankrupt.

All eyes should be on the stimulus bills, not the angry nail salon owners waving signs at the state capitols. Pretty soon, more and more people will decide a sustained quarantine is excessive – whatever the experts say – if it isn't made sustainable by a *quarantine wage*.

And everyone who observes, correctly, that sending everyone back to work amidst the pandemic will cause unnecessary deaths should take this crisis as an opportunity to fight for an end to *poverty*, which has been killing people unnecessarily for generations.

Back To Print: A Note From the Managing Editor

By MIKE JACKSON

TURNERS FALLS – Hello to all of our wonderful readers, particularly those who may not have been able to read this newspaper over the last four weeks!

Suspending our print edition was no one's first choice, but it was necessary to ensure social distancing and safe handling. We didn't want the volunteers in our newsroom to risk exposure to each other, and we especially didn't want to be responsible for distributing virus particles to our entire readership.

While we've heard praise for the digital version of this newspaper we have made **available for free on our website** since March 26, we've also heard from households complaining that it had been two weeks... three weeks... four weeks since they were delivered a paper, and that they are not online.

Therefore, we are cautiously entering what we're thinking of as Phase II of our coronavirus existence. We're printing the paper, about two-thirds our usual run, and **mailing it to all subscribers**. I'm writing this late Wednesday night, knowing that tomorrow I'll personally be wearing a mask and gloves, with one volunteer helper, affixing *all* the labels for the entire edition ourselves, hopefully in time to drive bins full of papers to our towns' various post offices for Friday home delivery.

It's going to be a hassle, and it's going to be both more time-consuming **and more expensive**. Additionally, we're planning to continue to make the paper available for free online, for now: we very much need money to stay in print, but also we believe the news is too important right now to hide behind a payroll.

So if you are able to read the *Reporter* online and you subscribe for home delivery, **please consider opting out of the mail service**. To do this, email your name and address to info@montaguereporter.org. You

can also call the office at (413) 863-8666 and leave us a voicemail with the same information.

We've mentioned this online and in last week's (digital-only) edition, but as of this first round, **only about 12% of our subscribers** have opted out of mailing. We *very much hope* that more of you will choose to join them.

I want to assure readers that this is not a permanent state of things, and that we're hoping to cautiously reinstitute regular home delivery. One step at a time.

Finally, if you were unable to read us during the last month, get in touch and we **will credit the missing editions to your account**.

Newspapers are not doing well right now, as the country and world appear to be entering a deep recession. Layoffs, furloughs, and pay cuts have hit the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Boston Herald*, NPR, many Vermont outlets (*Seven Days*, the *Rutland Herald* and *Barre-Montpelier Times Argus*, and the investigative news site *VT Digger*), and even some papers closer to home. We hope all our colleagues are hired back shortly.

Since people are asking me: Yes, we are also worried about what this economic downturn will mean for the *Montague Reporter*. **We intend to survive**, and we know we will only do so only with conscious support from a broad community.

Please spread the word about our unique paper. We are **an independent nonprofit** that does not qualify for a Small Business Administration payroll protection loan due to our 501(c)4 tax status. We need to rely creatively on our three legs of support: subscriptions, advertising, and donations. If you find you have the means, consider a 2-for-1 good deed: ask your favorite struggling local business if you can buy them an ad in our pages. Or simply send a check, or chip in directly online at www.montaguereporter.org/donate/.

Stay safe, and **stay in touch!**

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LARKIN+ROSSI ILLUSTRATION

Compiled by NINA ROSSI

Have you been to The Attic recently, Bruce Watson's online collection of "stories for **a kinder, cooler America**"? The Montague writer has been posting a series of articles on The Attic website called "The Healers," about doctors and nurses around the world on the frontlines during the COVID-19 crisis.

Watson has also put up links to nine webcams where you may view unprecedented scenes of abandoned public spaces: check in to live shots of Times Square, the Strip in Las Vegas, Laguna Beach, CA, Hollywood Boulevard, Wrigley Field in Chicago, Little Havana in Miami, and more. Rummage around at www.theattic.space.

Slate Roof Press of Northfield has extended the deadline for its annual **poetry chapbook contest**. Submissions of manuscripts are now accepted until June 15. The winner will be granted the Elyse Wolf Prize and will be accepted as a member of the press, a member-run, not-for-profit collective producing high quality books with letterpress covers and hand-sewn bindings. Find out more at www.slateroofpress.com.

The Communities That Care Coalition, the Gill-Montague Community School Partnership, and the Greenfield Safe Schools Safe Streets Coalition have shared that they are partnering on a **new weekly newsletter** designed to connect families and people who work with families with timely and helpful information.

They are posting news and updates on free school meals for kids, connections for caregivers, family meal tips, places to get help, and updates from schools. Subscribe here: www.tinyurl.com/yaam965v

The latest newsletter from the **Cancer Connection** asks, "Are you looking for something creative and engaging to do? Are you a sewing person or crafter? Perhaps this could be a good time to put your hands to work making ornaments for Cancer Connection."

They will soon have some patterns to share and are looking for your own ideas as well. If you have some ideas for them, or just want to work on crafty ornaments for their fundraiser while you have some time to spend, please contact info@cancer-connection.org. The Cancer Connection provides support for persons diagnosed with cancer, and their families.

Epsilon Spires, the Brattleboro arts venue, is streaming the **new documentary film ERDE (Earth)** for Earth Week, online through April 27. Produced by Nikolaus Geyrhalter, the film depicts "the myriad of ways that human beings across the globe transform their natural environments to present a portrait of our world in the Anthropocene."

Ticket sales support Epsilon Spires in bringing innovative and thought-provoking performances to the region. See vimeo.com/onde-mand/earthepsilonspires.

The UMass Fine Arts Center and University Museum of Contemporary Arts have shared that they have created an **online project space**:

"The UMCA Online Project Space serves as a laboratory where dialogue and multi-disciplinary practices are explored and tested. It serves as a showcase for a variety of Art History class projects... provides a platform for student essays, virtual exhibitions with interactive content, research results, intellectual inquiry, and collaboration with other institutions... it offers access

to global collections and intellectual collaboration."

Check it out, and maybe find inspiration, at fac.umass.edu/UMCA/Online.

Last week I shared a call for **neighborhood coronavirus maps** from CityLab. There are now over a hundred submissions on their website, charting homes, neighborhoods, and cities all over the world.

These fantastical realms of quarantine offer interesting viewpoints on the shape of interior emotional space intersecting with the environment. Space can be both constricted and expanded at this time, as we explore new or transformed interiors and exteriors.

What does your bubble look like? Share with them, and maybe send it in to us while you're at it! www.citylab.com and editor@montaguereporter.org.

The Massachusetts Center for the Book has announced their "Must Read" lists in the 20th annual book awards. This year, **Montague author Jennifer Acker** has been long listed in the fiction category for her debut novel, *The Limits of the World*, described as "a novel that spans four generations of an immigrant family. Set in three continents, the story of love, family, secrets, and aspirations unfolds as a result of an unforeseen accident."

Congratulations to Jennifer!

The Springfield Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) remains open, but has put out a public notice that "a few pandemic-related materials can cause problems **if included in recycling bins.**"

This includes plastic gloves, face masks, and sanitizing wipes, all of which must go in the trash, including so-called "flushable" wipes. "All types of wipes are clogging the systems at wastewater treatment plants," the MRF warns.

Our readers are also gently reminded to tie up trash bags securely for pickup. For more information, see www.springfieldmrf.org.

The all-volunteer Franklin County People's Fund seeks to distribute

financial aid to people in precarious circumstances who are especially affected by this crisis. Short-term financial support is offered to vulnerable populations: poor and unhoused people, people of color, undocumented people, and any others who are facing loss of income, food and housing insecurity, and other issues. A Go-fundme site seeks to raise \$50,000: www.gofundme.com/ffc-peoples-fund-covid19-mutual-aid-project. You can also contact them at franklincopeoplesfund@gmail.com.

The **Boston Public Library** is extending free remote services and online event access to all Massachusetts residents, and anyone living in Massachusetts while attending school. If you don't own a Boston Public Library card you can easily get one online at www.bpl.org/ecard.

You will then have access to audiobooks, ebooks, magazines, newspapers, TV shows, movies, and more – provided, of course, that you have some type of computer access. Many folks rely on libraries for computer access, and so far, I have heard of no substitutions to provide them with this during the pandemic.

Speaking of books, it seems strange that during this time, **books or movies are not allowed to be circulated by libraries**. Seeing how restaurants have managed to adapt themselves to take-out systems, couldn't a similar ordering and pickup/return method be used for reading materials as well?

Could books be gently heated to 160 degrees, or simply rested for three days to decontaminate them? Wouldn't it be less risky than eating take-out food?

I can see not allowing inter-library loans, which involves moving materials between towns and regions, but locking up these large collections of books and movies right now, when people have so much more time to indulge in reading and watching, seems too bad. Maybe I'm just not aware of the risks involved in providing such a service?

Send items for briefs to editor@montaguereporter.org.

GUEST EDITORIAL

By MIKE LANGKNECHT

GILL-MONTAGUE – As a member of the GMRSD School Committee, I normally prepare to do my "job" by becoming well informed on the issues that impact students and education.

In the current crisis, there is precious little information to be found, so I am, instead, focusing on the accumulation of questions that I hope we can answer to get our job done.

I'm sharing my process with the readership of the *Montague Reporter* because you will have questions that haven't occurred to me. I'd be having this "conversation" with the School Committee but we can't legally converse on subjects under our jurisdiction between meetings. (There's this *thing*, a very *big thing*, it's called the Open Meeting Law!)

My first question is: What are our educational, social, and institutional goals for the remainder of this school year? Then I wonder how much of the quality education to which they are entitled can we provide our students between now and the middle of June. Education is challenging enough in a typical school year.

The next question is, how will students move forward if there's a gaping hole in their education? Do we even want them to move on? Will seniors be ready for college? Will colleges be

ready for them? Will colleges even open in September? Will their campuses be closed till 2021? How many will never reopen at all?

If graduates choose to directly enter the job market, what is *that* going to look like after the layoffs of 22,000,000 workers and the loss of thousands of employers?

And what about the students who aren't graduating? Will they spend part of next year making up for what they missed this year? How will they make up for the time that takes?

Will these gaps just keep compounding every year so that those who are so inclined will have to start college with a "learning debt" to match the financial debt they'll be leaving college with? Will a fifth year of college, with the related expense, be the new normal for the next 12 years, while the institution of the K-12 public schools catches up? Will we transition to K-13?

For that matter:

What if this is only the first in a series of coronavirus-disrupted school years? What do we need to learn from this disrupted year in order to minimize future disruptions? Are there structural changes we can make? Who(m) do we need at the table for that discussion, and how do we get them to sit down with us? How do we include teachers, students, and families in that conversation in a meaningful way?

The Big Questions for Education

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GUEST COLUMNS

Wendell Selectboard: Candidate Statements

Mail-in ballots are now available for the Wendell annual town election. Two candidates are competing for a two-year seat on the town selectboard. We asked Nan Riebschlaeger and Gillian Budine each to submit a 500-word statement for our readers. Here is what they wrote!

By NAN RIEBSCHLAEGER

WENDELL – I believe that experience in public service and community leadership are necessary qualifications for Selectboard leaders. Since moving to Wendell 29 years ago, I have served as chair of the Planning Board, chair and co-chair of the Energy Committee, member of the Broadband and Technology committees, and president of the Friends of the Wendell Meeting-house. I have been a co-chair of the Franklin County Economic Development Strategy Committee, member of the Franklin County Planning Board, and municipal accountant and chief procurement officer in Orange.

Looking back, I am proud of securing the \$138,125 Green Community Grant for Wendell, which has already made town buildings and homes more energy efficient. And I am proud of leading the passage of the Conservation Development By-law that serves as a model for other towns in the Commonwealth.

I have pursued special training in support of my career in municipal government. I have earned a Master of Business Administration, a Master of Science in Organizational Leadership, and a Certificate in Advanced Critical Thinking and Decision Making. I am a candidate for the Doctorate in Public Administration, specializing in Local Government Management for Sustainable Communities.

As Wendell Selectboard member, I would bring three critical concerns.

The first is *an affordable tax rate*. If seniors and those displaced by a tough economy and the COVID-19 pandemic can't afford to stay in Wendell, we all suffer. The Selectboard and the town committees must

keep affordability foremost in their deliberations. Each Wendellite is a precious resource.

Our tax policies must include a focus on *appropriate business development*, my second concern. The lure of potential tax revenue from new businesses must be balanced against the character of our town. The prospect of commercial solar and marijuana installations has already challenged our needs and values. Under my leadership, the Planning Board has passed a moratorium on solar, and hopes to get one on marijuana. These will give us the opportunity to write bylaws that protect the rural aspect of the town while seeking sustainable business and industry.

My third concern is the *critical role of young adults* in our town government. In order to keep Wendell vibrant, we need to address their needs and concerns in planning and decision making. At the same time, we need to find ways to draw them into decision-making roles in town government. A starting point would be to provide childcare during town meetings and committee meetings so that parents can participate. The Senior/Community Center might be a place where such care could be offered.

I believe I have the skills, experience, and training to serve on the Wendell Selectboard.

Recently the board has been criticized for acting without seeking community input. I believe that the board can address this issue by holding occasional focus sessions, perhaps potlucks. In this way, the board can listen to what constituents are thinking, and citizens may learn what the Selectboard is thinking.

This is the kind of responsive Selectboard I believe Wendell needs and deserves.

By GILLIAN BUDINE

WENDELL – Dear Wendell Friends and Neighbors,

I, Gillian Budine, am a candidate for a 2-year seat on the Wendell Select Board.

I care deeply about the Wendell community, its people, children, families, schools, library, natural environment, and our local government and resources. All my life I have lived in a family involved in public service, in one way or another. I feel it is important to contribute when one is able to commit the time and energy. Now feels like the right time for me.

For over 23 years I have served as the coordinator of the Community Network for Children (CNC) in the Union #28 school system. I write grants to fund the program, as well as raise funds for supplemental CNC programming. The CNC works to strengthen connections among families and offers resources for families with young children and early childhood educators in our community.

I know our community, its people, and the challenges we face living in a small, rural community in Massachusetts.

In my role as the CNC Program Coordinator I plan community-based programs. We provide parent education and support, playgroups, story hours, and literacy enrichment activities in collaboration with our local artists, libraries and educators. We also support families with access to food, housing, and mental health resources.

I organize fundraisers, co-facilitate our CNC Advisory Council, communicate with our state legislators, and advocate tirelessly for

family and community support for our small and rural communities.

A major role of the Select Board is to coordinate the roles of all players in the financial management process, and to promote a team approach for addressing the fiscal issues of the town. I have a demonstrated, strong skill set for collaboration, positive communication, and efficient organizational strategies.

The Select Board should serve the best interests of the town and its people. I have the skills to fill the role of a Select Board member, and to serve the town as the community makes decisions for its future.

I grew up in Wendell from the age of three until I went to college. Many Wendell families remember me as a babysitter! As a teenager, I worked at the Wendell Country Store.

When I graduated from Wheelock College in Boston, I returned briefly to teach preschool at Swift River. My husband, Jeff, manages the Greenfield Farmers' Cooperative Exchange. We raised our three children in Erving.

Five years ago, we built our home next door to my parents, and are shareholders in the Swallow Rise Land Trust. This move committed us to settle in Wendell for good. We live on John Quist Road with our youngest daughter, Mattie, who attends Ralph C. Mahar Regional High School, as I did.

In seeking a Select Board position, my goal is to work productively with other town officials to navigate the fiscal challenges our growing community faces. I look forward to the support of Wendell citizens, and ask for their vote.

COOP from page A1

customers checking out.

"We are a world away from where we used to be," says longtime former store manager Paul Rosenberg. With the help of his wife, Patty Townsend, Rosenberg says he has been volunteering up to 70 hours a week lately to keep the shelves full of carload after carload of inventory.

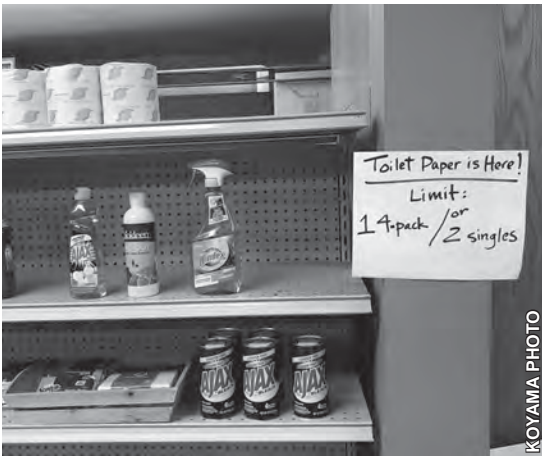
Members of the board, and other community members like Normack, have also been volunteering in shifts behind the cash register each morning to keep the store open.

"[Being on the board] is kind of like a double full-time job," says Ann Ferguson, who was invited to rejoin the board as clerk a few weeks ago, along with two new members, Danielle Barshak and Martin Pittman. Ferguson says the board meets once a week over Zoom, and various internal committees meet every week as well, including the fundraising and finance committees.

Former board president Julio Mendez spent over a month serving on the board until he stepped down in early April.

"I had to step away from it," Mendez tells the Reporter. "I did everything I could [for the coop], until physically I put so much time and energy into it that I honestly was not taking care of myself. I lost 15 pounds." Mendez continues that, while he will always be there for the coop, he feels like he did his part. The board is now headed by president Sam Black.

"It's not sustainable long term," says Jono Neiger, now vice president, of the coop's reliance on volunteer labor. Neiger says the store was recently granted a forgivable \$45,000 Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan from the federal Small Business Administration, which will allow the coop to pay and maintain staff, while also going toward mortgage interest and utility costs.



The newest sign of the times.

"In order for [the loan] to be forgivable, you have to spend a minimum of 75% on payroll, so that's what we're aiming to do," reports Neiger. "That will allow us to increase help in the kitchen, so we are bringing more people on and increasing shifts of existing staff. Right now, there are only four people who are paid staff, but soon there will be eight, plus Susan Walker, who is paid as a contractor."

Neiger adds that the PPP loan will also allow the coop to put Rosenberg and Townsend on the payroll.

Though the loan program is part of a federal stimulus intended to "help businesses keep their workforce employed during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis," according to the SBA website, it comes well-timed for the struggling coop.

At the beginning of February, the store was on the brink of shuttering as it faced a mountain of debt to vendors and ongoing difficulty securing a loan from the bank. Three board officers and store manager Ann Walsh laid off all staff, and resigned shortly afterward. When the new board took over under Mendez' leadership, they rehired

some staff back with limited hours and started volunteering to keep the coop open.

Now that the pandemic has taken hold, Friday night pizza events have transitioned to take-out-only, Sunderland Farm Collaborative designated the coop as a pickup spot for pre-packaged food orders, and customer traffic has been increasing steadily.

A renewed fundraising effort has raised over \$20,000 since February, and the store accepted a \$25,000 loan from member-owner Sam Lovejoy. Enough funds were raised to get a new freezer to keep ice cream for the summer, which has yet to be installed.

Pizza nights have been selling out the past two weeks and Rosenberg says a second weekly pizza night may be added starting next week. Some deliveries have begun, including honey, apples, and maple syrup.

"The numbers keep going up, because it's low traffic and you don't have to drive far," explains board member Jean Bergstrom, who co-chairs the coop's communications committee. She and Neiger both point out that the COVID-19 crisis has brought back many customers in the community who want to support local stores.

"Our kitchen was doing quite well [before the pandemic]," reflects Bergstrom, "and that was really what was bringing people in. Now our grocery is what's holding the store down."

"We've been breaking our record for weekly revenue, increasing every week," Neiger reports.

Still, despite recent successes, the co-op is still in the hole, gradually working to pay off debt and re-establish relationships and payment plans with vendors little by little.

"It's not a happy ending," says Neiger. "We're still in the midst of it. But it's going well."



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NOTES FROM THE WENDELL SELECTBOARD

Town Considering Coronavirus Hazard Pay For WRATS Staff

By JOSH HEINEMANN

The Wendell selectboard again met by Zoom on April 15, again with COVID-19 concerns high on the agenda. Fire chief Joe Cuneo reported that things are going reasonably well, and emergency manager Lonny Ricketts said that Good Neighbors ran smoothly on April 12.

Good Neighbors, after taking two weeks off, moved back into the town hall, with masks required, gloves dispensed at the start and disposed of at the end, and patrons spaced six feet apart. People entered in the back, and followed an S-shaped path through the main hall, with rows of tables isolated by hanging plastic sheets. Fewer people came than on most pre-isolation Sundays, possibly because April 12 was Easter Sunday.

Cuneo said COVID testing is now available at the Big E fair-ground in West Springfield, with priority given to first responders and healthcare workers. Results are ready in 48 hours. Cuneo cautioned that these results are only a “snapshot,” and do not account for any exposure between when the swab is taken and the test result comes in.

Board of health chair Barbara Craddock said that costs incurred by isolation can be included when the town applies for reimbursement of COVID-related extra expenses. Cuneo said he would talk with town coordinator Nancy Aldrich about creating a department-by-department spreadsheet of extraordinary expenses. Wendell will have to pay first, and get repaid later.

Hazard Pay
Wendell’s highway commission

supervises Wendell’s recycling center, the WRATS, and highway commission chair Phil Delorey recommended a \$5 per hour pay increase for WRATS workers. That would cost Wendell \$180 to the end of the fiscal year, because there are only two WRATS workers, and both work 19 hours a week.

The road crew works a full 40-hour week, and increasing their pay at the same rate would cost Wendell \$6,600 for the same time, and most of the road crew work is away from citizens. The road crew has less contact with citizens, but Delorey mentioned an incident when the crew was dealing with a tree that had fallen into the road. Drivers who had to wait got out of their vehicles and helped, as people do, but without masks, or being careful about spacing.

Selectboard member Christine Heard suggested putting a request over the town listserv to not help the road crew.

Selectboard member Laurie DiDonato asked whether any pay increase would be retroactive to the beginning of the Massachusetts quarantine recommendation. Delorey said it would end either with the fiscal year on June 30 or when the state lifts the quarantine. Because this past winter had little snow, the highway maintenance budget has more cash than it normally would in April.

Weed Agreement
Wendell received an email from Blake Mensing, a lawyer working for Appleguy Flowers LTD, with a proposed town host agreement for a marijuana growing facility that Appleguy hopes to build on a lot bordering West Street.

Aldrich said that if there is no moratorium in place, the town should have a host agreement. She said that Appleguy Flowers provided the document in question, and that board members should look at host agreements other towns have made with marijuana companies as a starting point. She can forward samples to board members.

Citizen Dan Leahy called in and said that he felt the Appleguy Flowers lawyer was leading the process, that this approach was putting the cart before the horse, and that Wendell does not yet know what kind of project the company plans to build.

Selectboard chair Dan Keller answered that he did not feel looking at agreements was putting the cart before the horse, that they were “first mini-step,” and that much discussion would take place before any decision was made.

Other Business
By unanimous vote, board members approved \$30,000 of Community Development Block Grant money for use as an infrastructure grant, to offset some of the cost of connecting fiberoptic cables to individual houses. The town, not the households, would own the wires.

Aldrich reported that the highway department now has fireproof cabinets to hold their flammable materials paid for directly with a grant from the town’s insurance company, the Massachusetts Inter-local Insurance Association.

Wendell’s Golden Cane, held by the town’s oldest resident, is being passed on to Lena O’Dou. In normal times, one or more board members visits the honoree and passes on the award. It was not clear how that would happen now.

LOOKING BACK: 10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Here’s the way it was April 22, 2010: *News from the Montague Reporter’s archive.*

Ambulance Decision Delayed

On Tuesday night at Hillcrest Elementary School, the officers of the Turners Falls Fire District presented their annual report, and put eighteen motions up for a vote. About 150 people attended.

Most controversial were motions 14 through 16, related to the Turners Falls Fire Department’s proposal to establish an ambulance service for town residents. The TFFD hopes to purchase an ambulance, hire and train EMT staff, and put itself in the position of billing insurance companies for transporting patients for emergency care.

Currently, although the department responds to all emergency calls in the villages of Millers Falls, Montague City, and Turners Falls, only co-responder Baystate Health Ambulance has the ambulances required to transport the patients, and thus bills for the entire expense of the calls.

However, the figures used by the Turners Falls Fire Prudential Committee in calculating the viability of the plan include providing ambulance service to all five villages of Montague.

Montague Center Fire Department prudential committee member Sam Lovejoy told the Montague selectboard earlier this month that the villages of Montague Center and Lake Pleasant are now planning to create their own ambulance service district, and contract directly with Baystate Health for coverage there.

Mark Allen, chairman of the

Turners Falls prudential committee, said the TFFD planned to hold further informational meetings on the ambulance plan in Montague Center and Lake Pleasant, hoping to bolster support for their proposed ambulance service, which the TFFD believes will cut response time for emergency calls, at no extra cost to town residents.

Pending those meetings, Allen asked for a “No” vote on the motions.

Motion 14, to authorize \$35,000 for the TFFD’s first payment on a six-year lease to purchase an ambulance, was defeated by a majority vote. The additional ambulance-related motions were defeated unanimously.

Leverett to Vote on Guantánamo Resolution

Attorney Bill Newman, director of the Western Massachusetts chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, delivered a speech on Tuesday at the Leverett Library to a crowd of more than two dozen Leverett residents, in preparation for Saturday’s town meeting vote regarding the United States Naval Station at Guantánamo Bay, and the detainees cleared for release at the detention camp that was established there in 2002.

The non-binding resolution, if approved by voters at the April 24 town meeting, would make Leverett the second town in the country, following Amherst, to adopt a resolution calling on Congress to lift the ban on cleared detainees from Guantánamo Bay settling in the United States, and would welcome such detainees to settle in the town of Leverett.

EARTH DAY from page A1

seriously, not as a subject for additional reports, not as a subject for additional international conferences, not to spin our wheels with voluntary activities, but to take something akin to the Green New Deal proposed domestically and take that out internationally with people around the world going out into the streets in mass crowd demonstrations....

“We hoped to have 750,000 people on the National Mall in Washington, DC, to stand there and just demand that we finally get serious about this issue and move boldly. Not with a \$15 a ton tax on carbon, but [with] initiatives that will really change the game dramatically.”

The COVID-19 pandemic changed those long-laid plans. But this week is seeing intense activity online, among them by Hayes’ Earth Day Network, the US Climate Strike Coalition’s Tuesday through Friday online streaming at earthdaylive2020.org, and here in Western Mass, programs by the youth-led Sunrise Movement.

Not all messages have come over the screen. In an artistic info-action, local artists and activists hung signs in Turners Falls and elsewhere with their Earth Day 2020 wishes.

The eyes of bikers and strollers along the Canalside Rail Trail in Turners could be caught by original posters, each with the heading: “Another World is Possible.”

Ferd Wulkan, Montague resident and co-chair of Franklin County Continuing the Political Revolution, explained: “Our theme for these posters, *another world is possible*, is so timely as we think about the twin crises we face: the coronavirus and the climate.

“In dealing with the virus, we have seen endless examples of mutual support and sol-

idarity; we recognize the importance of work done by low-paid workers; we see that the federal government has virtually unlimited amounts of money to address a crisis; we see the power and necessity of science; and we see that huge changes to our economy can happen very quickly. These are all lessons to apply to the climate crisis and to make another world not just possible and urgently needed, but a reality.”

Other area groups also expressed their climate activism in the great outdoors. Extinction Rebellion Western Massachusetts organized a “conversation in art to honor this moment in a spirit of healing,” featuring painted rocks and other artistic expressions.

“We may be stuck at home, but we are still taking back Earth Day,” was the word from the youthful climate action network Sunrise Movement, which since its founding in April 2017 has been a main player in making the Green New Deal a piece of national legislation and goal for many.

Instead of organizing public activities and a large demonstration, as they had originally planned, Sunrise Western MA is hosting three online webinars during the week of Earth Day, while working with other “Sunrise hubs” for a “virtual rally.”

The webinars cover themes crucial to the climate issue. Tuesday’s argued why the pandemic shows the urgent need for a Green New Deal. Wednesday’s explored ways to expand the Green New Deal past the climate crisis, with contributions from Springfield-area organizations Neighbor to Neighbor and Gardening the Community, Deeper Than Water, and the Western Mass Area Labor Federation.

Thursday’s session, which takes place from 4 to 5:30 p.m. (see www.tinyurl.com/ybmtpf4j),



focuses on the “People’s Bailout,” with presentations from Sunriser Haven Vincent-Warner and Divest Smith College. The group makes connections between the coronavirus bailout and the Green New Deal, and discusses how to take action on both.

Here is why Vincent-Warner, a 15-year-old from South Deerfield, is so active, currently as a Sunrise Movement coordinator and field representative for Our Climate:

“In elementary school I steered away from climate activism. As a person of color growing up in low-income housing, I thought climate change was a “white people issue” and I had other things to worry about. I had been told this repeatedly, and it was enforced in many ways within my life, so I really believed it.

“Then after taking the time to do my own research I learned that what I had been told and shown could not be further from the truth. Climate change is an intersectional issue in every way. I learned that if we don’t take preventative measures against climate change now, my generation will not have a future. Further, I saw how the climate crisis first af-

fects frontline and low-income communities, mainly populated by minorities.

“I realized I have to fight for all the kids who were told the same things I was. I have to join the fight for the future of my generation. I now work more than 30 hours a week as a climate activist, it is my passion, and I will continue fighting for climate action for the rest of my life.

“Organizing during the time of the COVID-19 crisis has been a complicated experience. We, as youth activists, have been resilient in adapting to organizing over an online platform. We have worked to make the connections between the COVID-19 crisis and the climate crisis while educating the public and continuing to meet with legislators.

“We have two urgent crises at hand, and we as activists must do everything in our power to keep both relevant, educate the public on both issues, and move our legislators towards equitable policy that addresses both issues.”

Although the forms of protest have changed this Earth Day anniversary, this year’s “twin crises” are making people think about the kind of future and world we want – and want to make possible for all.

Fifty years from now, what will the student climate strikers of today remember? What will their lives be like, in 2070?

For more on Extinction Rebellion Western Mass’s public art actions, see www.xrwesternmass.org/earth-day. The Sunrise Movement webinars can be found at tinyurl.com/ybmtpf4j, and video will be available after the events. Sunrise Western MA can be contacted at sunrisewmass@gmail.com, or on Instagram @sunrisewmass.



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HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE GILL POLICE LOG

Eight Dogs, Three Raccoons, Two Skunks, Countless Cars

Tuesday, 3/17
4:53 p.m. Caller reported two lost shelties.

Thursday, 3/19
10:35 a.m. Caller reported losing his phone somewhere between Uppinngil and Poet’s Seat in Greenfield.

Friday, 3/20
7:31 p.m. Caller reported a suspicious person on the French King Bridge. Subject was taking a photo, and all appears okay.

7:43 p.m. Caller reported a suspicious vehicle on the French King Highway. A male party was taking a nap.

Saturday, 3/21
3:51 p.m. Caller from Main Road reported his tenants left a yellow pit bull on his property.

4:33 p.m. Mountain Road caller located a dog.

7:58 p.m. Same caller from Main Road advises he is having issues with his dog again.

Sunday, 3/22
1:20 p.m. Medical emergency on Walnut Street.

Monday, 3/23
1:37 a.m. Served a warrant on Center Road for probation violation.

11:10 a.m. Investigated a report called into the Turners Falls FD of a large column of dark smoke coming from the West Gill Road area.

11:44 a.m. A passing motorist reported erratic driving by a tractor trailer truck on Main Road.

3:11 p.m. Caller reported loud banging noises on Main Road at 5:30 a.m. Checked area and was unable to locate.

4:52 p.m. Two-car accident on the Turners Falls-Gill Bridge.

Tuesday, 3/24
12:18 p.m. Caller on Main Road reported gas leaking from her vehicle.

Wednesday, 3/25
11:55 a.m. Caller from Center Road reported an injured raccoon.

2:46 p.m. Caller from West Gill Road reported that a motor vehicle cut him off, and is driving all over the road.

7:30 p.m. Caller from Main Road reported being locked out of a car with it running.

Friday, 3/27
12:20 p.m. Caller reported that an injured raccoon is crawling across her front yard.

2:31 p.m. Caller from Main Road reported two mailboxes across the street from each other destroyed in the early morning, possibly with sandbags. One was left behind.

4:02 p.m. Caller from Main Road advises there is a loose dog in

his yard. Dog is brown and white and medium-sized, with no tags.

Saturday, 3/28
1:07 p.m. Caller reported a rabid skunk walking in circles in the field.

4:25 p.m. Caller from Horserace View Road reported her neighbor’s German Shepherd on her property.

Sunday, 3/29
1:03 p.m. Caller from Main Road advised that his brindle boxer has taken off, and asked PD to keep an eye out.

Tuesday, 3/31
2:19 p.m. Caller reported a disabled black BMW on the Gill side of the southbound lane of the Turners Falls-Gill Bridge.

6:54 p.m. Responded to a report of smoke on the French King Highway. Found excessive smoke from an outside boiler, but no issues.

7:14 p.m. Caller reported a suspicious vehicle on the French King Bridge. Parties were observing the scenery with no signs of distress.

Wednesday, 4/1
6:30 a.m. Caller from Munn’s Ferry Road reported that someone wrote on her vehicle sometime overnight.

10:16 a.m. Caller from Munn’s Ferry Road asked for help in keeping the peace.

3:51 p.m. Caller from River Road reported that a trespassing vehicle caused damage to their fields.

10:27 p.m. Assisted Bernardston PD on Church Street.

Sunday, 4/5
2:35 A doctor called to request a welfare check of a resident on the French King Highway. Unable to locate.

4:02 p.m. Responded to a medical emergency on Riverview Drive.

7:12 p.m. Caller reported that she heard several shots fired coming from the West Gill Road area.

Monday, 4/6
4:25 p.m. Caller on River Road asked for an officer because her lawnmower is missing.

6:04 p.m. Caller from West Gill Road complained about ongoing parking issues at a residence.

Tuesday, 4/7
9:10 a.m. Responded to a medical emergency on Riverview Drive.

9:19 p.m. Assisted Erving PD with a disturbance on the French King Highway.

Wednesday, 4/8
8:25 a.m. Caller reported blue painters’ tape all over the railing of the Turners Falls-

Gill Bridge and on the monument at the Gill lights. Requesting that MassDOT be made aware of the report.

10:03 a.m. A resident from Main Road reported a skunk walking in circles in the roadway.

1:38 p.m. Caller reported a possible rabid raccoon in the field. The animal is looking sickly and mangy, and is limping.

4:27 p.m. Male subject reported tossing orange and yellow string/banner onto a tree next to a monument on the French King Highway.

Thursday, 4/9
10:46 a.m. Caller reported that a large white poodle came after them.

Friday, 4/10
9:53 a.m. Caller reported a tree blocking the eastbound lane on the French King Highway. Notified the Massachusetts DOT.

1:11 p.m. Report of debris in the roadway of the French King Highway from what appeared to be a past motor vehicle accident. Objects were removed from the roadway.

2:53 p.m. Caller was involved in a motor vehicle accident on the Turners Falls-Gill Bridge at about 1 p.m.

9:27 p.m. Assisted Erving PD at an address on Pratt Street.

Saturday 4/11
7:50 p.m. Erving and Gill PD will be checking the French King Bridge and Dorsey Road area for a possible suicidal subject.

9:02 p.m. Medical emergency on Boyle Road.

Sunday, 4/12
1:17 p.m. Caller reported that two horses are running in the roadway on Boyle Road.

3:45 p.m. Caller asked for a welfare check on an elderly male walking and sitting on the guardrail on Route 10. The caller believed he might be intoxicated.

Monday, 4/13
5:58 p.m. Medical emergency on Main Road.

Tuesday, 4/14
4:44 a.m. Caller from Riverview Drive reported that someone climbed over her dog’s fence and then knocked on her door and growled.

3:15 p.m. A motorist traveling westbound on Route 2 reported a silver Toyota Prius operating erratically.

3:23 p.m. Caller from Center Road said that she is stuck in her house and her door won’t open. She would like assistance.

LEAK from page A1

the acid that had leaked inside the containment area, the group said, “and initiated internal discussions” about removing the leaking tank and installing a new one.

According to state laws regulating the storage of hazardous chemicals, owners are required in the event of a leak into a secondary containment system to “remove all released materials within 24 hours or in as timely a manner as possible to prevent a threat to public health, safety, welfare, or the environment.”

The laws also require owners to “within 24 hours of the release or, if the owner or operator demonstrates that it is not possible, at the earliest practicable time, remove as much of the waste as is necessary to prevent further release of hazardous waste to the environment and to allow inspection and repair of the tank system.”

According to MassDEP, when the leaking tank finally failed, most of the acid was captured by the concrete containment, but some had also “sprayed” from the corroded joint, making its way down a storm-water drainage swale and towards Tailrace Brook.

Employees discovered the release around 6 a.m. on September 1, and worked to stop it before notifying MassDEP around 8 a.m. In their initial Release Log Form filed with MassDEP’s Bureau of Waste Site Cleanup, the company estimated that 10 gallons of acid had been released.

“Approximately 6 gallons was sprayed over the containment and onto a drainage ditch,” a narrative in the report added. “No surface waters or storm drains were impacted.”

The Barnhardt facility uses a 93% solution of sulfuric acid during its cotton-bleaching process, as well as for treating industrial and domestic wastewater on site. According to the OEG report, the most recent delivery of sulfuric acid had been for 2,919 gallons. After the spill, employees removed 946 gallons of “virgin” acid and 1,920 gallons of used acid from the tank system, leaving 53 gallons unaccounted for.

Of the missing acid, between 25 to 32 gallons were believed to have been released into the river, with the rest soaking into subsurface soils.

Neither Barnhardt Company management nor a consultant from Omni Environmental Group responded to repeated requests for comment as of press time.

Believed To Be Minimal

Before private citizens started reporting a mass die-off of fish in the river later that day, neither the company nor MassDEP say they knew the acid had reached the waterway.

“...[T]he volume of impact to the Tailrace was believed to be minimal,” OEG’s report explained. “According to BMC, it was unclear if the release had actually made it into the Tailrace or had just made it up to the end of the stormwater swale.”

The state Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MassWildlife) later estimated that “tens of thousands” of fish died from up to seven different species including trout, dace, American eel, and common shiners. The longnose sucker, a protected species, is also present in the North River and was likely impacted by the acid spill, according to the Connecticut River Conservancy (CRC).

“In my sixteen years working for the CRC, I do not remember a fish kill this bad,” Andrea Donlon, a river steward for the CRC, told the *Reporter*.

No official public notification was

made about the acid release on September 1, though the original release log form indicated the incident had posed an “imminent hazard.” However, MassDEP officials did warn some people downstream, advising them not to swim in the area “until further assessment could be done.”

“We have anecdotes that ‘the Police’ went around closing off swimming holes but would not say why,” Donlon wrote in a letter to MassDEP. “The public, and downstream communities as well as water districts, should know what is happening and why.”

News of the acid spill first circulated through photos of dead fish on Facebook, generating rumors and anxiety throughout the community.

“It really hit home because I work on the river. All the people I work with were worried about going into certain sections,” said Sam Rode, then an employee of Zoar Outdoors, who was one of the first to report the fish kill to authorities. “That was a really tough thing to hear.”

By the time officials sampled and tested water and soil downstream that afternoon, they found pH levels to be within a safe range. Meanwhile, MassWildlife officials collected fish for sampling downstream.

“In my 16 years working for the CRC, I do not remember a fish kill this bad.”
Andrea Donlon, Connecticut River Conservancy

One week later, locals staged a small protest outside the Barnhardt facility in an effort to draw attention to the incident and hold the company accountable.

“It’s a small enough community that not only do you know the company, you know personally people who work there,” Rode said. “I have that internal conflict, for sure.”

Cleaning Up The Mess

According to the OEG report, the subsurface soil near the tank contained residual sulfuric acid months after the incident, and was scheduled to be reexamined last month. At least ten 55-gallon drums of impacted soils, or 50 cubic yards of earth, were removed and transported to Stablex Canada, a hazardous waste disposal facility based in Blainville, Quebec.

The damaged 4,500-gallon metal storage tank was sent to the Freedman Recycling center in Springfield, according to the report, and the concrete containment dike was demolished and removed in late October, revealing more impacted soil. According to OEG, 170 pounds of baking soda were used to neutralize the affected surfaces.

Sulfuric acid is a highly corrosive solution that can dissolve most metals, causes severe burns to living organisms, and is toxic to plants and aquatic life. “Sulfuric acid can readily migrate through soils via precipitation infiltration, is water soluble and can migrate with groundwater flow and/or ‘sink’ deeper into groundwater due to its specific gravity greater than water,” OEG’s report read.

Concerned about the acid’s impact on well water supplies, the Shelburne Falls Fire District sent a letter to MassDEP in October expressing their dismay that they hadn’t been notified sooner of the safety concerns.

“We regret the delay in notifying

your district of the suspected sulfuric acid release from the Barnhardt facility,” Elizabeth Stinehart, acting deputy director of waste site cleanup for MassDEP, wrote back. “We are currently reviewing our notification protocols for down-stream receptors in suspected releases to waterways.”

While state and local fire marshalls oversee and regulate the storage of hazardous chemicals, MassDEP is responsible for the cleanup of hazardous waste.

“Massachusetts DEP and the Environmental Protection Agency are handling any enforcement and corrective measures,” Colrain fire chief Nicholas Anzuoni said in an email. “The fire department assisted the Massachusetts DEP during the initial response and had minimal involvement after that point.”

While the Barnhardt company has done some site remediation, the company has been issued no fines by MassDEP.

A Leaky History

“I wanted to make damn sure it was reported to the right people and handled like it should be,” said Rode, who studies environmental science at UMass-Amherst. “In a lot of these cases companies aren’t held responsible nearly as much as they should be.”

After the acid spill Donlon, the CRC river steward, wrote to MassDEP, suggesting the agency look into Barnhardt’s history of noncompliance with environmental regulations and issue a penalty equivalent to the damage done by the spill.

“Sometimes DEP’s fines seem minimal relative to what we see as the damage,” Donlon said. “This one seemed to be severe.”

The Colrain factory, located about three miles upstream from Sunburn Beach, has a past dense with effluent violations.

“This is the second time that sulfuric acid has reached the North River from this facility,” Donlon wrote, referencing a 1999 incident at the cotton bleachery, then known as Fiberweb. The factory was acquired in 2007 by the North Carolina-based Barnhardt Manufacturing Company, owned by the self-described “First Family of American Cotton.”

Barnhardt was issued notices of noncompliance by MassDEP in 2013, and twice in 2014. In September 2016, the company was fined \$5,175 for noncompliance with environmental regulations.

According to EPA data, the facility exceeded safe discharge limits for sulfide last year by 271% between April and May, and has failed to consistently report effluent data on a quarterly basis.

“It seems time to require that Barnhardt move the sulfuric acid to indoor storage such that there is no route to the North River should a spill happen again in the future,” Donlon wrote.

MassDEP has not responded to emailed questions sent by the *Reporter* last September. This week, spokesperson Catherine Skiba confirmed that her department is pursuing enforcement action with the state attorney general. “At this time, while there is an ongoing investigation, we are unable to respond to the additional questions you have posed in your most recent e-mail,” she wrote.

MassWildlife did not return repeated requests for comment for this story. Last fall, first graders from Colrain Central School raised money to purchase supplies needed to hatch and raise trout to restock the river.



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DATA from page A1

according to the DPH website.

As a result, Greenfield began publishing the city’s COVID numbers while Montague’s board of health, during an April 6 joint meeting with the town selectboard, voted only to “share” the Franklin County numbers with local citizens.

Montague made this decision based on privacy concerns and the fear that residents might misinterpret the numbers: a high number of cases might produce the conclusion that “we are doing something wrong,” while a low number might create the feeling that “everything is fine,” according to Michael Nelson, who sits on both boards and works for DPH.

Since then, the state has shifted gears, publishing the city and town numbers once a week on its website. But this data includes a caveat on the first page: “Please note. These are reported cases only. The absence of reported cases in a community does not indicate the absence.”

A Policy Paradox

This is perhaps an understatement. Public health officials we spoke with universally agreed that the number of confirmed COVID cases is well below the actual number of people infected with the virus. These relatively low estimates could have consequences, both for public policy and for understanding the data trends themselves.

The website *FiveThirtyEight.com*, using data produced by researchers Thomas McAndrew and Nicholas Reich at UMass-Amherst, estimates that as of the end of March, as few as 12% of total infections were actually being reported. Much of this was due to the extreme limitations on testing at that time. A significant proportion of infected people have been asymptomatic, and a patient had to be nearly on the road to hospitalization to be tested.

McAndrew and Reich make a “consensus estimate” of the projections of leading experts in the field of epidemiology statistics. The individual projections they use vary a great deal, but all suggest that the number of total COVID infections has been well above the reported figures.

This broad discrepancy may have improved since the end of March in places like Massachusetts, as testing becomes more available, but this raises another problem: as institutions such as nursing homes implement more comprehensive testing programs, their towns appear

to report sudden increases in COVID cases.

One public health official from the Springfield area, who asked not to be named, said the numbers in Longmeadow are likely to reflect more testing underway in that community. “The number of cases rises with the number of tests,” she told the *Reporter*.

The statistical impact of the increase in testing creates a policy paradox. More widespread testing is widely supported in the public health community as part of the effort to “slow the curve” of new infections. Those who test positive, even if they are only mildly symptomatic, can be encouraged (or required) to quarantine. But testing at a higher rate tends to raise the curve, statistically speaking.

Underlying Conditions

In the *Globe* article on the apparently low COVID rates in Fall River and New Bedford, some local officials suggested that the numbers reflected the impact of aggressive social distancing and other public health measures taken early. But the reporters also observed many residents in those cities not wearing masks or observing social distancing in malls and shopping areas.

According to Boston College epidemiologist Nadia Abuelezam, quoted in the article: “It does seem weird that this area seems to be doing better – to me that indicates we’re not doing a good enough job collecting information on them.”

Greenfield’s apparently high COVID numbers could be an example of the unintended statistical consequence of doing a better job. According to Danielle Letourneau, chief of staff to the mayor of Greenfield, the city’s public health department is aggressively tracing the contacts of those who have tested positive or are symptomatic with COVID. These contacts are urged to contact their own healthcare providers.

But this could potentially lead to more tests, more positive results, and higher COVID numbers for Greenfield – particularly compared with other towns in Franklin County.

Letourneau also argued that Greenfield’s elderly population is relatively large, as the city is home to a number of medical care facilities, like Baystate Franklin Medical Center, and nursing homes.

State senator Eric Lesser, who represents Longmeadow, made the same point: “The number of senior living facilities – the num-

Town By Town		
Massachusetts DPH figures as of April 22:		
Town	Confirmed Cases	Rate per 100.000
Amherst	16	40
Athol	34	284
Bernardston	< 5	–
Colrain	< 5	–
Deerfield	< 5	–
Erving	< 5	–
Gill	< 5	–
Greenfield	122	703
Hadley	17	296
Leverett	< 5	–
Montague	14	164
Northampton	119	407
Northfield	< 5	–
Orange	25	306
Shelburne	5	270
Sunderland	7	184
Wendell	0	0

ber of healthcare personnel, frankly – that we have here in Longmeadow, I think is also a contributing factor. The town government has been very responsive.”

Randy Crochier, who serves as the public health agent for ten towns in Franklin County through the Franklin Regional Council of Governments, says the local numbers from nursing homes can be problematic.

“It depends which town they write down,” he told the *Reporter*, when they submit data to MAVEN. If someone is tested in a facility in Greenfield but technically resides in Montague, they should be reported in the latter town. But that is not always the case.

Furthermore, some residents may write “Millers Falls” when they live, say, in Erving, or “Shelburne Falls” when they live in Buckland. Small numbers of mistakes can produce significant differences in local COVID percentages at the town level.

Unintended Consequences

Experts in the field of statistics have frequently been noting the problems collecting and reporting accurate COVID data.

Statistical/forecasting guru Nate Silver, founder and editor of the website *FiveThirtyEight* – the name is based on the number of electors in the electoral college – wrote recent-

ly that the COVID case counts are “[m]eaningless, unless you know something about testing, and even then it gets complicated.” In fact, that’s the title of an article he published.

Silver also stresses unintended policy consequences of the dynamic in which more testing means more apparent COVID cases: “You don’t just run the risk of being a little bit wrong: Your analysis could be off by an order of magnitude. Or even worse, you might be led in the opposite direction of what is actually happening. A country where the case count is increasing because it’s doing more testing, for instance, might actually be getting its epidemic under control. Alternatively, in a country where the reported number of new cases is declining, the situation could actually be getting worse...”

Such warnings are frequent on Silver’s website, as one report on the UMass researchers’ project begins by saying that building COVID models is “really freaking hard,” in part because of all the uncertainty.

Yet the site continues to cover the project on a weekly basis, and Silver, after a long and highly technical discussion of different statistical scenarios, does not advocate for less testing, or less data collection.

After all, he also suggests that more testing, while it may lead to more reported COVID cases, may also reduce the number of deaths: “Germany, for example, which is conducting about 50,000 tests per day – seven times more than the UK – has more than twice as many reported cases as the UK, but they’ve also had only about one-third as many deaths.”

Silver also doesn’t suggest withholding information from the public. Rather, he says that “I don’t usually like to be so didactic, but I hope you’ll be a more educated consumer of COVID-19 data instead of just looking at case counts ticking upward on cable news screens without context.”

In that spirit, we will end by quoting Randy Crochier of the small town of Gill, who has a litany of complaints about the local data being reported, but says that:

“I do believe we will cure a lot of the [data] problems when we do the hot wash at the end of this. It will improve as we move forward. The things that we have learned in the last four weeks are a lifetime. We know a lot more about the 1918 pandemic than we knew in 1919.”

Hopefully the learning curve is a little shorter, this time around.

OPIOID from page A1

from coming into the jail, to keep our incarcerated population, and our officers and their families, safe.”

Donelan reported that so far, two officers have tested positive. “We caught it quickly and quarantined them. To date, we don’t even have any symptoms inside the facility, let alone any positive tests among our incarcerated population, so I’m very pleased about that.”

All staff and incarcerated people are required to wear masks.

Donelan said 75 inmates have been released since March 13. “Some were released because of the end of sentence,” he said. “Almost our entire minimum-security population was released over the course of two months, on electronic monitoring, to complete their sentences at home.

“So those are the ways that we’ve reduced our population, thus expanding elbow room for folks to have either single cells or the opportunity to maintain appropriate distancing from each other, so they can stay safe.”

Timely Justice

During Wednesday’s meeting, Greenfield police chief Robert Haigh Jr. said that while arrest numbers have declined during the shutdown, he’s frustrated that arrestees are waiting too long for hearings before a judge, with video conferences sometimes delayed by hours.

Haigh said the increased risks of exposure to the virus, both for offi-

cers and the people being held after arrest, are a pressing concern. He said he feels that once people are in the justice system, it is imperative that process move efficiently.

Faced with this question and of when the courts may open, Franklin County register of probate John Merrigan said, “We’re waiting to hear, but we’re told for the month of May we may be doing the same, or similar, kind of work we’re doing now. We need to do a better job. Because if we’re going to be down for this long, we need to figure out better access to the system of justice that is important for every community in the commonwealth. We have work to do.”

Merrigan, who serves as co-chair of the task force with Donelan, encouraged Haigh to raise the issue with other police chiefs, and said he would help advocate at the state level for improving timely access to hearings.

Shelter and Food

For people getting out of jail, housing can be a concern under normal circumstances. With the risks of COVID-19, it is an even more pressing concern.

Levin Schwartz, director of clinical and reentry services at the Franklin County House of Correction, has been working on coordinating supervised release. “One of the benefits of the sheriff’s approach to shutting down the doors so quickly,” Schwartz said, “is that programs will take our referrals be-

cause there’s no one symptomatic. We have had great success getting individuals into programs.”

When asked late last week whether members of the community can help inmates at the Greenfield jail by donating supplies, Donelan replied, “As far as people wanting to help our population, they have access to everything they need: soap, hand sanitizer, food, clothing – everything. We stockpiled before all of this. We’ve got a three-month supply of everything in the warehouse, just in case the supply chain is interrupted.”

“What I’m more concerned about is their families in the community,” Donelan continued. “If your readers are looking for ways to help the men and women in here, I would suggest maybe they make donations to places in the community that are helping to feed the poor, because a lot of people are having a hard time buying groceries.”

Donelan recommended donating to Stone Soup Café, the Brick House, or the food pantry at Blessed Sacrament Church.

Mental Health

During Wednesday’s meeting, Haigh and Northwestern District Attorney’s Office director of operations Martha Murphy Kane both noted an increase in the need for mental health services as part of the effects of the COVID-19 crisis.

“Suicide and mental health is one of our biggest concerns right now,” Haigh said. “We are still dealing with that on a regular basis.”

In a recent post on the Greenfield Police Department Facebook page, Haigh encouraged members of the community to reach out to each other, and to ask for help.

“I promise you we have people on the other end of the phone lines who care,” Haigh wrote, “both from our professional emergency communication dispatchers [and] our City employees on the community resource phone lines at the EOC. If you or anyone you know needs help, do not feel this pandemic will prevent people from responding, and know we are here for you at all times.”

If you or someone you know is in need of help, local information is available by calling the COVID-19 Community Information Line at (413) 775-6411. This line is staffed Monday through Friday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and is available to anyone living in Franklin County.

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The Crisis Text Line offers a free text-message service that provides support to those in crisis: text 741-741 at any time of the day or night to connect with a trained crisis counselor right away.

A Preexisting Pandemic

Task force coordinator Debra McLaughlin pointed to a recent increase in overdoses.

“We’re hearing people report fatal and nonfatal overdoses. COVID-19 is exacerbating the conditions that really promote opioid misuse right

now,” McLaughlin said.

Greenfield District chief probation officer Antoinetta “Tonie” DeAngelis weighed in on the issue. “Each morning we do address the nonfatal overdoses,” she said. “We are working very hard to have very structured contact, multiple times a week, with our probationers and pretrial defendants who we are most concerned about. We’re doing video conferencing because, obviously, it’s a little bit more beneficial for us to actually lay some eyes on the individual.”

“I can’t say that it’s an uptick, in the sense of what the numbers were from before,” DeAngelis said, “but I think it’s an uptick from what we were originally experiencing over the first couple weeks of this shutdown period.”

Illaria Dana of Tapestry Health said their services are all mobile during the shutdown and they are doing community outreach and distribution of Narcan, an antidote to opioid overdose. Dana said the priority for Tapestry during the crisis is making sure Narcan is distributed to those who need it most. The Tapestry Outreach number is 413-221-7722

In closing out the meeting, Donelan said he believes practice working together through the Opioid Task Force has made law enforcement and corrections, treatment services, and community supports more adaptable, and better equipped to respond to the timely demands that COVID-19 has placed on the community.

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Montague Democrats Plan To Caucus In Parking Lot

The Montague Dems will hold their annual election caucus at 6 p.m. next Wednesday, April 29 in the Montague Town Hall rear parking lot, 1 Avenue A, Turners Falls.

The caucus is open to all voters either registered as Democrats or unenrolled, and will vote to elect Democrats to place on the ballot for the Montague town election scheduled for June 22.

The vote will be held in the parking lot due to coronavirus concerns. Participants are requested to follow social distancing guidelines and personal protective procedures. There is a rain date of Thursday, April 30 at 6 p.m.

If there are questions, please contact Mark Wisniewski at mpwisniewski@gmail.com or (413) 588-6307.

SCHOOLS from page A1

education for kids with big variations in access to the tools they need.

“The main thing has been to provide Chromebook computers to students who live in a household where there isn’t any computer technology,” Sullivan said. “We’ve been highly successful in that. We started by dismantling all the Chromebook carts we had in our schools and farming those computers out. [In] grades six through nine, we already had Chromebooks for every student, so that gave us an advantage.”

The district now faces challenges buying more of the lightweight laptops, as stocks are depleted across the country due to increasing demand and the lingering trade war with China.

Once kids have the tools at hand, keeping them dialed in and motivated to connect is another challenge. “The participation rate of when teachers are holding class online is really high,” Sullivan said. “All the kids are showing up to see their classmates and see their teachers.”

“Much higher than the percentage of kids who are actually completing the assignments they are being asked to do,” Sullivan added, chuckling. “That’s significantly lower.”

“Our motto during this time is ‘relationships first,’” he said, “and we’re finding that is what kids are

really valuing – staying connected to their friends and to their teachers.”

Jessica Vachula-Curtis is a teacher and parent in the Gill-Montague district. She teaches special education and English at Turners Falls High School.

“Being a special ed teacher is both helpful and more overwhelming in some ways,” she said. “I tend to know my students really well, and have really solid relationships with them – that’s the positive thing. I’ve been able to stay in contact almost daily with most of my students.”

Vachula-Curtis reports working hard to keep up, while worrying about her own kids as they do their work from home. She said she sees a range of responses in how teachers are adapting.

“Some have been using Google Classroom for a few years now anyway,” she explained, “and some have been forced, by circumstances, to just figure it out now on the fly. I think that’s been challenging for students, parents, teachers, for everyone.”

Robin Sidel is a Greenfield parent of three children. Two are students at Four Rivers Charter Public School, and one goes to Bernardston Elementary.


“They are all having different experiences,” Sidel says. “It was really clear from the beginning that

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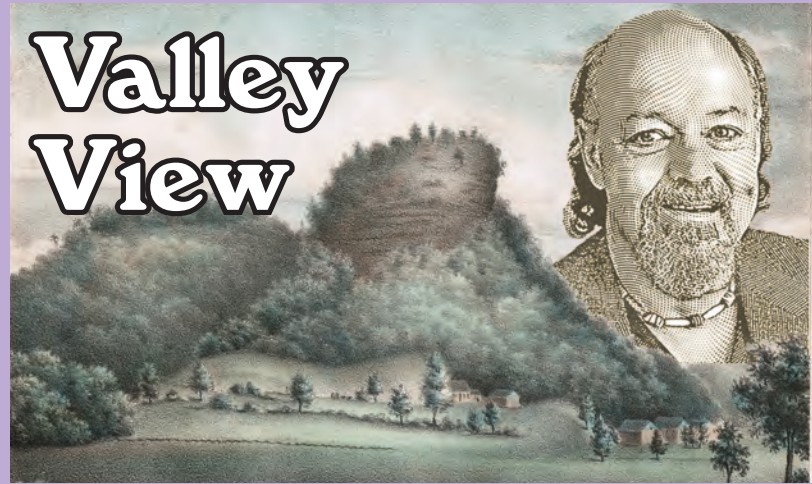
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FEATURES@MONTAGUEREPORTER.ORG OF THE MONTAGUE REPORTER APRIL 23, 2020



By GARY SANDERSON

GREENFIELD – An old cliché tells us familiarity breeds contempt. So, how about ignorance? Does not familiarity breed it, too? Well, in my case, the answer is an unapologetic yes. Let me explain, focused on my boyhood South Deerfield.

At the southwest corner of Pleasant and North Main, a short distance up the road from my earliest home and the home of my father and grandfather as well, stood a worn, two-story, clapboarded industrial building painted a dull, flaky red and showing its age. Situated on the east bank of Bloody Brook just above the Pleasant Street bridge, the late 19th-century building’s gabled ends faced east and west, with a parking lot off Main Street on the south side.

My friends and I called it the plastic shop because it was indeed operating as such then. My father, grandfather and spinster great aunt all knew it as the Arms pocketbook shop, which closed in 1950, three years before my birth.

In the morning shadow of this tired old building I learned to skate and fish. We’d clear the snow with shovels to skate. Then, come summer, we’d dunk worms below red and white bobbers, catching suckers and bullheads from a launching pad near a giant weeping willow standing tall and wide on the west bank.

Across from that large, messy tree, raw, rust-colored, factory effluent oozed from a six- or eight-inch pipe, keeping open a small, D-shaped patch of water we carefully avoided no matter how cold it got. I can only imagine in hor-

SANDERSON PHOTO



The author found this wallet on eBay.

ror the carcinogenic toxicity of that disgusting liquid waste flowing straight from factory to brook back in those days of unchecked industrial air and water pollution. Yes, those were the days when a smart man would not dip so much as his little toe into the river below Sunderland Bridge.

The reason I mention the boyhood building on the corner of Main and Pleasant, long ago demolished and replaced by a modern, one-story Cowan’s Auto Parts store, is a recent eBay purchase. How better to occupy time during this tedious COVID-19 shutdown than taking daily spins around the online auction site in search of local treasure? From near and far, it shows up week after week. A steady flow keeps on keepin’ on.

What I was excited to find a few weeks back was a 19th-century, three-fold, leather wallet in remarkably good condition. What was its significance? Well, stamped across an inner face was a rectangular impression reading “Made by Chas Arms, South Deerfield, Mass.” Wow! That caught my attention.

Though I immediately knew what it was, it was, in all my years living in the factory neighborhood, not to mention many old Arms homes and those of the workforce, never, not once, had I lain eyes on one of its products. I soon discovered that the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association’s Memorial Hall Museum had a worn wallet and a pouch of another style among its collections. But that didn’t matter. The museum pieces had escaped me before I went looking.

see VALLEY VIEW page B4

ArtBeat by Trish Crapo

Barbara Milot: Feeding a Need

TURNERS FALLS – From her neighborhood up on the hill from downtown Turners Falls, artist and art educator Barbara Milot is sending out ripples that reach thousands of public school art students, from elementary school age to high schoolers. That’s because Milot’s six Framingham State University (FSU) student art teachers are each responsible for teaching between 500 and 700 art students a week.

It’s a bit of staggering math I’d never thought about before. But Milot explains that elementary school art teachers, unlike classroom teachers, end up teaching not just one class or grade, but every student in the school. And many art teachers rotate among schools, as Milot did when she taught in the Pioneer Valley Regional School district thirty years ago, teaching classes in Northfield, Warwick, Bernardston, and Leyden.

Milot taught elementary and middle school art for six years at various public schools before being hired at Framingham State University in 1991. At FSU she teaches drawing, life drawing, color and design, and art education courses, and supervises student teachers in public school art classrooms. She’s



Barbara Milot’s studio table shows the progress of one of her photo collage projects.

also the coordinator and advisor for FSU art education programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

This spring, perhaps fortuitously, Milot is not teaching any studio art classes. Her responsibilities at present are to supervise the practicums of six students, some at the undergraduate and some at the graduate level, who are in the final stages of their certification to be art teachers.

Placed in public schools in and around Framingham, her students

are all working with art teachers Milot’s worked with before, or who are former students, making communication during this unfamiliar process easier than it might be otherwise.

Working Remotely
The shift to working remotely and online has meant that Milot has to be flexible and creative in her approach. Normally, at this point see **ARTBEAT** page B4

REFLECTION

These Days

By JEANNE LAPIERRE

NORTH GRANBY, CT – In the beginning of this whole mess, my running felt flat but free. As I ran closer to her, an older woman walking with a cane threw up her hand, hollering a big “Hello!” Her head was bundled in a wooly wrap, and I could tell she really, really, wanted to talk. I gave in.

“How are you?” she asked.

“The birds are singing, the sky is blue, the sun is warm.” That’s what I said.

“Oh, yes! I’m Doris,” she replied, shaking her head as she mentioned a family member who lives in Italy. She called me sweetie more than once.

“Do you live on the street?” she asked. If it had been someone else at another time, this information would not be offered, but I told her my general locality.

“See that van? I live there.” She pointed two houses beyond me. If ever anything happens, she said, that’s where she lives. “Thanks! I’ve had situations.”

I took note of the mailbox number. Nice lady. It was exactly what I needed and what I needed to do. I continued on with my run, considering how I am unable to connect with my elderly parents in Turners Falls other than with phone calls. My Mom is a hugger. No hugs. I wonder about Doris.

My calendar is a mess, no doubt yours is as well; all events including vet, dentist, and spring races have lines through them, the races postponed, canceled, or



LAPIERRE PHOTO

Masks made by Jeanne LaPierre. “The fabric stash is still huge so I made a few masks as well, one with glittery fabric, just because it’s fun and a distraction,” writes LaPierre.

morphing into virtual events. This year, after a contentious internal dialogue that gave me a headache, I’d shored up my false confidence to participate in the USAITF Masters 10K championship at the James Joyce Ramble. Admittedly, it scared me, but you can’t pass a test you don’t take. To paraphrase the song Whistle a Happy Tune, “when you’re afraid, pretend you’re brave, and soon enough you deceive yourself.” I don’t whistle well, but I was going to give it a try.

Of course, it was canceled.

I continue to run, but with less purpose. Last week, see **THESE DAYS** page B8



CHRISTOPHER GARNODY/COLLEAGE

Pet of the Week

“LAURA”

Are you looking for a beautiful, sweet new friend? Do you like your pets to be musically inclined? Well, a parakeet may be just the critter for you. We should get out-of-cage time every day to stretch our wings and relieve boredom.

Please give us plenty of toys, swings, and perches, and then sit back and watch for hours of entertainment!

Senior Center Activities

APRIL 27 TO MAY 3

GILL and MONTAGUE

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

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

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.

Big Y:	Senior hours from 7 to 8 a.m.	(413) 772-0435
Foster's:	Senior hours from 7 to 8 a.m.	(413) 773-1100
Food City:	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 (413) 625-2548

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

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FILM REVIEW

Emma (2020)

By SEAMUS TURNER-GLENNON

CHARLEMONT – Autumn de Wilde, director of 2020’s latest Jane Austen adaptation *Emma*, didn’t start her career making movies. Instead, her time as a director began in the world of music – specifically, the music video. De Wilde has directed videos for bands like Death Cab For Cutie, The Decemberists, and The Raconteurs, to name a few. Unsurprisingly, her directorial style reflects the music of the bands she directs: bland, uninspired, lackluster, and empty.

While De Wilde has seemed to eschew the world of the music video and concert documentary in favor of the cinema with *Emma*, her feature-length debut is living proof that for the 49-year-old director, old habits die hard.

At first glance *Emma* is a film of intricate sets and natural scenery, a film of extravagant costumes and highly stylized camerawork. Many critics have made note of that aspect of it: praising it as “visually beautiful” and “a treat for the eyes.” But why?

Every shot in *Emma*, every meticulously designed parlor, are at best-bog standard costume drama fare and, at worst, a somehow dumbed-down mimicry of the sort of tryhard indie cinema cinematography spawned by Wes Anderson and embraced by superstar indie hacks like Spike Jonze and Alexander Payne. One can only see the group of schoolgirls walking in two neat rows, all in their matching red robes against a clear white or blue background, before the façade

starts to slip away and reveal the true, inauthentic nature of what Autumn de Wilde is really doing here.

Emma stars actress Anya Taylor-Joy as the titular Emma Woodhouse, a wealthy young woman with a penchant for playing matchmaker with her friends and enemies alike. She’s a character who is portrayed as being excessively self-absorbed, which is not an inherently bad thing. The fundamental issue for me with the character of Emma, as well as the rest of the characters in the film, is that I simply do not care.

Emma is a story about people so swimming in wealth, so deeply entrenched in their privileged, affluent lives that whatever potential it may have had to become a satire or commentary about class privilege and how the massively insignificant problems of the bourgeoisie feel almost world-ending devastating to them is drowned out by a sea of perceived slights at lavish parties, of rigid and bizarre social codes

which, despite existing only within the collective imaginations of the characters, the viewer is expected to simply accept and self-memorize.

It’s deeply indicative of the true nature of *Emma* that it has been praised by liberal and conservative critics alike. Both *Vox* and the *National Review*’s Ross Douthat (who began his career as a dull Harvard snob who summered aboard Bill Buckley’s presumably disease-ridden sailboat) praise *Emma* as a charming, smartly made, sometimes funny period drama.

It is none of these things. The real, unspoken reason *Emma* is praised by the preferred publications of affluent white liberals and crypto-fascist tradcath freaks alike is because of the true place at which those two groups unite: their shared class interests. *Emma* isn’t some charming period dramady like it’s made out to be: it’s a film meant to appease the wealthy arthouse elite by telling them “no, you really do have problems,” and “yes, of course you can still be a good person despite being wealthy.”

And it’s a nightmare of sloppy filmmaking technique, to boot.

THE GARDENER’S COMPANION

Spring, On And Off Again

bed in the morning?

Sure. This is a very strange time with the coronavirus, which no one wants to catch. We travel with masks on and feel like potential thieves. We watch movies and read *ad infinitum*. Walks are a mandatory aspect of every day.

This week Ken will be a year older. Then I will grow older next month myself. Still, we feel much the same. Perhaps a tad more arthritic, but generally happy to be alive, and looking forward to starting peas and salad greens in the garden this Spring.

Next month my younger niece will marry her sweetheart. Because of the virus, her wedding will be very small, just the two of them and their parents. We feel a bit left out but are understanding.

Ken wanted to visit his older brother to celebrate his 80th birthday with a cake, but because Jack has several chronic health issues he knows it’s not wise to be potentially exposed to anything more. Apparently, you can pick up the virus from gas pumps, where it can live for several days.

So we will stay at home and enjoy the flowering yard. The daffodils are splendid in their yellow and white trumpets, snow and all. They

spread charmingly along the hedge and all through the backwoods. The wild beach roses – red and white – which we grew from seed are showing new leaves, and look as if they will bloom profusely.

Spring is such a strange mix of endings and beginnings. Both of my parents died in the spring and I held on fiercely to the notion that if they could only survive another winter, the spring would bring them back to life. Of course, that didn’t happen and they died in their time.

Perhaps this melancholia is just a byproduct of my awareness of my next birthday upon which I will be seventy-five, a beefy number which I hope to surpass although both my mother and grandmother died at eighty-three. There is no reason not to believe that I can’t do better. I certainly plan to.

Nonetheless, this is my favorite season even when the rain starts out as snow again. It will melt shortly.

Soon we will be able to hold small dinner parties again, and share food and laughter with friends.

Let us be grateful to people who make us happy; they are the charming gardeners who make our souls bloom.

– Marcel Proust

MARY AZARIAN WOODBLOCK PRINT

By LESLIE BROWN

MONTAGUE CITY – Sure enough.

Just as the daffodils were in full regalia, perfect trumpets of Spring, it snows.

We were picking up Chinese food for a change of fare, and made such a comment to the woman at the restaurant.

“How long have you lived in New England?” was her cryptic reply. Her eyes darted back and forth as if she were seeing people from another planet.

She had a sour look anyway. Business was sparse at mid-afternoon. Or maybe she would have preferred to be settled in her rocking chair with a sour mash toddy.

Oh well, we were just trying to make pleasant conversation. Everyone is either anxious or suspicious or looking for the down side these days.

Doom and gloom.

We have what may be an annoyingly upbeat view of life. On the other hand, if not, why get out of

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Montague Community Television News

We'll Edit Your Videos!

By MICHAEL SMITH

Along with most businesses, MCTV will encourage people to stay at home and limit visits to the station. Keep an eye on our Facebook page for updated station hours.

One way to connect with your community from the confines of your quarantine is to make videos! It's easy to film a tutorial, a public service announcement, a story or a hike by using your phone, computer or one of MCTV's cameras that are sanitized and available for pickup. Any editing can be done by MCTV staff editors, or you can

try it at home!

Residents of Montague can find MCTV on Channel 17, and the MCTV Vimeo page is available online. Email hannahbrookman@gmail.com for editing assistance or filmmaking questions.

Something going on you think others would like to see? If you get in touch, we can show you how easy it is to use a camera and capture the moment.

Contact us at (413) 863-9200 or infomontaguetv@gmail.com between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., Monday through Friday. We'd love to work with you!

Artist Profile: Ahearn Aesthetics

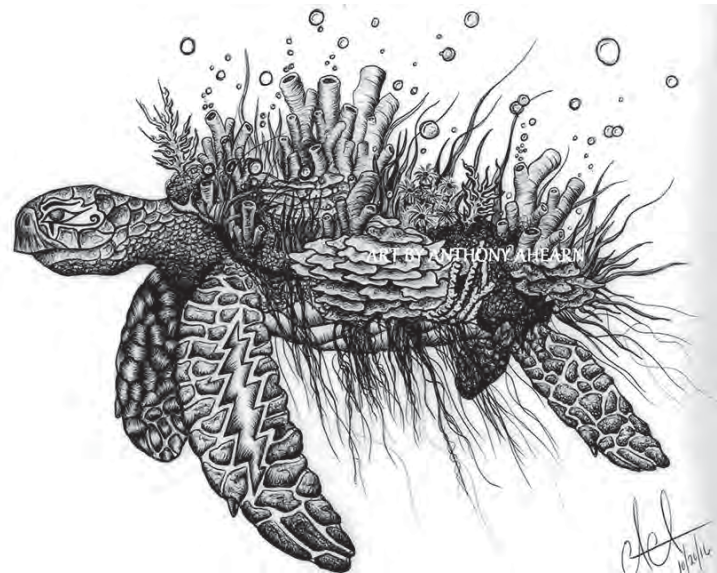
By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

GREENFIELD – When I went to the 2019 Great Falls Festival in Turners Falls, I found a couple of artists that I wanted to do profiles on for this paper. One was Anthony Ahearn, who is behind Ahearn Aesthetics out of Millers Falls.

Ahearn gave his opinion of Turner Falls: "I think it's an upcoming town. It has a great many local artists." He also said what I already know myself: "It has a strong art community."

Besides the festival I mentioned where I saw him, Ahearn said he has done vending at festivals and events for four years. "Four years in a row, at least the Great Falls one," he said. "I do Wormtown and StrangeCreek as well." These are festivals that happen in Greenfield.

He mostly does events and commission works, including paintings and clothing, which is custom shoes and hats. This man with a degree in Fine Arts from GCC has made custom work including "three pairs of shoes per customer, and several



Sea turtle print by Ahearn Aesthetics.

different hats."

He has also had gallery openings. One of these in the past was at Hawks and Reed in Greenfield. Another, as he said, currently is at 253 Pharmacy in Turners Falls.

When I saw his booth at the Great Falls Festival, I recognized his work from somewhere. "I've sold my artwork at local businesses, including Tangible Bliss," he mentioned. I have been in there, and bought a gift for somebody. It was a painted sea shell.

I believe the "Creature of Light" is a painting of his that is sold at Tangible Bliss. I like its use of colors very much. I also believe that "The Way In Is The Way Out" is one of his works, too. To say the least, Tangible Bliss seems to find his work to be enjoyable and likes having it in their store.

I found Anthony Ahearn's artworks to have a little bit of surreal quality to them, and I like his use of color.

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

River Germs Spike After Rain

FRANKLIN COUNTY – As weather begins to warm and people head outside for fresh air and exercise while remaining physically distant, Connecticut River Conservancy (CRC) urges people to use caution when swimming, boating, or fishing in rivers. In addition to rivers being swollen from spring rain and snowmelt, there's an added concern about *E. coli* bacteria and coronavirus exposure from untreated sewage in rivers.

Luckily, there's one easy thing to keep in mind – the weather, specifically if it has rained recently.

Typical wastewater treatments involving chlorine or ultraviolet (UV) light are effective in killing *E. coli* bacteria, and are expected to be highly effective in killing COVID-19. Therefore, CRC is primarily concerned about untreated sewage discharges into our rivers, which has always been a concern. Rain flushes all sorts of pollutants into our rivers and can overwhelm our aging stormwater infrastructure, causing sewage and polluted stormwater runoff to flow directly into our rivers.

"Many years of Connecticut River *E. coli* bacteria testing data tell us that it's a good idea to stay out of rivers for 24 to 48 hours after a heavy rain because bacteria levels could be high," says CRC executive director Andrew Fisk. "While COVID-19 is a new threat, our recommendation to avoid rivers after heavy rain remains the same."

Research is still underway to determine if COVID-19 remains infectious in freshwater or after passing through wastewater treatment facil-

ities. Information available from the Center for Disease Control (CDC), Environmental Protection Agency, and Water Research Foundation indicates the likelihood of catching COVID-19 from treated or untreated sewage is low. However, the CDC has noted that the SARS virus, also a type of coronavirus, was detected in untreated sewage for 14 days.

Each year, CRC and more than 20 partner organizations deploy volunteers to collect water samples from popular boat launches and swimming holes. Samples are typically collected at each site weekly or bi-weekly, tested for *E. Coli*, and test results are posted online 24 hours later. Current plans are for testing to resume as usual this year.

River users are encouraged to visit the "Is It Clean?" website at www.ctriver.org/isitclean to find test results for nearly 200 river access and recreation sites in Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Connecticut. The website provides bacteria data for the Connecticut River and more than 20 tributaries, including the Chicopee and Deerfield rivers in MA, the Scantic River in CT, the Saxtons and Black rivers in VT, and the Ashuelot in NH.

Bacteria test results for 2019 showed nearly all sites had dry-weather average bacteria levels below the limits considered safe for swimming and boating. Many cities and towns along our rivers are making significant investments to separate the outdated combined sewer overflows (CSOs) into separate sewer and stormwater systems that can better handle all the water.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Coronavirus-Related Tensions Hit Family Dollar; ATVs Prompt Calls In Three Sections Of Town

Monday, 4/13

11:50 a.m. While on a detail on Wendell Road, officer was alerted by a passing motorist that Senn's cows are in the road. Passerby is attempting to reach the owner now. No cows in road upon arrival.

12:53 p.m. Caller from Millers Falls Laundry Company reports that someone cut the cord to the change machine at his business. Surveillance footage

available. Report taken.

4:50 p.m. Caller from Turners Falls Road requesting to speak with officer about an internet start-up kit he ordered from Comcast that is showing as delivered and activated, but caller states that he does not have possession of the item. Officer advised caller of options.

Tuesday, 4/14

12:29 a.m. Caller from Bernardo Drive states that he was on his way home and stopped to check on a suspicious male party who appeared to be beaten up, or possibly drunk, stumbling down the road. Caller states he got home and noticed his window was wide open; he knows he didn't have it open when he left. Caller states nobody got into his house because the stuff near the window was not disturbed. Caller states male told him his girlfriend works in the area but gave no other information. Officer checked area; nothing found.

8:45 a.m. Wendell detail officer took report from a passing motorist of approximately six cows in Wendell Road on the Millers Falls side. Officer advised and responding. Officer contacted owner, who is also en route.

1:49 p.m. Caller from Avenue A reports that earlier today and on other previous occasions, a male party would ring the doorbell and come into the building. Caller advises it disturbed her and implied that it might have disturbed others as well. Male has since left. Advised to contact police if this recurs.

5:06 p.m. Caller states that her car was parked in the Montague Wildlife Management Area off North Street and she just returned to find that the door on the driver's side is damaged; there is black paint transfer. Officer reports that vehicle owner saw a silver CRV with a black bumper parked near her before walking. Investigated.

6:12 p.m. Caller from Grout Circle would like it on record that there were people with four-wheelers shooting guns on her posted private property. Caller states that she and her husband heard gunshots and saw a few deer run out of the woods; they then went in their truck to see if they could locate anyone and saw some people leaving on a bright orange four-wheeler with a roll cage. Services rendered.

8:21 p.m. Three calls reporting someone revving their motorcycle on Henry Avenue. Party advised of complaint.

9:06 p.m. Several reports from Henry Avenue of loud explosion in area.

One caller states that there have been ongoing problems with the neighbors at this location having large bonfires and ATVs out late at night and being loud for several weeks. Tonight, the caller was bringing out his trash and heard a male party yelling to a female to give him a half stick so he could really wake the neighbors. Female party was telling him not to do it. Officer saw male party at this location who stated he did not light anything off. Officer will be remaining in area.

Wednesday, 4/15

1:19 p.m. Caller from Family Dollar requesting assistance with unwanted male who was just in the store and is now outside the store screaming and causing a disturbance. Last seen with white face mask, black hooded sweatshirt, and black sweatpants with a white stripe down the side. Officer spoke with male party; verbal disagreement between male and caller over proper personal protective equipment. Officer will be speaking with caller.

Thursday, 4/16

10:14 a.m. Report of disturbance that just occurred at Family Dollar; caller states a woman got upset at store limits on cleaning supplies and threw the items that she wanted to buy at the caller. Caller advises the plexiglass blocked some of the items, but some items did hit her. Woman last seen walking on Avenue A turning into Peskeomskut Park wearing a black mask, purple bandana, blue backpack, and blue shoes and is with another woman in a gray shirt. Report taken.

2:18 p.m. Caller from Fifth Street requesting his options re: ongoing noise from another apartment in the building; believes the person may be doing it to harass him. Noise consists of moving furniture and loud walking or stomping. Advised of options.

Friday, 4/17

11:15 p.m. Caller from Eighth Street states that she heard what sounded like two gunshots about five minutes apart from each other. Unknown which direction sound came from. Officer checked area; nothing found. Caller requesting walkthrough of building. Area search negative.

Saturday, 4/18

11:42 a.m. Caller from X Street inquiring what the laws are on riding four-wheelers and dirt bikes in neighborhood yards. Caller states his neighbor has been doing this and the yards are very close to each other; also advises riders are not wearing helmets. Officer

spoke with caller and gave him the Environmental Police number as they handle ATV issues.

2:31 p.m. Caller from Family Dollar reporting that a female just shoplifted several items from the store and they caught her. Caller states female is now in a gray Honda Civic in the parking lot. Officer advises that items have been returned.

9:54 p.m. Caller from Avenue A requesting officer speak with upstairs neighbor who is being very loud. Caller states she tried to reason with her neighbor but because the neighbor is intoxicated, she is unwilling to quiet down. Officer spoke with neighbor's son, who agreed to quiet down for the night. Officer advised neighbors that caller will contact management if the issues persist.

Sunday, 4/19

6:37 a.m. Caller states that three batteries were stolen overnight from Pioneer Stone Seals on Federal Street. Report taken.

1:18 p.m. Report of three or four people skateboarding in the closed part of the skatepark. Area search negative.

1:47 p.m. Caller from Sunderland Road inquiring if animal control officer can respond to pick up an injured raccoon on the side of the road so it can be rehabbed. Caller is not looking for the animal to be dispatched. Advised caller ACO is not on duty. Caller will make other arrangements.

4:12 p.m. Caller reports that she was walking her dog and seven-month-old granddaughter on Hillside Road when three dogs came running after them. She was able to get two of the dogs to go away, but the third dog attacked her dog. During the attack, the stroller was knocked over and her granddaughter fell out. Caller states her dog has a bite mark under its eye and the baby has a bump on her head. Officer states caller was given a statement form to fill out and declined medical attention at this time. Officer is going to residence where dogs live and will follow up with caller once he speaks with the owners.

4:42 p.m. Report of an intoxicated male under the Spring Street bridge who is falling into the road and unable to walk normally. Officer located male party and made sure he returned home safely.

6:06 p.m. Caller from Sherman Drive reporting that her neighbor is burning what smells like plastic in his garage. The burning is causing a lot of smoke and is making her kids cough. TFFD advised.

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ARTBEAT from page B1

in her students’ progress, Milot would be observing them in classrooms. With schools shut down, Milot and her students gather online once a week instead, and students either teach the rest of the group something live, or share a demo video they’ve made in which they teach an art project.

“And then we can all critique,” Milot says. “And that has actually been a good thing. Things I’m forced to do now – because how else am I going to do it – I’m realizing, ‘Oh, this is a good thing!’”

Milot recalls teaching a graduate seminar that included readings in creative theory. What she learned from that, she says, is that, “You probably can’t really be creative unless things have gone horribly wrong and you’ve hit a roadblock.”

At that point, she says, “You can’t just do the tried-and-true. You have to twist things around.”

The challenge for teachers right now, Milot believes, is, “How can we make this as much like our regular program as possible, while also taking into account that we don’t really know the logistics of what each family is dealing with?”

Students have varying availability of materials, time and space, for instance. So her student teachers have shifted from projects that require specialized materials that would normally be handed out in class – like clay or paints – to items

families might have at home. One project for younger children, for example, asks kids to cut open paper bags to use as background paper, then cut aluminum foil into shapes to create robots.

Teachers are also trying to think of ways to get children away from their screens, and, if possible, outside. “Think Andy Goldsworthy,” Milot says, referring to the British sculptor known for his large, ephemeral works created from natural materials such as leaves, stone, even water or ice. Children who made such works could presumably photograph them and post to a site like Google Classroom, though Milot acknowledges that access to reliable internet is not a given in every household.

“The arts are the least of principals’ worries right now,” Milot says.

Yet, Milot’s teachers have been discovering that posting art assignments and having students share their results, “seems to be feeding a real need for kids to be making something and doing something.”

The student teachers say they are getting more responses than expected, especially for projects that are voluntary. And some of those working in middle and high schools are finding that their students check in more often than they thought they would during optional online “office hours.”

“Sometimes, just being there helps emotionally,” Milot says.

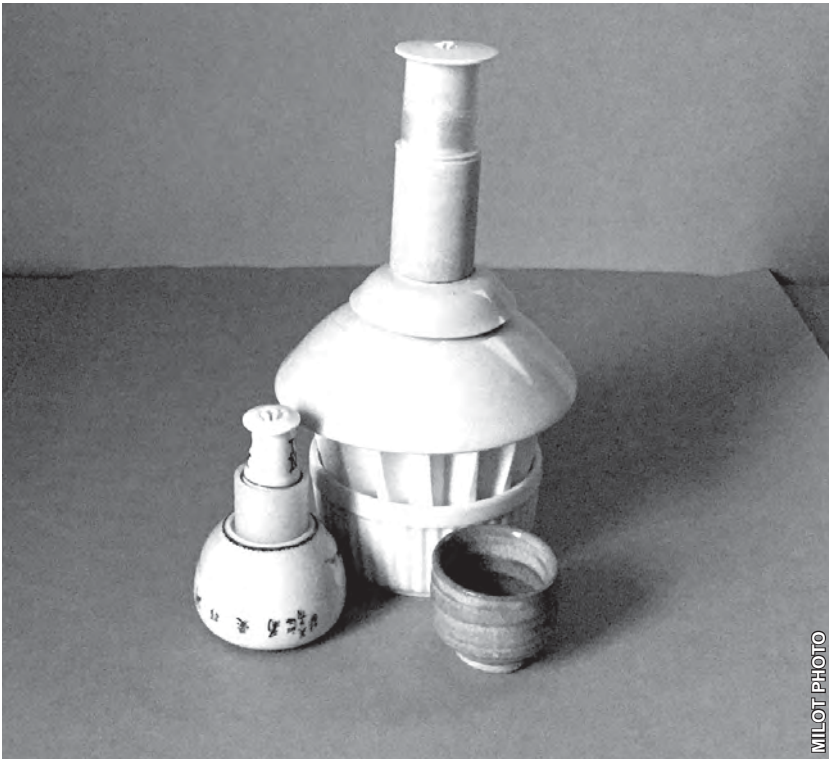
And the reason for students’ interest in art projects right now may be not incidental to the uncertainties and difficulties of this time but rather, spring directly from them.

“The arts feed a need,” Milot says. “When things are uncertain, to make something is good for you. It makes you feel in control.”

Creative Projects

Milot, trained as a printmaker, describes her own art practice as relying heavily on drawing. She also works in photo collage, and for the past ten years, she’s been working with photographs of clouds that she alters with drawing, or turns into constructions by adding wire. She says that, because her work is “not terribly representational,” she’s not sure how the pressure of the coronavirus pandemic is affecting it. “Sometimes we don’t really know how life events affect our art until we look back later,” she says. But the act of working is important.

Milot recounts how she assigned her students the Getty Art Museum challenge that’s circulating on Twitter, and decided to tackle it herself. The challenge invites people to recreate famous works from the Getty collection using props and costumes they have at home. Milot thought it would be good to remind her students, and herself, what it’s like to respond to an assignment, instead of just creating them for others. She also



MILOT PHOTO

Artist and art educator Barbara Milot’s recreation of a Giorgio Morandi still life painting makes use of many small objects she foraged from around her home.

thought the Getty challenge would give them all a welcome chance to just relax and create.

Milot laughs as she says that she became so obsessed with her recreation of a still life by Italian painter Giorgio Morandi that, when she wasn’t teaching or attending to daily tasks like cooking, it was all she thought about. It was “two days of blur,” she says. She’d see some object in the house and realize *Oh, that would work!* and go running to add it to the still life.

Milot stacked many small objects of similar color, including bowls, saucers, and a spool of thread, to create what in Morandi’s still life was one large vase. Her husband probably thought she was crazy, she says, laughing again. But it was clear that the project, by giving her mind something to focus on, freed her for a while.

“I think I needed something that just completely absorbed me,” Milot says. “I might do it again.”



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VALLEY VIEW from page B1

Could I resist jumping into the auction? Nope. Not a chance. In fact, I aggressively pursued my interest by making an offer and – *chaching* – a week and \$61.13 later, the carefully packaged wallet arrived in my mailbox from the southcentral Wisconsin town of Reedsburg. Owner Sarah Riedel of the downtown store Antiques on Main had rescued it at an estate sale, found mixed among military papers in a dusty old dresser drawer. It’s pretty typical of the way such items come to light and return to the communities where they were created as collectors’ items.

Fact is that the timing of this discovery couldn’t have been better. Deerfield’s 350th birthday celebration is a short three years away. Maybe I’ll loan it to the Historical Commission for some sort of a South Deerfield pocketbook-factory display.

Talk about igniting a fascinating adventure down South Deerfield’s memory lane. The wallet did just that, while also stirring my ever-ready genealogical-research juices. Arms Family roots stretch as deep as any in South Deerfield annals, beginning with progenitor William Arms, who came to the Connecticut Valley in 1676 as a soldier under Capt. William Turner of “Falls Fight” fame. Later, the Arms family was among the first to settle the Deerfield village first known as Bloody Brook during the second half of the 18th century.

Even better, the wallet discovery and purchase pulled me back into my own family roots in the local leather-working trade, tanner and shoemaker families that evolved into Industrial Revolution cogs at the Arms Manufacturing Co. factory. The South Deerfield manufactory was a big deal in its day, in a class

SANDERSON PHOTO



The wallet’s provenance is stamped on it: “Made by Chas Arms.”

with John Russell’s Green River Works cutlery as a Franklin County industry, according to online data published by Greenfield’s Museum of Our Industrial Heritage.

The Arms factory was on center stage a short distance from downtown South Deerfield, where it cranked out fine leather pocketbooks, bill books, letter books and card cases. The products were shipped to New York and sold nationally.

Before the railroad, Arms products were shipped by oxcart to Hartford, where they picked up a barge to New York City for distribution. Production and shipping dramatically increased once the Connecticut River Railroad went through town. The freights would stop at loading docks between the Conway and Elm Street crossings, alongside today’s Leader Home Centers hardware store and lumber yard.

Although it’s impossible to piece together the entire picture at a time when Old Deerfield’s Memorial Libraries are closed for the pandemic, there is enough on-

line information available to get a general picture. Perhaps, were I an Ancestry.com subscriber, I could from home assemble some of the pocketbook factory’s workforce from online census records. But without that luxury at my fingertips, I must wait for library access once COVID-19 passes.

In the meantime, I must rely on what I already knew and what I have recently discovered by reading and discussion with knowledgeable sources. It’s not like I came into this mission totally uninformed. I entered the journey with a general understanding of the pre-industrial leather-working trade due to genealogical research into my Sanderson, Arms, Graham and Woodruff families, all of which display strong veins of tanners and shoemakers working their trade in Whately, Deerfield and Sunderland.

It gets even closer. Each morning at daybreak, I crack open my eyes looking at two Victorian Woodruff sisters – great-grand-

mother Fannie, born 1865, and older Marriette, born 1849 – peering down at me from their framed perches on my upstairs bedroom’s north wall. Plus, several times a day on my way to the study, I pass two earlier photo portraits of their parents – Asa Franklin Woodruff and Eliza Arms – framed on each side of the fan-lit front door.

Asa, a New Hartford, Conn., shoemaker, married into Eliza’s South Deerfield shoemaking family in 1842 and settled in town. They would have been South Deerfield neighbors of Dennis Arms, the pocketbook shop’s founder, and Eliza’s grandfather. Dennis Arms’ son Charles, Eliza’s first cousin, bought out brothers William S. and James C. in 1861 and put Arms Manufacturing on the map.

Is it possible that Asa Woodruff, buried under a tall obelisk in the downtown Sugarloaf Cemetery, worked for the Arms pocketbook factory? Can’t say at this point. A work in progress. Although more information is needed, I wouldn’t bet against it. That’ll have to wait for now. There’s time. I’ll wait to dig when the diggin’s better. No great rush. Deerfield’s 350th isn’t until 2023. Who knows what great stuff will emerge by then?

Which reminds me of a sobering thought: I was a 20-year-old celebrant of the town’s 300th birthday. Now this. No denying I’m getting old.

Interesting how this latest research mission began with a simple eBay keyword search in the comforts of home, a search I’ve executed many times over the past 20 years. Never a waste of time, this particular foray just happened to produce exceptional fruit. It happens. That’s why I keep going back for more. It’s fun. Sometimes rewarding.



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Unearthing the Archives

By Charlotte Kohlmann



PART XI: JANE GAINES AND THE WOMEN FILM PIONEERS PROJECT

The virulent coronavirus has changed every facet of daily life in just a few short weeks. Our collective efforts to mitigate its impact on global public health, safety, the environment, and the economy will continue to make ripple effects for generations to come.

As layoffs and closures come to a devastating upsurge, cultural institutions continue to suffer major

losses. Mechanisms put in place for public funding relief – and resources that ensure emergency support for archives, museums, historical societies, libraries, galleries, community-based organizations, and other non-profit cultural organizations – must be shared equitably, with advocacy towards those serving marginalized communities, and/or ones with disadvantaged resources.

For non-essential workers who aren't risking their lives fighting off the harmful surge of this pandemic, the new normal of staying inside has recast the internet as a newfound lifeline, offering alluring expeditions into its cavernous corridors. As public institutions shut their doors, individuals can retreat to virtual ones.

The focus of this series, *Unearthing the Archives*, will shift towards digital repositories, initiated both locally and out-of-state. Online archives, resources, databases, libraries, museum tours, and amateur YouTube uploads now have greater meaning in a time when safety issues concerning public space are momentarily unresolved.

One free digital resource to explore is *The Women Film Pioneers Project* (TWFP), available online at wfpp.columbia.edu, which features peer-reviewed scholarship and career profiles of women who worked in the national and international silent film industries between 1895 and 1925. The project aims to highlight and encourage the exploration and independent research of these women's immense, but mostly unheard-of, careers in the industry.

Their occupations in the business ranged from directors, studio managers, film editors, costume designers, agents, animal trainers, film animators, art directors, camera operators, carpenters, casting directors, censors, screenwriters, composers, documentary makers,

distributors, metalworkers, and producers to war cinematographers and much more.

Archivist Jane Gaines

I recently spoke with Jane Gaines, a venerated film scholar, professor, and founder of this online database, which is published in partnership with the Columbia University Library System.

"This project came into being while I was a professor at Vassar College. I wanted to know about the women who had careers in early photography and motion pictures and share it, especially with female professors," said Gaines. "As I started to collect names from various archives and libraries, the list just kept on growing."

Soon enough, graduate students were collecting more and more names and adding them to her search. She first envisioned this project taking on the form of an encyclopedia, but a single-volume set would not be big enough to print all of these unacknowledged women.

When Gaines later joined the Columbia University Film and Media Studies Program, the project was selected as a digital pilot project by the Columbia University Libraries. It officially launched in 2013 with the technical support of the library, making it a free platform for every internet user – a rare attribute for databases which frequently charge subscription fees to fund their publications.

Pioneers Revealed

An underlying principle of the database is "What we assume never existed is what we invariably find." Misinformation, or information that exists but simply lacks a spotlight, are phenomena that latch onto public perceptions of history. The past is just as endless as the future. Recovering these women's roles, even in fragmented form, can help reinstate the history of cinema as a whole.

"When I went to graduate school in the 1970s, there was an assumption that there might have been women in the film industry, but it just simply didn't exist," said Gaines. In the 1990s, she would help uncover a truth that already lived in the archive stacks: women did, in fact, have a remarkably strong impact on the early film industry. It just took individuals like Gaines to bring it back to light.

The Women Film Pioneers Project has so far published 288 profiles of women from around the world, with 649 names of pioneers to be investigated further. The profiles reflect their instrumental efforts in this field, short biographies and a multitude of resources which can be used to locate any available digitized surviving copies of their works on nitrate-cellulose film.

"In order to change the canon of film, we need to prove how deep the treasure is, and how much actually exists," said Gaines.

"What was even more shocking to learn was, for instance, how there were whole worlds of women in the international silent film industry that were never fully recognized."

Second-wave feminist scholars in the 1970s were reintegrating women back into all kinds of cultural histories that they had been ominously censored out of, or simply forgotten, due to constructed gender disparities. But these scholars had missed out on readdressing the women who played a major role in motion picture history.

In Gaines' academic article, "Sad Songs of Nitrate," she mentions a preconception that "even if there had been any work by women, it was inferior; that of such inferior work, no examples survived...we are studying an unfortunate object, misused and left alone, the subject of earlier neglect" (*Camera Obscura* 22, 2007).

The shift to online digitized engagement can create new expectations for archives to responsibly provide open and accessible collections for broader audiences who would not otherwise have a chance to utilize these materials.

While thousands of films were produced out of the Silent Era, a staggeringly low number of them exist today. This is partly due to cellulose nitrate film, the standard medium of the time. This film-type decays over time and is extremely

flammable. The costs to preserve these early cinema films are so high that only those with important significance get priority when it comes to preservation. Therefore, films heavily produced by women don't actually get priority simply because of National Archives policy.

This online database archive is trying to overturn the fallback of access to these neglected films. It is organized into the following sections: *Overviews*, *Pioneers*, *Resources*, and *Projections*. "Overviews" are peer-reviewed essays written by scholars from around the world, featuring topics such as Latin American women who worked in the silent film history, women camera operators, and African-American women in the silent film industry.

The "Pioneers" page showcases brief bibliographies of women in film with their names, photographs, links to other sites, works cited, further resources, and any available videos that showcase their film repertoire. These profiles were submitted and written by film scholars, curators, archivists, and historians – they are peer reviewed and fact-checked constantly, which makes changing or replacing any information in them, very accessible to do online.



Alice Guy-Blaché

French filmmaker Alice Guy-Blaché was the first woman to own her own film company and studio in the United States. In the early years of cinema, she directed, wrote, and created the very first narrative genre film called *La Fée aux Choux* (1896).

Although Guy-Blaché made a prolific 1,000 films during her lifelong career, which began when she was 22, it was never acknowledged that the "forefathers" of cinema had a female counterpart. Guy-Blaché was just the tip of the iceberg, but even with so many women in the industry for decades, they suffered from erasure or lived in the margins.



Haydée Chikly Tamzali

Haydée Chikly Tamzali (1906-1998) started her career when she was 16. She was a Tunisian film actress, screenwriter, film cutter, journalist, and hand-colorist of films. At that time, women had no authority in Tunisia, and lived oppressed lives; they could not remove their veil, or work to support their families. Not many films were produced out of Tunisia during this era, but

Haydée played a part in dismantling these barriers, and helped shape early Arabic and African film.



Marija Jurić Zagorka

Marija Jurić Zagorka (1873-1957) – also known as M. Jurica Zagorski, Marija Jurić, Z., Z-a, Il-glica, Vlastelinka, and Zagorka – was a journalist, screenwriter, and film source author in Croatia and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

Zagorka was the first female journalist in Croatia; she wrote about local politics and was first published in 1896. Forced to use a fictitious name, she was not allowed to work in the same offices as the other newspaper staff, as they believed it would cause a scandal if anyone discovered her working there.

She also wrote numerous novels concentrating on female protagonists who overcame social pressures. According to Dijana Jelaca's biography on the TWFP website, "Her literary plot twists often featured cross-dressing and other forms of playing with traditional gender roles."

Zagorka received recognition as a screenwriter for two Croatian motion picture films: *Matija Gubec* (1917), based on August Šenoa's novel *Peasants' Uprising*, and *The Grič Witch/The Hill Witch* (1920), based on her own novel. But due to the lack of preservation, there are no remaining copies of these films, which make all references dependent upon written accounts, surviving film stills, and poster advertisements located in the Croatian state archives.

A Unique Resource

This multifaceted database can be used in many ways. It can be a resource for scholarship by anyone from amateur to established historians, writers, teachers, film enthusiasts, and archivists. It can be a hub for discovering other archives, libraries, and digitally curated records for further investigation of these unhistoricized pioneers. Or it can simply be used as a nuanced Wikipedia search.

What makes this site unique is that it is free, and that it was started from just a list of names and materials gathered from deep dives into preexisting libraries and archives. With help, Gaines was motivated to build a grassroots database free of any major institutional editorial control.

Archives can only do so much, collecting shreds of information available about a finite number of events. This creation and organization of resources is reconstituting old, lost narratives.

But is inclusion enough to bring these pioneers into cultural view? Can this database create a visceral shift in a viewer's understanding of the history of cinema and gender?

Be sure to check out The Women Film Pioneers Project at <https://wfpp.columbia.edu/>.




Aloha Wandervell Baker (1906-1996) was a cinematographer, director, editor, documentary maker, writer, producer, film cutter, and lecturer. She was a part of the making of eleven travelogues from 1921 to 1952, which took her to over fifty countries.



All images courtesy The Women Film Pioneers Project.

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The Children's Page

Lovely Picture Search

Words by Beverly Ketch and Images by Hannah Brookman



Can you find the magic in your own home town? The music and the sunbeams and the artist on the hill, the angel whispering in the ear of a writer whose thoughts are very clear, the doll house with its tiny rooms, the blooms and all their sweet perfumes the sun goes up and the sun comes down and the birds in the clouds are above and around and we dance and we laugh while the fairies do sleep on a mushroom bed where the crickets leap and the caterpillars crawl and the world is fine, in Turners Falls and it all is mine!

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Carolyn Clark

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THESE DAYS from page B1

feeling rather fatigued because of unsettled sleep, I arrived at the track intending to do intervals. Intention is a good but abstract kind of notion. You can have it but it so easily melts away if the conditions are right.

Three ladies walked along the perimeter near the outer lane. We exchanged greetings from a distance. As I pushed against a wall of wind on the backside of the first 400 yards, I wanted to stop. But, what would three ladies walking think if I ran only one interval? Would they snicker or call me a wimp? Realistically I knew they cared less but I needed to deceive myself into believing that they would be proved wrong.

If the situation had been otherwise I'd be training for the Sugarloaf 15K in Maine, a real motivation, so I assigned that role to the three walking ladies to fill the void. They received shiny, gold stars. I managed half of what I'd planned, but more than if I'd quit. On Jeanne's Scale of Perceived Exertion, I rated this workout an "oh, pooh" which falls between "piece of cake" and "cowabunga, I am awesome!"

In need of focus, I was recently inspired by Ross Gay, author of *The Book of Delights*, to begin a list of



A quilt in progress, part of a series called "Happy." "The idea was instigated by letting loose and letting go of the usual straight lines, matching seams, and expensive purchased fabric," LaPierre writes.

my own found delights. It's about the little things. The cat was a good place to start.

Every morning, Sherman, my furry feline friend, patiently waits until I pour my mug of coffee. I place him on the dryer, his grooming station. He directs my brushing towards his face by turning his head from side to side. He is fully engaged, even though the finches are pecking seeds in the feeder on the other side of the window.

Scientists once studied the grooming behavior of a certain type of fish. Most fish in the school sought out grooming once or twice a day. But there was one particularly greedy, needy – or as the scientists speculated, obsessed – fish, who returned repeatedly. Since I am sheltered at home Shermie solicits me more frequently. Just as I preferred not to converse with Doris but, post-interaction, felt uplifted, this is our daily ritual. It is both a comfort and a delight. His snoring is also endearing, because unlike humans, it is not as loud nor aggravating nor grating, nor... Sorry, I'm losing the delight. Sorry.

I've made facemasks. I work on another in my quilt series entitled "Happy." I run five days a week. I try to avoid unhealthy habits, but an insidious few have crept back.

Needing distraction, I watch my YouTube music mix. That's when I nab Shermie and dance around the room, his coon cat tail swishing, my body wrapped in the musical moment just because it feels good: "Live from Daryl's House" featuring Cee Lo Green singing "I Can't Go for That," a song apropos of nothing but with a big bass playing on the one. (See [youtube.com/watch?v=8yxoob6aPtk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8yxoob6aPtk)) The first few riffs are hypnotic. I slip away into my alternative universe where all is happy and healthy.

Find your delights. Dance. Appreciate your pets. Talk to strangers, from afar. See you on the other side.

Jeanne LaPierre, formerly of Turners Falls, lives in North Granby, CT with her husband and Sherman, the cat. She has been a member of the Sugarloaf Mountain Athletic Club based in Western Mass since the mid-seventies.



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