

The Montague Reporter

YEAR 18 – NO. 26

also serving Irving, Gill, Leverett and Wendell

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EDITOR@MONTAGUEREPORTER.ORG

THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

APRIL 30, 2020

LASTING MEMORIES

That's Another Story: *Part I*



Mr. Bush taught and coached for three decades at Turners Falls High School.

By MIKE JACKSON

TURNERS FALLS – George F. Bush is well known in this town, and he can tell you one or two things about it. Mr. Bush, as many know him, is a lifelong fixture in the stands at high school sports games, and his own athletic experience stretches back through decades as a teacher-coach at Turners Falls High School to time spent growing up in the Depression playing baseball at Unity Park, and kick the can in the alleys downtown.

When I heard he had returned from his winter residence in Florida, I arranged for an interview. Very few people have set foot in the Reporter office since March due to the coronavirus, and I agreed to have him come in and sit a safe distance away.

Mr. Bush and I spoke for a long time, and this interview, all golden, will run in three weekly installments. The transcript has been re-ordered, and edited for clarity.

MR: *I want to know about Turners growing up! Which end of Fifth Street were you born on?*

GB: This end. One of the houses that's still standing – 75 Fifth Street. It's a lot different from when we were growing up, that's for sure.

MR: *So you live on the other side of the alley, now, from where you were born!*

GB: When I was born... My mother was an immigrant, from what at that particular time was the Austro-Hungarian Empire, it wasn't an independent Poland. She came over in 1906, she was 16 years old. Turners Falls was an immigrant town. Don't tell Donald Trump that, but that's what it was.

And she married and she had five children, my three brothers and one sister. And my father passed away when my mother was carrying me. My brother Lou was a sophomore in high school. And by the way, my sister was retarded, so we had four boys and a retarded child she had to take care of by herself.

MR: *How'd she do it?*

GB: She worked in a cotton mill. And also, those were Prohibition days, and she made what you weren't supposed to make during Prohibition, and got a little side money that way – you'd probably call it moonshine or those days.

Believe it or not, one of her best customers was a police officer!

MR: *I actually do believe that.*

GB: He was trying to help the family out. Plus Lou worked in the bowling alleys, and shining shoes – he was our father growing up.

MR: *Did you ever go into the mill where she worked?*

GB: Oh yeah, I used to go down sometimes and bring her lunch. You called it Kendall Mills then, at that particular time.

She remarried when I was eight years old. My stepfather owned a house on Fourth Street. It was built in 1882, I've got the deed. He purchased it in the early 1930s when my mother remarried, and we moved over to Fourth Street.

My father worked in the International Paper Company that they had at that time. It was called the IP. It was by one of those bridges that goes over the canal. Eventually they moved out of town, so that closed up almost the same time as the Cutlery building closed. Those were the Depression days.

Later on he worked as a fireman down near the hospital.

I had two stepsisters and a step-brother...

MR: *You must have seen this town change so many times.*

GB: Well, that's another story. Our town – of course, I was living during Depression days, too, all the Thirties and the low Forties.

Turners Falls was an immigrant town, like I said. We had the different nationalities, and they all had their own clubs.

The Polish, down here, had St. Kazimierz' and St. Stan's. I used to go in there to pay the insurance. The Irish had the Ancient Order of Hibernians; the French Canadians had a school over at Ste. Anne's and right across was where the nuns live, and the French Canadians had their club on Third Street.

Now you have a German club, on the lower end of Third Street... And in those days there were a lot of Jewish families.

MR: *Was there a temple?*

GB: I think. Right at the top of K Street, just before you get to the Polish church. It's an apartment building now.

Besides the Polish church, you had Ste. Anne's which was the French, and St. Marie's which was the Irish, and then you had the Protestant churches – Congregational, Methodist, Baptists, and so forth. The Unitarians were where the Elks Club is. The Polish people, when they came, were going to the Irish church – well, they wanted their own priest and everything, so they bought that from the Unitarians.

In the high 20s, they had a fire that caused some destruction, so they got a committee up, a lot of the members of St. Kaz were in it, and they said, "We want our own church." That's where they built it, 1929. That's where I spent most of my time, as far as going to church.

MR: *Have you lived on Fourth*
see **STORY** page A6

Montague Board of Health Officially Encourages Mask Use

By JEFF SINGLETON

MONTAGUE – For the first time in the COVID pandemic, the Montague board of health has issued a "strong advisory" calling on residents, as well as customers and employees of essential services, to wear protective masks.

The vote at the April 27 joint meeting with the selectboard followed a lengthy discussion of whether the order would be mandatory, whether it would only apply to business establishments, and how it would be enforced or publicized.

Recent meetings of the two boards have been dominated by dis-

cussions of how the town should react to the pandemic. Montague has closed town buildings, playgrounds, and the skate park, and required businesses that remain open to install shields at checkout counters. But the issue of whether to encourage the wearing of protective masks, which has been state and federal policy for nearly a month, has not been on the local agenda until this week.

Selectboard and health board member Mike Nelson advocated that Montague follow the example of "our neighbors," and require residents to wear face masks "in public, for at least the next couple

see **MONTAGUE** page A4

Restaurants Focus on Takeout Option As Shutdown Continues

By ISABEL KOYAMA

TURNERS FALLS – In response to a continuing statewide stay-at-home advisory, many local restaurants are developing systems for takeout in order to stay open while adhering to social distancing guidelines.

Having received money last Monday for a Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan from the Small Business Administration through Greenfield Cooperative Bank, the Rendezvous in downtown Turners Falls was able to hire back staff and reopen a week ago. The bar and restaurant is offering a new delivery and pick-up menu, as well as an evolving schedule of upcoming livestream shows and online events.

"If we were entirely shuttered, it would still cost thousands of dollars a month to be closed," says co-owner Chris Janke. "We're still not making money – not even breaking even – but we're doing better than we would if we were closed." Janke says the restaurant will do its best to



The Rendezvous reopened last week, thanks to a federal loan program.

meet the conditions of the PPP over the next two months in order for the loan to be forgivable, by using the money for wages, mortgage interest, and utilities.

"We had a crazy opening day," recounts Janke, adding that he was

see **TAKEOUT** page A8

GILL-MONTAGUE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Parade Honors Class of 2020

By MIKE JACKSON

GILL-MONTAGUE – School buildings will be closed for the rest



Proud mom Heather Shearer and TFHS senior Jakob Shearer had been tipped off about the parade on Friday, and were waiting for Jakob's lawn sign.

of the year throughout the state due to the novel coronavirus, and educators are improvising their attempts to connect with children, and wondering what the future holds.

"The level of participation by students is very uneven," Gill-Montague superintendent Michael Sullivan reported to the school committee Tuesday night. "and it's hard to hold kids accountable in this situation."

Sullivan said the district is starting to hear from families who had not spoken up earlier about not having internet access at home. Comcast is providing a two-month free internet service for low-income families, and the schools may provide wireless hotspots in special cases. School staff continue to distribute Chromebooks, and nearly every secondary school student now has one to call their own, in an accelerated rollout of the planned 1:1 computing program.

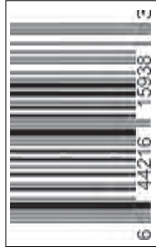
Hillcrest technology teacher Katie Hopp is becoming the district's "parent technology czar," helping families navigate remote learning.

Business manager Joanne Blier
see **GMRSD** page A7

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Arthur Wins Dem Nom In Caucus Upset

By MIKE JACKSON

MONTAGUE – Two surprises lay in store for seven-year Montague selectboard incumbent Michael Nelson on Wednesday night. The first was a strong show of support for challenger Ashley Arthur at the Democratic Party election caucus. The second was that Arthur's 21-13 win means Nelson's name will not appear on the June 22 ballot.

After the caucus, held in the town hall parking lot to encourage social distancing, Nelson told the Reporter that he had not yet decided whether to mount a write-in campaign to defend

see **CAUCUS** page A5

LEVERETT SELECTBOARD

Court Favors Leverett Retiree In Benefits Case

By JERRI HIGGINS

Former Leverett elementary school art teacher Susan Boss won a judgment last week from the state Supreme Judicial Court, which found both Boss and her dependents entitled to 50% of their full premium health-insurance benefits, citing a vote at Leverett's April 2004 town meeting to adopt MGL Ch. 32B § A.

Asked at the selectboard's Tuesday night meeting about the financial impact to town of the precedent set by the SJC decision, chair Peter d'Errico said, "That's a good question. Every department is going to have to deal with this, in terms of the increased load going forward."

Board member Julie Shively responded that as Boss is a former school employee, the school would bear that responsibility.

D'Errico added that while the decision's major impact will be on the school, he sees it as "all part of total compensation," and that "every

see **LEVERETT** page A8

GILL SELECTBOARD

Gill Holding Steady So Far

By GEORGE BRACE

Gill's April 27 selectboard meeting began with a brief COVID-19 update, followed by the board deciding to move town elections from the usual date in early May to June 22. Members of the board also commented on the situation in the surrounding area, and the status of the school regionalization study group.

Town administrator Ray Purington, a member of Gill's emergency management team, reported that there were no significant changes in the town's COVID-related status since two weeks ago. Purington said the quarterly Gill newsletter was posted on the town website this week, and was mainly devoted to

see **GILL** page A5

The Montague Reporter

“The Voice of the Villages”

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Technical Administration

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August 2002

Blood from a Turnip

“With rent due in a few days and folks across the country worried they won’t be able to make their payments, it’s clear more needs to be done to provide relief. We need to freeze rent immediately for people who have lost their jobs and place a temporary ban on evictions.”

That’s presumptive Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden, tweeting on Wednesday evening. Rent, particularly in America’s coastal cities – and anywhere within commuting distance of them – represents a large share of working-class income, one that has increased dramatically since the last recession. This Friday, May 1, many face the second rent bill of the coronavirus pandemic and economic contraction.

Nearly half of all renter households are at least “moderately burdened” by this monthly expense, and a quarter are “severely burdened,” according to a February study by the Joint Center for Housing Studies at Harvard University. A severe burden means handing more than half of one’s income over to the landlord. 11 million households are in this category.

So far, federal emergency aid during the pandemic has not directly addressed rent, though it has significantly beefed up weekly unemployment payouts and expanded eligibility. In the last six weeks, nearly 30 million workers have filed for this benefit – a staggering, historically unprecedented figure.

Those claimants stand to take in a \$2,400 per month bonus, though that will go further in West Virginia, where the median family of four pays \$681 in rent, than here in Massachusetts, where they pay \$1,173.

While some banks have offered deferrals on mortgage payments during the pandemic, they do not require landlords to pass that relief on to their tenants. Calls for a moratorium on rent payments have been circulating on the margins, but so far they have not gained traction. Instead, two much more modest measures are being enacted in cities and states around the country: rent freezes and eviction moratoriums.

A rent freeze, such as the one passed by the California city of San Jose this week, barely scratches the surface of the problem. Prohibiting landlords from raising rents until the end of the year does not address the hardship caused by widespread loss of income.

And a temporary ban on evictions, such as the Massachusetts Eviction and Foreclosure Act

signed into law last week, is a helpful harm-reduction measure, but only kicks the can down the road. It looks like a rubber band being slowly pulled back, threatening thousands of simultaneous evictions the summer (mid-August or a month and a half after the emergency is lifted, whichever comes sooner). Similar moratoriums are in place in 30 states.

On April 17, Minnesota Democrat Ilhan Omar and eight cosponsors in the House introduced a bill the “Rent and Mortgage Cancellation Act of 2020,” which would eliminate rent for the duration of the emergency and create a national Landlord Relief Fund (and a Lender Relief Fund) to offset losses.

That bill seems highly unlikely to advance, but at least the concept is on the table as Congress gears up to discuss a fifth coronavirus relief package. A different approach is embodied by the “Emergency Money for the People Act,” which would give all citizens age 16 and over \$2,000 each month for up to a year, plus \$500 per child. On the Republican side of the aisle, we see the “Getting America Back to Work Act,” a payroll tax rebate for employers who hire and retain staff.

The debate is sure to come down to just how safe people see a return to business as usual, with many on the political Right arguing that a resurgence of the virus before a vaccine becomes available is an acceptable risk.


A poll by Data for Progress indicated that 67% of Democrats, 48% of independents, and 42% of Republicans – over half of all voters – support suspending mortgage and rent during the crisis.

Public opinion is incapable of advancing legislation, but it may have spurred Biden to give lip service to the issue. Unfortunately, “freez[ing] rent... for people who have lost their jobs” is the weakest imaginable intervention at this point, and allowing broke tenants to rack up debts until the emergency is lifted only ensures a compounded catastrophe later this year.

Tens of thousands of tenants in cities like Philadelphia, New York, and Los Angeles have publicly pledged to join in a rent strike May 1. It is unclear where their leverage lies, other than incentivizing individual landlords to support a bailout for renters.

But even that might be a rational place to start. If those who cannot pay rent band together now, they will be better prepared to fight eviction together come the fall.

NINA ROSSI ILLUSTRATION



Seamsters Suzanne Conway, Jennia Karron, and Belinda Schatz make thermal bags for senior home-delivered meal programs at the Meals on Wheels Store in the airport industrial park in Turners Falls. The company has experienced a surge of orders lately, as more people rely on home-delivered meals during the shutdown.

Letters to the Editors

A Rather Bleak Documentary

I watched Michael Moore’s movie, *Planet of the Humans*, when it came out as a free release on Earth Day. Director Jeff Gibbs walks us through the technologies that were poised to wean us from our dependency on oil and gas and take us into a happy sustainable future. The picture he paints is very bleak.

The movie is a rebuke of the renewable energy movement so far, exposing all the bad bedfellows, mistakes, and illusions. Some friends in the know have mentioned that the movie focuses on the early part of the movement, and fails to mention true successes that are out there. The omission of success stories is truly a shame.

Like many, I found the movie very disheartening. It seemed to end more out of exhaustion than intention, offering no strategy or direction other than an acknowledgement that there are too many people and that we must somehow change our lifestyles. It was also polemical in places, bashing big oil and billionaires and perhaps unnecessarily presuming that neither is capable of launching progressive projects or being supportive of efforts toward a sustainable future.

While these sources must certainly be regarded with extra scrutiny, I’m not sure their involvement, by itself, signifies corruption. All that said, I am very glad for the information about the short life

of some of the big solar projects, the terrible pollution caused by the method of large-scale harvesting of sugarcane for ethanol, the small output of some projects that still make promises they don’t begin to keep, and the irresponsibility of much of the biofuel industry. This information is super important, presenting facts that must be faced.

A great quote came from Indian environmentalist, Vandana Shiva: “I think the big crisis of our times is, our minds have been manipulated to give power to illusions.”

Without the truth, there is no moving forward.

**Nina Gross
Greenfield**

Domestic Violence & the Coronavirus

Victims of domestic violence and their children live with the risk of emotional and physical abuse every day. In the Northwestern District (Franklin/Hampshire counties and the town of Athol), there have been 23 domestic violence homicides since 1984, and there are over 250 cases identified as “high risk” – that is, cases that are deemed as potentially lethal.

Victims are isolated, threatened in front of their children, and many face dangerous physical violence and strangulation. When they seek a court order or try to get out of the situation, the danger can actually increase. Many abusers will escalate controlling behaviors when they sense they are losing control.

So, imagine this same scenario and the COVID-19 outbreak. With schools and workplaces closed and families forced to stay at home, the danger has now increased. The very places that were connections and offering some respite for victims are now gone. From an abuser’s perspective it’s the perfect storm, increasing their ability to isolate and control their partner.

If you or someone you know is in this situation now, there are options:

- First and foremost, call 911 if you are being threatened or are in danger. Police officers will still respond to calls for help.
- Call your local hotline for confidential, 24/7 support over the phone. In Franklin County, call the New England Learning Center for Women in Transition

(NELCWIT) in Greenfield at (413) 772-0806, or in Orange/Athol at (978) 544-9857. In Hampshire County, call Safe Passage in Northampton: (413) 586-5066. Staff can help you think about a safety plan that fits your current needs and situation.

- If you need a protection court order, you can still get one even though the courts are temporarily closed. Call your local police department or the District Attorney’s Office – Greenfield, (413) 774-3186; Northampton, (413) 586-9225 – for information on accessing a restraining order by phone or for questions on a current order.

- Think about your support system and who you can trust. Talk with that person for support, and about how they could help if you need to get out quickly.

- If your children are old enough, talk with them about your concerns and make a plan for where they should go and who to call if things start to escalate and you can’t get to the phone.

- You can also call the DA’s office for information on our lock change funds if your abuser has left and you fear they will return.

Whatever you do, please know you do not have to deal with this alone. Confidential, 24/7 help is available.

Mary A. Kociela
*Director of Domestic & Sexual Violence Projects
Northwestern District Attorney’s Office*

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LARKIN-ROSSI ILLUSTRATION

Compiled by NINA ROSSI

Week six of this shutdown, and the flood of cancellation emails has ebbed, since what was once on the calendar has, for the most part, passed. Nothing further has been planned, really, except for online events. But into this limbo come appeals for help, some of which are featured in *Local Briefs* this week.

Got something else to share? Please send it in!

Also, please read Montague Library director Linda Hickman's thoughtful answer to my query about circulating library books during the COVID crisis, in this week's *Letters to the Editor* below.

Go, Post Office! Especially at this time, we are **grateful for the United States postal service**, which has helped bring many of you this issue of the *Montague Reporter*. This week, join the nationwide letter writing campaign in support of fully funding the USPS, a campaign that uses the US Mail to make its point. Write to our two Massachusetts senators, Edward Markey and Elizabeth Warren, something along the lines of this suggestion from the mail action toolkit created by www.ruralorganizing.org:

"Please vote to fully fund the US Postal Service. The Postal Service delivers life-saving medications and food, enables voting by mail in primary states, supports other services necessary for our nation to operate during the COVID-19 crisis, and is obligated to serve all Americans regardless of where they live, rural

and urban alike. I look forward to watching how you vote during the next stimulus bill."

Mail your message in a stamped envelope to: Senator Edward Markey, 255 Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510; Senator Elizabeth Warren, 309 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510.

Consider adding a nice note of support for your local mail carrier on the outside of the envelope!

Pandemic Unemployment Assistance applications are up and running as of April 20 at www.mass.gov/pua. The assistance extends unemployment benefits to those who don't normally qualify, such as self-employed workers, gig workers, independent contractors, and freelancers, as well as claimants who have insufficient work history or were laid off from churches and religious institutions that normally wouldn't qualify under state law.

Residents of Turners Falls may now sign up with the Compost Coop for **curbside compostables pickup**. This service-for-a-fee provides a 5-gallon bucket and liner, which you can fill up – with vegetable scraps, bones (wrapped in newspaper), paper towels, meat, compostable plates, and other containers – for weekly or bi-weekly curbside pickup.

Even if you have a yard to compost in, you may want to have this service in order to be able to compost more items such as meat, paper towels, napkins, and plates. They will even pick up those oily pizza boxes if

you put them out next to the bucket.

The worker-owned cooperative opened in 2018, and has already diverted almost a quarter million pounds of materials away from landfills and incinerators, according to the flyer I received from them. The stuff they pick up goes to Martin's Farm for composting. Check out the details at www.thecompostcooperative.com.

Speaking of cooperatives, the **Shelburne Artists Cooperative** is searching for support at this time in a GoFundMe campaign. SAC has operated a storefront on Bridge Street in Shelburne Falls for 22 years, and would like to be able to reopen in that location when the COVID-19 crisis is over.

It's unusual for an art gallery to survive for more than ten years, yet alone 22; the coop, by spreading the workload and the profits among its large membership, has got a formula that works. No one person is making a living from the operation, rather, it contributes to the livelihood of dozens.

Full disclosure: I've belonged to the gallery for many years, along with what is currently 42 artists and crafters from all over Western Mass. For many of us it was our first gallery representation; our fledgling art careers benefited from the supportive fellowship at the coop, and from its ideal location near to a popular scenic attraction, the Bridge of Flowers.

SAC is about halfway to the goal at this writing: find out more at www.gofundme.com/f/support-the-shelburne-arts-coop.

A free introductory **Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction** class will be held Wednesday, May 6, at 6 p.m. on Zoom. Hosted by Jean Erlbaum, Qualified MBSR teacher, you may receive the Zoom link for the class by contacting her at jeanie@valleystressreduction.com. Full information is available on www.valleystressreduction.com.

Did you ever visit the amazing **Three Sisters Sanctuary** in Goshen? The large sculpture garden and sanctuary, designed and built by Richard Richardson, is reaching out to the community for help. Three Sisters was completely dependent on money from admissions and events to maintain the grounds and gardens, funds that are now gone.

The Sanctuary is currently participating in a GoFundMe campaign specifically designed for small businesses impacted by the COVID-19 epidemic. It pledges a \$500 matching grant if we reach at least \$500 through donations. "All donations, no matter the amount, are greatly appreciated, and every penny will go directly to maintain and sustain the Sanctuary at this most critical time," writes Richardson. "Together, we can ensure the Three Sisters Sanctuary will continue to be an incomparable garden of inspiration and healing, a true sanctuary for all."

Visit www.threesisterssanctuary.com/support. Going up for an evening concert at the hilltop amphitheater there, and seeing and hearing the large mosaic dragon breathe fire into a darkening sky, is an unforgettable experience!

#GivingTuesday is next Tuesday, May 5! This worldwide day of giving was initiated in 2012 by New York's 92nd Street Y along with the United Nations Foundation. It is meant to be a day of generosity, whether that be a gift of time in providing services or kindnesses to

others, or of giving money to a cause.

There are many ideas on their website for ways to give and how to engage in this generosity movement, which has grown exponentially around the world in the eight years since its inception.

Locally, Turners Falls has six organizations looking for donations on www.GivingTuesday.org: Franklin County Home Care, The Brick House Community Resource Center, Franklin County Regional Dog Shelter, Ice Stars for Wounded Warriors, Montague Catholic Social Ministries, and Silverthorne Theater.

There are an additional 34 organizations looking for help in Greenfield, and nine in Shelburne. GivingTuesday raised \$1.9 billion worldwide in 2019; over \$500 million of that raised for organizations in the US.

(Although we are not part of the official campaign, please also think of *The Montague Reporter* if the generous spirit hits you on May 5 – or any other time!)

An email from Big Brothers Big Sisters of Franklin County announces the launch of a **Graduation Sign Fundraiser**. "Be it kindergarten, 6th grade, 8th grade, high school or college, graduation is a huge milestone, and BBBS wants to help celebrate," it says. To that end, they are selling yard signs that say "An Awesome 2020 Graduate Lives Here" on their website, www.bbbs-fc.org.

The 24" wide by 18" high, single-sided signs can be delivered for free anywhere in Franklin County. There are two styles to choose from. One is printed to the full size of the sign, and the other has extra space making it customizable. They are \$22 each.

Greenfield is **canceled the May 23 annual Bee Festival**, according to an announcement we recently received. The festival was launched in 2010 to mark the 200th birthday of Lorenzo Langstroth, the founder of modern beekeeping, who served as a pastor at the Greenfield Second Congo Church in the 1800s.

Next spring, organizers are excited to forecast the release of six large fiberglass bees, hand-decorated by local artists, onto the streets of Greenfield.

"The Greenfield Bee Fest Committee is grateful for the spirit and resolve of area bee-inspired residents and businesses who are committed to carrying the torch forward to spring 2021," said festival organizer Sandy Thomas. "In the meantime, we wish good health to our community as spring comes into bloom."

Another festival, the **Authors and Artists festival** planned for Northfield in June, has moved to being an online event.

Organizer Lisa McLoughlin, science page editor for this newspaper, writes that "Spreading the festival out over all four Saturdays in June... avoids concurrent programming, and allows people to register for one or more weeks. The festival will still include opportunities for local authors and artists to participate with an online art show, nature poetry coordinated with Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust, and readings each week."

Sign up to share your work, or just check out what's coming up at www.authorsandartistsfestival.wordpress.com.

Send items for briefs to editor@montaguereporter.org.

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Another Letter The Libraries Respond



In the most recent issue (April 23, *Local Briefs*, page A3), Nina Rossi asked why library materials are not being loaned out at this time. This is an issue we have been wrestling with at the Montague Public Libraries. The short answer is, it is not currently safe.

In Massachusetts, we have been asked to stay at home to flatten the curve. In order for people to borrow books, they need to go out, and more library staff need to report to work. Many of our staff are considered to be at higher risk and almost all are at least partially working from home. We are rotating a skeleton crew, and maintaining strict social distancing. We are providing telephone assistance, online programming, electronic books, and preparing for when we can safely reopen to the public.

Handling library materials is currently considered unsafe. Heating books and DVDs, as Nina suggested, is not practical, both for the sake of the materials, nor do we have an oven. Quarantining the books and DVDs for four days reduces risk, but they would need to be handled first to get them to a safe location for their "rest."

At first we operated curbside pickup, but were advised against it by the Massachusetts Library

Association. Staff could be asymptomatic, and unwittingly spread the COVID-19 virus. As essential as I know books and DVDs are to many people, including myself, I do not want to risk exposing library users, especially those who are elderly or with preexisting health conditions, to a possibly fatal disease.

We are encouraging people to safely borrow digital books through the library system. Instructions are gladly given over the phone and through links posted on our website, www.montaguepubliclibraries.org, and on our Montague Public Libraries Facebook page. Our schedule of online story times and Music and Movement with Tom Carroll and Laurie Davidson are also posted on these sites.

We welcome phone calls, and are glad to hear from library users. We miss them! The Carnegie Library phone number is (413) 863-3214. The Montague Center Library is (413) 659-3801, and the Millers Falls Library is (413) 659-3801. My email address is library-director@montague-ma.gov.

We look forward to resuming the loaning of library materials when it is considered safe to do so, and to seeing our library users!

**Linda Hickman, Director
Montague Public Libraries**

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MONTAGUE from page A1

of weeks, when we are further down the curve.”

Anne Stuart, clerk to the health department, had distributed announcements from three cities that adopted regulations requiring masks. Chicopee requires masks for employees and customers of state-defined “essential services,” such as grocery stores. Holyoke requires masks “at all times when social distancing can not be maintained.” Somerville mandates that “anyone over the age of two wear a clean face mask or face covering when in any indoor or outdoor space that is open to the public.”

These announcements provided varying rationales for the policy. Nearly all suggested that enforcement would be through persuasion or, in the words of the Somerville order, “compassionate policing.”

“Nothing in this order is intended to encourage residents to act as an enforcement authority for the City of Chicopee,” declared that city’s mandate.

“Can we actually force people to wear masks?” asked health director Daniel Wasiuk.

“I think we can strongly recommend it, as with any recommendation coming from the governor,” said Turners Falls fire chief John Zellman. He added that he had “secured” 1,500 masks, and that if any business wanted to require masks, “we can get them started.”

“The board of health does have the authority to enforce,” said Nelson. “Obviously, I don’t see us out there writing tickets to people.”

Selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz spoke favorably of the detailed Chicopee policy, but Wasiuk said he had done local “field research” and found that managers and employees of “food service locations” believed that the enforcement of a mask policy would be a “challenge.” They believed that the required shields at checkout counters, and stay-at-home requirements for symptomatic employees, were “sufficient.”

In the end, the health board issued a “strong advisory” to encourage residents to wear masks in public, but left the wording of the advisory in the hands of Wasiuk.

The board also extended the cur-

rent closure of the town playgrounds and Unity Skate Park until May 11. Parks and recreation director Jon Dobosz said the current policy was being “honored by Montague residents, at least when I’m at [Unity Park], and I go around to all the other town parks at least once a week.”

Parks and rec commissioner Barbara Kuklewicz asked Rich Kuklewicz if the town had received complaints from the Our Lady Of Peace church on Seventh about skateboarders using their property. He and other officials responded in the negative, and she explained that while local skateboarders have been “very good about the park,” she had recently been in Germany, and that “people are wrecking the stairs over there.” “I do not want them to get wrecked at Lady of Peace,” she said.

Nelson said he believed “we are at the top of the curve,” and that the governor would extend his stay-at-home guidance. “We would be making a foolhardy decision if we opened up,” he said. On Tuesday, the guidance was extended to May 18.

The board of health voted to endorse a policy requiring staff to wear masks when working at town hall. Each town hall employee has been issued five masks. Town administrator Steve Ellis said mask wearing would be effective from a “continuity standpoint, and employee safety standpoint.”

The board also endorsed a lengthy “temporary emergency policy” that dealt with COVID reporting by town employees. The policy requires staff to report to a supervisor any COVID symptoms, and any decision to test for the virus, and require them to “stay at home” if they are symptomatic. Any decision to return to work would be made “in consultation with the town nurse, subject to approval by the Health Director.”

Ellis reported that the pandemic had had generally little impact to date on town “expenses.” The town nurse has been putting in more hours relaying data to the state and tracing the contacts of residents who have tested positive, and there have been increased technology costs related to doing more town business online. Ellis said these increases could so far be “absorbed” by existing budgets.

There was a lengthy discussion of

how to hold the annual town meeting, scheduled for June 13. Town accountant Carolyn Olsen has sent out an online survey asking town meeting members if they prefer an indoor location, an outdoor location covered by a tent, or an online meeting.

Nelson stressed that there was still a great deal of uncertainty as to when the “world as we know and love” will return.

“I understand there’s a lot of uncertainty,” said Olsen. “But we kind of need an answer by next Monday, because if we need to go with the tent, we need reserve fund transfers to cover the cost...”

Nelson advocated holding the meeting in the school gymnasium, with social distancing. Chris Boutwell, who sits on both boards, agreed, saying if the town attempted an online meeting, “we’re asking for a lot of issues.”

Ellis noted that the response rate for the online survey was 60% positive for meeting online, 46% for a tent, and 39% for an indoor meeting.

Ellis asked Kuklewicz if he had investigated companies that facilitate large online meetings. Kuklewicz said he had contacted one that organizes webinars, but “those are not as interactive as a town meeting.” He suggested a scenario where key officials were in a “central area” that town meeting members could access through video conferencing.

Kuklewicz recommended continuing to investigate both options, and the board did not make a decision on the issue.

The board also discussed reducing the town meeting agenda to crucial budget articles, leaving the remainder to a special town meeting in the fall. Nelson, who works for the state Department of Public Health, said that “the virus is not going away anytime soon,” and that “there’s a lot of chatter that we’ll see a second spike in the fall.”

Relief Loans

Town planner Walter Ramsey reviewed planning for emergency assistance, particularly small business relief. The federal government passed the “CARES Act” in late March, which included funds for this purpose, he said, but “there’s still some unknowns as to how that mon-

ey is going to come down to small towns like ours, so we can’t stick around waiting – we need to come up with our own program.”

Ramsey said a countywide program including Montague, Greenfield, Buckland, and Shelburne was under discussion, with a fund administered by the Franklin County Community Development Corporation (CDC). Local small businesses, he said, could apply for “forgivable loans” of \$5,000 to \$10,000. Business with 11 employees or fewer would be eligible, and the owner would need to make below 80% of the median household.

The program would be funded using \$60,000 under the control of the CDC, and reallocating balances in Community Development Block Grant funds held by the four towns. The selectboard informally set a date of May 11 for a public hearing to reallocate Montague’s funding.

Graduate Banners

Cassie Damkoehler requested permission to place banners on Avenue A honoring Turners Falls High School seniors, who will not have a traditional graduation this year. Damkoehler, who also serves on the school committee, indicated she was representing an informal group of parents and volunteers, including teachers.

Boutwell said he had “been approached by some parents at the tech school about this,” and Rich Kuklewicz, a longtime member of the Franklin County Tech school committee, expressed concerns about leaving tech school students out, but said he would recuse himself from voting on the issue.

Damkoehler said she had been approached to include seniors who choose out to other high schools or attend the tech school, but that because this is the “first year of the project” and “we’re all figuring this out,” it might not be possible without help.

Kuklewicz said he thought it was a “great idea,” and would contact the tech school superintendent to discuss potential collaboration. The board approved a very long and complex motion to encourage Damkoehler’s proposal and a collaboration with the tech school.



NOTES FROM THE ERVING SELECTBOARD

Contingency Plans For Voting, Town Meeting

By KATIE NOLAN

Meeting Monday night using GoToWebinar, the Erving selectboard decided not to adopt the new state legislation allowing late payment of property taxes until June 30. Selectboard chair Jacob Smith said that the majority of property taxes had already been paid, and that the tax collector already has the ability to work out flexible payment plans.

The board reviewed and accepted town clerk Richard Newton’s COVID-19 contingency plan for the June 17 town election. Voting by mail will be encouraged. If a state of emergency still exists on June 17, in-person voting at town hall will include reduced hours (noon to 7 p.m.), sanitizing of the basement voting space before polls open and after they close, social distancing, and use of masks and gloves by poll workers and voters.

Selectboard member William Bembury asked how use of masks would be enforced, if a voter refused. The plan indicated that, in the case of refusal to wear a mask, the refuser would be asked to wait outside until other voters had been cleared from the area, and then would be allowed inside to vote. Newton said he felt that it would not be necessary to station a police of-

ficer at the polls to enforce mask-wearing.

Town coordinator Bryan Smith said that Newton will also be working on a contingency plan for the June 22 annual town meeting.

The board considered changes to the town’s traditional Memorial Day ceremonies, which could potentially result in citizens’ exposure to the virus. Although the possibility of not holding any ceremony was considered, Jacob Smith said, “There must be some way to do something.”

Bryan Smith said he had ordered wreaths, and that laying them at memorial locations could be done individually. He said that the fire department will hang flags throughout town, and flags would be placed in cemeteries.

The board reviewed the remaining change orders and costs for construction of the new library building. They approved change orders totaling approximately \$8,000, and asked for additional information on other ones.

The board briefly discussed changing the town’s official name of the board from “Board of Selectmen” to “Select Board.” Jacob Smith observed that Select Board was “more gender-neutral,” but that Board of Selectmen was the term when the town was founded.

Bembury said that he “could go either way.” He noted that Board of Selectmen is the historic

term (“where we come from”), but added that “there are times when PC is the best thing to do, so everyone is included.”

Selectboard member Peter Sanders said he thought the board “should head that way for the future.”

The board did not make a decision, but left the topic open for future discussion.

The board approved a proclamation designating May 3 through 9 as Children’s Mental Health Week in Erving, in coordination with other state and local governments. The American Psychological Association has proclaimed May 9 as National Children’s Mental Health Awareness Day.

Bryan Smith said that Air Quality Experts, Inc. would start work on the hazardous materials cleanup project at the former International Paper Mill site this Wednesday, and that the project would take six to eight weeks.

The board voted to authorize use of the town’s Chapter 90 state funds and town funds for the sidewalk project at River, Warner, and Strachan streets.

Around Town newsletter editor Jacqueline Boyden told the board that there will not be a May issue, because of lack of content, but there will be a June issue.

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FURTHER NOTES FROM THE MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Strathmore Chimney To Come Down; Fate Of Pedestrian Bridges Uncertain

By JEFF SINGLETON

Town planner Walter Ramsey told the selectboard Monday night of a significant problem with the project slated to replace the Fifth Street pedestrian bridge over the canal this fall. The town-owned bridge, which parallels a state-owned bridge for vehicles, has been closed for over a year due to structural instability. The new bridge would allow pedestrian access to businesses on the island between the canal and Connecticut River, and carry sewer and water services to those businesses.

Ramsey said the bridge’s proposed design may not be viable, because the required handicapped access ramp will block the road that provides access to the northeast portion of the island. To solve this problem, Ramsey proposed placing the new bridge on the other side of the state-owned bridge instead.

This will require an easement from FirstLight Power Resources, which owns the canal, and the approval of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, which licenses the company’s hydroelectric projects.

Ramsey said that when the town approached FirstLight with the bridge relocation proposal, the company brought up another bridge over the canal which it owns – a closed pedestrian bridge to the northeast from Canal Street to the Strathmore mill complex. That bridge was once heavily used for worker access to the mills, and has been seen as central to their redevelopment. It also carries sewer and water services to the mill district. Ramsey claimed FirstLight proposed eliminating those town utility services over its bridge and attaching them to the new one.

Another meeting about the issue was scheduled for Wednesday, and Ramsey said he wanted to “broach the subject” with the selectboard to “make sure we are heading down the right path.” He also said the change in the project might cause a delay in its completion.

Asked why FirstLight would want to eliminate utilities attached to the overhead pedestrian bridge, Ramsey said “it is natural to think

that once the utilities are off that bridge FirstLight has no responsibility to keep it there, and it is probably in their interest to remove that bridge. Part of the equation in thinking about this is, is the town ready to let go of that pedestrian bridge?”

The board did not take a vote on the issue, but members generally expressed support for the “path” Ramsey was headed down. Chair Rich Kuklewicz indicated he might attend the meeting with FirstLight.

Town administrator Steve Ellis reported on another serious problem with “that building we don’t enjoy talking about,” the Strathmore. He said that a 160-foot length of “fascia board” on the northeast side of Building #2 has fallen away, leaving a good deal of “daylight” exposed to the rain. This could lead to rapid water damage, and threaten workers on an upcoming hazmat abatement project.

Ellis proposed that the town stabilize and cover the area before the abatement project begins, using funds left over from a previous Strathmore appropriation. He said he had received permission from the state to streamline the bidding process. The board lent its support to both measures.

Ramsey announced that he had mistakenly told the selectboard that the chimney demolition portion of the Strathmore abatement project had been put on hold due to a lack of funds. He reported that the chimney demolition was, in fact, funded under the current project, and slated to be completed before the end of June. Ramsey said the town had received approval from the Massachusetts Historical Commission for the demolition.

“It will be interesting, not seeing that stack,” said Kuklewicz. “I’ve seen it every day for my entire life, but it’s going to take itself down if we don’t do something.”

Verbal Assurances

There was a lengthy discussion of “parking concerns” at the new Rutters Park in Lake Pleasant. Parks and rec director Jon Dobosz said he believed “two or three

residents” were parking, long term, in the lot designed for those using the playground. He said he had received a number of complaints about the issue.

Lake Pleasant resident George Shapiro said the cars were his, and that he had been “blindsided” because no one had talked to him about the problem before the police department had told him he was “banned” from the lot.

Shapiro said that he and a woman named “Mo” had been assured during the park planning process that they could park in the lot. Mo had insisted on, and received, a designated space, but Shapiro had accepted the assurances.

Lake Pleasant resident Deborah Frenkel, who served on the planning committee, supported Shapiro’s rendition of events.

“I’m open to some compromise,” said Shapiro. “But no one has actually come to talk to me about it.”

Kuklewicz suggested that Shapiro and town officials “get together” to find a solution.

Other Business

The selectboard reviewed a contract with the engineering firm GZA GeoEnvironmental to monitor the capping of the former burn dump on Sandy Lane. The project is being financed by the solar company Kearsarge Energy, which is building a solar array on the site, but the town is required to monitor it.

The board decided to wait to approve that contract until a tax agreement with Kearsarge is finalized. Ellis reported on the negotiations between the assessors’ office and Kearsarge on the agreement, which he said he hoped would be completed in the coming week.

Ellis also clarified that the work stoppage by carpenters on the Department of Public Works facility project did not mean the project was “dead in the water” for the time being. Project managers are attempting to reconfigure the “sequencing” of work so the building can still be completed this summer.

The next selectboard meeting will be on May 4.

LEGAL NOTICE REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

LifePath, Inc., Area Agency on Aging is seeking proposals for funding for programs for seniors.

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Church Street Home Fund	Franklin County	• Home repair • Programs and activities for Franklin County senior centers	Seniors aged 60 and over

Eligible applicants include local units of government, local governmental departments (such as Councils on Aging), public or private non-profit agencies, and profit-making businesses. Preference will be given to programs or projects which are targeted to older persons in greatest social and economic need. The grant period will run from October 1, 2020 through September 30, 2021, with a second year renewal, pending satisfactory performance and availability of funds.

A general information and technical assistance session will be held online on May 19 at 1:30 p.m. Letters of Intent will be due by June 16. Final proposals are due by July 8 at 5 p.m. LifePath, Inc. is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.

Any questions can be directed to Lynne Feldman, Planner, at LifePath, Inc., 101 Munson St. Suite 201, Greenfield, MA 01301. Call (413) 773-5555, ext 2215 or email lfeldman@lifepathma.org. Complete instructions and definitions of services are available at www.lifepathma.org/rfp.

CAUCUS from page A1

the seat. He did not submit nomination papers this spring, and said he had misunderstood town clerk Deb Bourbeau’s offer to include him on the caucus ballot to mean inclusion on the townwide ballot in June.

“If anything, [this] has offered me the opportunity to really self-reflect on the needs of the town, versus the needs of my family and my position with the state government,” Nelson said, explaining that he has been working “a ridiculous amount of hours” at the state Department of Public Health, and that his wife is due with a baby the week after the election. “Certainly there’s a lot of consideration.”

Arthur, owner of the Five Eyed Fox restaurant on Third Street, said her win also surprised her. “I reached out to people in town that I know and asked them to come vote for me,” she said. “A lot of people showed up. I overheard somebody saying that last year only ten people were there.”

Montague Democratic Party chair Mark Wisnewski said that despite the caucus’s postponement and the constraints caused by the coronavirus pandemic, the event went smoothly.

“People would come up to six feet away and tell me their name

and address, and then I would ask them to move to the side,” Wisnewski said. “For the most part, I think everybody did keep about six feet around them. We yelled, and we stood in line to put the ballots in the box, and it worked as safely as I could expect it to.”

Arthur, who has not previously held public office, said that strangers have reached out to her with support after she announced her candidacy, and added that she was “looking forward to moving forward with a fun campaign.”

“I’m not running just to run,” she emphasized. “I like working, and I work hard. Working for other people makes me work harder, and gives me a sense of joy and accountability that is outside my realm of food.”

Nelson and Arthur each praised the other in conversation with the *Reporter*.

“I think I would have a really strong chance of winning, but I’m really not sure which direction I want to go with it,” Nelson said. “If I do decide to move forward with the write-in campaign, I will certainly look forward to having further conversation, at the debate level, about the policies and direction for the town to be moving in.”



GILL from page A1

COVID information and resources.

Fire chief Gene Beaubien, also a member of the team, likewise had no significant changes to comment on, but the department had conducted a drill with their new tanker truck, using “all precautions” including wearing masks in addition to their regular equipment. He said the additional equipment made the drill tougher, but it went well, and it was nice to get outside.

The chief went on to say that the engine has been out on a few calls since entering service in 2019, and is performing well so far. It has also gone out on a few “drive-bys,” where fire trucks travel to a location and sound their sirens for events such as birthdays, and the department had another one scheduled to honor healthcare workers in Greenfield later in the week.

Board member Randy Crochier, who also serves on Gill’s board of health and emergency management team and as a regional health agent for Franklin County, shared some

observations on things he was seeing outside of Gill. Crochier said he had received reports from rural towns of an increase in activity – possibly due to tourism, quarantine fatigue, or the days getting warmer – which might impact efforts to reduce transmission of the disease. He said he was concerned about a potential surge in the need for contact tracing, which might exceed the capacity of the tracing system similar to the way that a surge in need for healthcare stressed that system a month ago.

After the meeting Crochier expanded on his remarks, describing how contact tracing works, and said it was a “great process.” Local contacts, such as boards of health, are notified by the Massachusetts Virtual Epidemiologic Network (MAVEN) of positive COVID results in their locality, then decide whether to take on the tracing work themselves or kick it back to the state’s newly-formed Community Tracing Collaborative (CTC).

Crochier said contact tracing involves finding out who had spent

more than 15 minutes within six feet of someone who had tested positive for the virus within 48 hours of the positive test result. He urged that people “take the call” if they are contacted, saying privacy was protected, and contact-tracers are able to answer questions and provide connections to further resources if needed.

Crochier said that as of April 28, there were no known active cases of COVID in Gill.

Town Elections

The board approved the warrant for town elections, to take place on June 22 from noon to 4 p.m. at the fire station. Absentee ballots will be available beginning on April 29; those interested in obtaining one should contact the town clerk.

Purinton reported that the town had received a drop box to collect both the ballots and tax payments – for which the due date has been extended to June 1 – and was working on getting it installed near the rear door to the town hall. He said that location was chosen over the front

door due to handicap accessibility.

Other Business

Board member Greg Snedeker notified the board that the grant for the study of school regionalization being conducted by six area towns won’t be extended past a hard deadline of June 30. He said he’d hoped it would be extended due to the short timeframe the group had to work with, but due to the COVID situation, it would not be.

Snedeker said there had been hold-ups with information needed from the Pioneer Valley School Regional School District, but things are “moving a bit now.” He said the committee was under the gun to get financial projections finished before the grant’s expiration, and will do the best they can.

The board awarded the contract for the town’s 2020 lawnmowing in 2020 to the low bidder, Artscape Landscaping. Crochier abstained from the voting due to having a family member among the bidders.

The board discussed the town’s

hope that the contractor selected had some flexibility in when the lawns were mowed, to avoid over-mowing for financial and environmental reasons, but also to make sure it was done when needed. Purinton said Artscape had been used for several years, and he had seen him skip weeks when mowing was not needed, and also pointed to language included in the contract on this point.

“Exactly what we wanted to hear,” said chair John Ward.

Energy commission chair Vicki Jenkins told the board that she and Purinton were ready to submit a Green Communities Competitive Grant application for further work on the town hall. She speculated that the state may be overwhelmed with COVID issues, adding uncertainty to the application. “We’ll see what happens,” she said.

Jenkins also informed the board that the Electric Vehicle Charging Station grant application has been completed, crediting Alden Booth for doing a great job getting it lined up.



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STORY from page A1

Street all this time?

GB: I’ve lived on Fourth Street for 85 years.

It was a three-tenement house. We rented on the first floor, and lived on the second floor.

I helped out a little bit when I was very young – I used to shine shoes. There was a convenience store called Drago’s – you know where Hubie’s Tavern is? It was located right in that area – you had Drago’s store, and the barroom was called Carney’s.

Drago’s was where I used to hang out when I was a kid. You had people who were sports-minded there. In those days you didn’t have TV, but we could listen to the radio and get the baseball scores, and I would put them up on a board on a wall...

So I used to shine shoes there, and I used to deliver newspapers. You know where Power Town Apartments’ [office] is located? ...We called that the Hibernian Hall. In my younger days they used to have a basketball court. We used to have a semi-pro basketball team that you would see play games.

MR: And the Ancient Order of Hibernians would have been there.

GB: “A.O.H.,” you can see up on top. The basketball court was on the third floor, and the second floor was a dance hall. Now, on the first floor, on the corner of Fourth Street and Avenue A, was a drugstore called Fournier’s Drugstore. Right next to that was a restaurant.

When I was growing up also, we had a news store there. It was called the Corner Bookstore. They sold not only papers, but greeting cards and all this and that. Did you know, when I was growing up, that we had four newspapers from Springfield? The *Republican* and *Union* were in the morning, and the *Daily News* and the *Evening Union* were evening papers. Plus, you still had the *Greenfield Recorder-Gazette*. And the newspapers cost 3 cents.

When I was 10, 11 years old, my step-brother and I would peddle newspapers up on the Hill. They were the elite, they were the upper class. We used to walk from here, and go up that hill, and deliver newspapers on High Street and Crocker Avenue, Stevens Street, Davis Street, Burnham Street, so forth. We would deliver the papers at 6 o’clock in the morning, and we did that for two or three years. We made \$1.40 a week.

The Upper Hill was where the wealthy people lived, the upper class of the town. Park Street and Central Street, we called that the Lower Hill, and then we’re downtown.

Of course, when we were delivering, we were maybe in grammar school. The grammar school went from 8 to 12, and then you come home for lunch and go back for 1 o’clock. We used to go up the boardwalk on the end of L and Seventh Street – we used to go up that hill three times a day! ...

My stepbrother and I would get up to the top of the hill, I’d go one way on High Street and he’d go the other way, and then we’d meet in the middle on Steven Street. This is how we’d keep in shape and stay healthy. I also delivered Sunday papers, and had a wagon – pulled the wagon up the hill and delivered Sunday papers up there. In fact, I got more for delivering Sunday papers than I did for the daily papers.

Later on, when we were a little

older, we used to work on the tobacco fields. I worked for Frank Kuzmeskus in Montague Center. Others were in Hadley and Hatfield and those areas, Deerfield, and that’s what the high school kids would work during the summer. Or we worked on the farms where they had cucumbers. The amount that you made was according to how many pickles you picked!

As far as dress was concerned, in the summertime we’d like to have a short haircut. We’d call that a “pineapple.” And there were times we would be going barefoot, walking down to the park from here. You can see all the exercise we’d get when we were kids.

MR: Did you used to swim in the river?

GB: Oh boy. That’s another story. Yeah, when we were kids! Unity Park was our playground. The alley was our playground.

MR: Kids still play soccer in there...

GB: Yeah, well. We used to play kick the can, and hide-and-go-seek, and we used to play baseball and throw the football.

In our days, the families were big – we had five, and the next apartment over, they had five boys, so we’d get together. At the upper end of the alley you had big families there: the Parenteau family, the Mailloux family. We had our own gang – not in the sense of the word that they had today. When we weren’t down at the park we were right there in the alley.

In the park, we’d be playing baseball every morning, and in the afternoon do you know where we’d go? The river! That’s where we used to swim.

MR: People don’t do that now. It’s looked on as dangerous.

GB: No, no! And you had small rafts, or docks, all the way along the bank, and you had rowboats there,



GEORGE FRANK BUSH

“Friendship must be accompanied with virtue, and always lodged in great and generous minds.”

Voyt, our vice-president, was kept busy during his four years. He played basketball and baseball for four years and captained the basketball team his senior year. Voyt was a member of the French and T Clubs for three years. George was on the 1942 State Champion baseball team; he also played Legion ball. George received the Marston award and was manager of the track team for two years. Voyt was head usher at the Junior Prom and ushered at various other dances. George is a Pro Merito.

Naval Air Corps

“Voyt”

Mr. Bush’s entry in the Class of 1944 Turners Falls High School yearbook.

or canoes, or motorboats, all anchored at those rafts. And we’d build diving boards.

And of course, you had the Red Bridge, that was taken down for the war and everything. We used to jump off that bridge, dive off that bridge – that was part of swimming.

Initiation, as far as really being a swimmer, we used to have to swim the river and back. The river is where we spent the afternoon.

MR: Was there a big current?

GB: No, no. No current at all. And did you know we had a wading pool, where the field house is?

MR: Did they use it for skating in the wintertime?

GB: Yes. You’d go in, it was up to your ankles, and it was made of concrete, so there were a lot of bruises. That would be another option...

Unity Park, that’s where we learned how to play baseball. They had all kinds of leagues, different teams from different sections of town. We would be the Fourth Street team, and then the South End, they were the Patch, and then the Hill had a team, and Montague City would have a team.

MR: This has been a baseball town for a long time.

GB: Definitely a baseball and a football town, both...

Within a 6-year period from 1937, 1940, and 1942 you had three [Turners Falls High School] base-

ball teams that were in the state finals. I was on the ‘42 team – I was the youngest one, 15 years old, a sophomore in high school – I didn’t play very much, because the varsity and regulars were mostly seniors.

In those days you only had one division statewide, and we were only a school of 500, and we’re playing schools of 1,500, 2,000 and so forth, like Chicopee. Chicopee was over 2,000. Westfield, Northampton, Holyoke...

Now you have different divisions according to enrollment, and we’re right at the bottom. So that was why that was such a great achievement at that time.

My brother Frank played in ‘37. In that particular year they played Lynn English, and they lost 6 to 5 in 12 innings.

But they had to win Western Mass first – the school was Springfield Tech. The pitcher that they beat, 2 to 1, was Vic Raschi, and Vic Raschi was with the Yankees for many, many years, pitched in the World Series and everything. They called him the Springfield Rifle. My brother went 4 for 4, two singles and two doubles, and drove in both runs – and we won 2 to 1.

And then we played Lynn English in the finals at the old Braves Field. In those years they would alternate between Braves Field and Fenway Park... I was nine years old. They lost to Lynn English, 6 to 5, and the catcher on the team was Jim Hegan. He was in the big

leagues for quite a while.

And the pitcher on that particular team for Turners, his name was Howie Haskins. He was drafted by the Braves, and he played in the minor leagues with Hartford, and his teammate was Warren Spahn, one of the great, great pitchers for the Boston Braves. I don’t know if you remember that....

In 1940 we played Belmont, and lost 6 to 4 in the states.

In ‘42 we beat Classical – West Springfield we beat in the semifinals – and we got five runs in the last inning to win the game. That was the team I was on. We got to the states, and the team was undefeated.

The two good pitchers we had, one was Walter Kostanski, and Walter was probably the second-greatest athlete to come out of Turners Falls, and Walter eventually become our representative for Montague. And, of course, he’s connected with the funeral home and so forth.

MR: I was going to say, there’s a familiar name. Who was the greatest?

GB: The greatest was my brother Lou. I have to tell you about him. He was the greatest in Turners Falls.

He graduated in ‘29. He played not only baseball in the spring, but also he ran track! And basketball, and football. Four sports.

And then he went to Vermont Academy, and the three teams he was on in football, basketball, and baseball were all undefeated. He went from there to what was called then Mass State – it wasn’t a University, and the nickname was Mass Aggies – there again, played four sports. And when he was a sophomore in football he led the whole nation in scoring.

MR: Lou Bush.

GB: He was a little All-American. When UMass set up their Hall of Fame, he was the first one inducted.... Lou graduated from Mass State in ‘34.

MR: So then he was a good deal older than you.

GB: I was born in ‘26...

When he graduated, he played minor league baseball, because he was so good. And in those days, he got as far as triple-A and he played with the Cardinals organization, Rochester, Columbus, and so forth.

And then the war came, and that was the end of that.

MR: Did he serve?

GB: Yeah, he was in the Second Armored Division, he was a captain in a tank. Tank corps.

He went through North Africa, Italy, Naples, Anzio, Tunisia and Morocco, and then from Northern Africa they invaded the southern part of Italy. Anzio was where they landed.

But that’s another story...

Check out next week’s edition for Part II of this interview!



Mr. Bush reflects on changes in the town since his youth.

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NOTES FROM THE WENDELL SELECTBOARD

All Town Employees Offered Hazard Pay For Public Interaction

By JOSH HEINEMANN

On Wednesday April 22, at 6 p.m. instead of the normal 7 p.m., the Wendell selectboard held an off-week meeting to discuss a hazardous pay increase for the Wendell Recycling and Transfer Station (WRATS) workers, how and when to hold the annual town meeting, and general pandemic planning.

The issue of a WRATS pay increase brought up a question of how that pay increase can be applied fairly to other town workers who are exposed to the public during COVID-19 isolation time.

As with prior meetings, this one was held through Zoom, with some people connecting with a computer and a view of the speakers, others by telephone with no image. Selectboard chair Dan Keller was one of the latter, and he allowed selectboard member Christine Heard, who did have a screen and could see participants, to facilitate.

Road commission chair Phil Delorey said that the commission approved unanimously a \$5 per hour pay increase for WRATS workers for the duration of the pandemic. Road crew members were at that commission meeting, and said they thought they should be included.

Keller added other town workers who contact citizens: the firefighters and first responders, police, town clerk, tax collector, and town coordinator. Their contact with the public varies widely, and Delorey said he and finance committee chair Doug Tanner came up with a \$90 bonus to every worker with public contact.

Town coordinator Nancy Aldrich said she had talked with treasurer Carolyn Manley and tax collector Penny Delorey about the potential pay increase. They agreed that while extra money is appreciated, they work in a locked building, and said they felt their contact with the public was not enough to justify the pay increase.

Heard mentioned that some towns have reduced road crew hours, but not their pay. But Delorey said that Wendell’s crew has a busy spring and summer schedule, including the replacement of a large culvert, after it went out to bid and the bids that came back were too high. Heard said other town workers are working at home.

Fire chief Joe Cuneo said that, as of Monday’s meeting, Wendell, New Salem, and Warwick had no reported cases of COVID-19 infections. He cautioned that towns around these three do have cases, and that some people who are carrying the virus might be observing a self-quarantine and not showing up as public information.

Heard made a motion to increase pay for highway and WRATS workers, police and firefighters by \$90 per week, retroactive to when the state announced closing on March 10, and until either the end of the statewide quarantine or the end of the fiscal year, whichever comes first.

The motion passed unanimously. The next question was how to pay for it. Because of the low-snow winter the highway department has some money left in its budget, and finance committee chair Doug Tanner suggested that departments should supply the pay increase as long as they have money, and then the fin com reserve fund can cover the rest. The suggestion was accepted. The stabilization account has \$300,000 and free cash, when it is certified, will add to that.

Town Meeting, Drum Circle, Etc.

The board set a tentative date for the annual town meeting, 10 a.m. on Saturday, June 27, and talked about ways to make it work outside and on the common, to allow people to keep apart.

Keller said he wanted to schedule it a week earlier if it is to be held on the common, to allow for a rain date.

Tanner said he thought voting would not be that difficult to carry out, but he suggested limiting the warrant to the first four articles and delaying the rest of the meeting until the state lifts the ban on gatherings of more than 10 people.

Fin com member Al McIntire said that might be the end of June. The date, June 27, is still tentative.

“Be prepared for a fall return,” warned Cuneo, especially in states that relax their closings too soon. He said not many calls have come to the emergency operation center at the New Salem fire station.

Board of health chair Barbara Craddock said that Wendell Warriors, a drumming group, have proposed a concert on the common. Residents could park their cars around the common and listen. Craddock herself was cautious, and board members agreed that such a concert should be postponed. Children would not be content to sit in a car when there is a whole common open for them to run around.

Town voting is postponed until June 1, and citizens are being requested to vote by mail. Polls are required to be open, and town clerk Gretchen Smith has a plan so that people who vote in person can keep apart from each other and from election workers.

Election workers will get the \$5 per hour hazard pay increase.

GMRSD from page A1

said the district is feeding about 400 students – two meals a day, seven days a week. “They don’t even have to live in our towns,” she said. “They just have to come to the meal site.”

The state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has issued a statement asking districts to teach students in order to make them “well-positioned for the fall,” Sullivan said, offering “power standards” in core subject areas. However, Gill-Montague teachers are being advised not to change their plans to teach to those standards.

“I’m glad the district is being realistic about it, and leaving it up to the teachers – who are, after all, doing the teaching,” Montague member Michael Langknecht commented.

Blier is adjusting the FY’20 budget to reflect changes brought by the pandemic, and tracking related expenses in case they become eligible for reimbursement. The committee approved some transfers, including \$2,000 to purchase more thermometers and other supplies for school nurses before the fall, and money for facilities staff to buy masks, gloves, and “the sanitizing tablets that go in our electrostatic wands.”

The committee also approved an agreement with the Kuzmeskus bus company to use buses for food distribution at \$71.28 per bus per day.

Gill member Bill Tomb, who sits on the six-town committee studying

the feasibility a district with Bernardston, Warwick, Northfield, and Leyden, reported that the Pioneer Valley district has been “a reluctant partner” in the process. “In fact, they’ve been absent,” said Tomb. “They’re not taking part in, or supporting in any way, the technical side.”

State funding for the consultants gathering data on education in the towns is not expected to renew after June, but Tomb said they “feel they can accomplish their task with some degree of accuracy” despite resistance from Pioneer.

The Gill-Montague committee discussed whether to formally evaluate Sullivan, who is retiring in June. “I think we did one last year that covers two years,” reasoned Montague member Heather Katsoulis. Her colleagues agreed, by unanimous vote.

Sullivan and his successor, Brian Beck, plan to collaborate to hire a new principal for Gill Elementary School before the end of the school year to replace Conor Driscoll. The hiring committee is led by Sheffield assistant principal Christine Limoges and principal Melissa Pitrat.

Last Friday, district staff and volunteers organized a surprise vehicle parade, visiting 47 graduating Turners Falls High School seniors and leaving lawn signs celebrating the class. “Even after it has rained on your parade, your class will continue to watch the sun rise,” the signs read.



LOOKING BACK: 10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Here’s the way it was April 29, 2010: News from the Montague Reporter’s archive.

Cooperative Reuse of Maple Valley School Proposed

On April 21, a dozen residents gathered in the Herrick Room of the Wendell Free Library to discuss ideas for the future reuse of the former Maple Valley School buildings and grounds, a 53.3-acre complex at the corner of Farley Road and Wendell Depot Road.

The year-round residential school, which for decades housed and educated young males with behavioral problems, closed last year and has remained vacant since. The property is owned by Tuoeys Brason.

The meeting was called together by Charles Cooper, a resident of Wendell Depot, who said his goal was to “establish a community business coop as a means to generate economic development for the people of Wendell,” and perhaps to use the former school as the location for a cooperative business enterprise.

Those present seemed to agree, and by meeting’s end, they had picked a name for their effort, the Wendell Works Coop, and a second meeting date on May 19.

Pruitt Bids Farewell

In an emotional farewell, Montague selectboard chair Patricia Pruitt said Monday, April 26, would be her last meeting with the selectboard. After the meeting, she cited health reasons to explain why she would not be able to attend the last two scheduled meetings of the board as her second term expires.

“I’d like to say I am grateful to have been elected to serve on

the selectboard,” said Pruitt. “It’s been an education for me. I have great admiration for all the people I’ve served with. They all have the concern for the town foremost in mind. A lot of wonderful things have happened in the last six years. It’s wonderful to be part of the flowering of this town.” Board member Pat Allen told Pruitt, “You have brought a humanity for the board,” considering “how it might affect other people,” before making decisions. She agreed, “There have been many tremendous changes... in the ambience and attitude,” of the town over the last six years. “We will miss you.”

The Plots Thicken

The town of Gill is running out of space to put its residents, and doubling up with family is not an option.

Deceased residents, that is. “We are desperately looking for more land for cemeteries,” cemetery commission chair Carrie Stevens told the selectboard on Wednesday. “Between the three cemeteries, we have about 12 available plots,” Stevens warned.

The commission oversees the maintenance of the North Cemetery and the Center Cemetery, both on Main Road, and the West Gill Cemetery on Hoe Shop Road. There is no available land to add to the holdings at those locations.

In fact, for some years the commission has been worried about losing ground at the Center Cemetery, where Unadilla Brook has continued to erode the north bank during spring runoff season.

“We always worry about Mr. Croteau going in the river,” commissioner Pat Haigis admitted at a selectboard meeting last October.

NOTES FROM THE WENDELL TOWN CLERK

Wendell Town Election: Schedule Change

The Wendell town election originally scheduled for May 4 has been postponed to **Monday, June 1** to help minimize concerns about the COVID-19 virus.

Wendell, like other towns, is encouraging a mail-in election using the Early Voter application process. We are still obligated to have the polls open on Election Day, and so we will do that as well and as safely as we know how. Polls open at noon, and close at 7 p.m.

New voters or those who have changed their address in Wendell need to fill out a new voter registration form on or before Friday, May 22. If this applies to you, please call the Town Clerk to get it done. The deadline to apply Early or Absentee is Friday, May 29 at Noon.

On June 1, we will set up the polling place so that no more than two voters are in the room at the same time. The path to the voting booth will be marked with floor tape. The way in and out of the building will be set and enforced by the constable and/or election warden. Voters are encouraged to bring their own pens/pencils, masks, and gloves. We expect to have supplies here as well. Physical distance between poll workers and voters will follow

the six foot rule. Voting booths will be disinfected after every use, and the single-use pencils dropped into a container at the check-out table. As always, please review the posted ballot, and get answers to any questions you may have before entering the voting booth area.

Selectboard, three years: Daniel Keller, incumbent. Selectboard, two years: contested, nominees: Gillian Kyle Budine and Nancy J. Riebschlaeger. Board of assessors, three years: Chris Prunier Wings, incumbent. Town clerk, three years: Gretchen Smith, incumbent. Tax collector, three years: Penny Delorey, incumbent. Treasurer, three years: Carolyn Manley, incumbent. Board of health, three years: Judith D. Bailey, incumbent. Cemetery commissioner, three years: Judith N. Putnam, incumbent. Planning board, five years: Molly F. Doody, incumbent. Planning board, two years: *write-in possible*. Moderator, one year: Kathleen Nolan, incumbent. School committee, three years: Johanna Bartlett and Anna Rebecca Wetherby, incumbents. School Committee, one year: April C. Thompson, nominee. Road commissioner, three years: Phil Delorey, incumbent. Library trust-

ees, three years: Judith Putnam and Sylvia Wetherby, incumbents. Library trustee, one year; Mara Bright, nominee. Tree warden, one year: *write-in possible*.

The ballot also includes a Ballot Question concerning the payment of all costs related to the purchase of a backhoe for the Highway Department.

The Selectboard recently sent every household a letter explaining the Early Voting Process. You must use the Early Voting application sheet (one page) and submit that to the Town Clerk so that you can be sent a ballot. Once you have voted the ballot, seal it within the Early Ballot Envelope and return it to the Town Clerk via the postage-paid envelope included in every mailing of every ballot. These envelopes will be opened on Election Day, and the enclosed ballot submitted to the ballot box in the usual way.

If you have any questions, please call the Town Clerk at (978) 544-3395 x. 2 or (978) 544-7186. Note that the Town Office Building is currently closed, and there are no regular office hours. When you call, please leave a message and a return phone number so that the Town Clerk can reach you at home.

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LEVERETT from page A1

department will need to absorb those increased costs.”

Saving Money

The selectboard and fin com discussed the ongoing efforts to budget for FY’21, concern that state reimbursement might be reduced next year for departments unable to spend as planned in FY’20, and whether to enact a spending freeze.

Reporting a suggestion heard during a meeting with the governor’s office Tuesday afternoon that the state “would hold FY’20 harmless,” town administrator Marjorie McGinnis cautioned: “Do we want to request for FY’20 that money be held, so that we would possibly have money to transfer to FY’21, should the state fall out from underneath us for FY’21?”

The board and fin com agreed to request that department heads prioritize their expenditure needs for FY’20, “assume essential spending only,” and identify any FY’20 savings those departments anticipate due to current closures or limited operations.

COVID-19 Unmasked

Community members have raised concern over a postal worker not wearing a mask, citing current Massachusetts guidelines asking all workers and community members to wear masks in public, but it is not required unless there is a mandatory state or federal order in place.

The town is providing procedural, or surgical, masks to essential workers. D’Errico and Shively affirmed that masks should be worn by town employees following Massachusetts’ emergency guidelines, and asked McGinnis to draft a resolution stating the town’s policy.

“I think we want some kind of general policy that only regular essential employees are to be hired,” said Shively, leading into a discussion on essential worker policy. “No fill-ins, no substitutes,” she added, acknowledging exceptions for first responders and healthcare workers.

Regional Policing

A consultant studying options for Leverett and Wendell to share police resources is busy crunching numbers to determine costs on various scenarios, including a shared police chief, a shared force, and simply having the Leverett police be on call in Wendell.

Shively said she was confident Leverett would soon have an estimate of its cost portion under the various scenarios, and she is having the consultant draft a general agreement to start working from.

Other Business

Police chief Scott Minckler is researching the number of accidents occurring on a section of Route 63 for resident Gillian Cook, who is working toward a legislative answer for passing zone redetermination on the road.

Board members expressed their concern and consternation with unsafe passing zones and speeders along Route 63 as well. D’Errico noted that there was a motorcycle fatality last weekend, as well as another fatality “on the other side of that section” several months ago.

The coronavirus emergency may mean that grants are available for the town of Amherst to build a drinking water connection to Leverett, a proposal that would solve the problem of contaminated groundwater in the Teawaddle Hill neighborhood.

A notice that the railroad will be spraying pesticide on its right-of-ways will be posted on the town website, letting residents know who to contact for inquiries or concerns.

“People need to know that the railroad is just about one rung under God when it comes to their jurisdiction,” said d’Errico. “It’s not like we can send out [police chief] Scott [Minckler] to stop them.”

D’Errico did say that the railroad will respond to inquiries and concerns, “even though they don’t have to pay any attention to it.”

Tuesday’s meeting, held via GoToMeeting, did not have the technical issues experienced



TAKEOUT from page A1

struck by the “outpouring of support” from the community.

Given a high volume of orders, Janke said the Rendezvous is still adapting to new realities of operations in the era of COVID-19. “We are really good at getting a burger cooked and delivered to your table, but we’re not as good at getting it to your house,” he says with a chuckle. “We hope people are understanding of the learning curve we’re going through.”

Six Feet Apart

Another business in downtown Turners, the Country Creemee, has been open since March, but experiencing increased business as the weather starts to warm up.

“We had just started hiring people back to work, when [non-essential business closures] happened two weeks after that,” reflects owner Robyn Mason. “It’s been different.”

Mason says she runs the ice cream shop on her own with shortened hours, and occasionally has one other person come in to help.

“We had to adapt. Otherwise, we wouldn’t be open at all,” says Mason.

Since Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker announced Tuesday that the stay-at-home advisory and Mass non-essential business closures would be extended by two weeks, until May 18, Mason says she worries the whole summer might be this way.

“We usually have picnic tables close to the building,” Mason continues. “Now we have signs posted everywhere saying ‘Stay six feet apart.’” Mason put a takeout window where the front door is, and uses a baby monitor equipped with a camera and speaker to interact with customers. “I kind of like it,” she says.

Understandable Challenges

“Kudos to all the restaurant operators,” cheers Montague health director Daniel Wasiuk, who says he has been impressed with the way local businesses have complied with

takeout-only restrictions and social distancing guidelines.

Wasiuk says that he and Gina McNeely, who served as acting director while Wasiuk was away from work, have visited and checked on locations, and observed an increase in customers and staff members wearing face masks.

TIP: For an up-to-date list of local restaurants offering takeout and delivery, go to the Chamber of Commerce website at www.franklincc.org and click on “Special Hours and Services for Franklin County Businesses.”

“In the past two weeks I’ve been talking with management and non-management personnel about the hardships they are facing in these times,” reports Wasiuk. “Part of the discussion is whether the use of face masks will benefit them or not.”

Wasiuk says it can be a challenge for kitchen staff to breathe with face masks on, let alone maintain six feet of distance from one another.

“With takeout restaurants, front of house is easy,” Wasiuk explains, “but with back-of-house, there are still some understandable challenges because of the set-up of kitchens. People aren’t moving dishwashers and stoves; it’s just not feasible. It’s a Catch-22.”

Despite these challenges, according to Wasiuk, the Montague board of health has been “very satisfied” with how local businesses have stepped up their sanitizing procedures and adopted the usage of face masks.

Wasiuk says that the board of health is also working to put together “their own guidelines and town orders of what they want to see restaurants do” when the non-essential business closure is eventually lifted and restaurants return to full-service.

“We’re putting that together slowly,” says Wasiuk, adding that any local guidelines would have to be coordinated with the state department of public health as well as the

Governor. “For now,” he says, “It’s a waiting game for everybody.”

Entertainment Menu

The Rendezvous is not waiting until then to bring music back. On Sunday the restaurant went live on Facebook with one of their longtime monthly performers, Drew Paton, whose deep, raspy voice rang through his face mask as he sang a set in the empty restaurant. The video, available on the Rendezvous’ Facebook page, has now been viewed over 1,000 times.

“We’re finding our livestreams getting viewed by more people than could ever fit in our establishment,” says Janke.

According to John McGuigan, the Rendezvous staff member who has been managing bookings for a year and a half, about ten other solo and small-group acts have already expressed interest in performing via livestream. McGuigan says upcoming performances will include the band Masala Jazz, who will come to the store, and Dan Hales, who will go live from home.

“There are three options [for performers],” McGuigan explains. “They could come into the empty Rendezvous – that the staff will have cleaned and sanitized – and they’ll observe social distancing and wear masks. Or, people could play live from their homes to the Voo’s Facebook page. The third option is people can send in videos.” Viewers have an opportunity to tip artists using the Venmo app.

One potential challenge, however, is getting bandmates to perform together live from their respective homes. “Apparently it’s not really possible – unless you have really powerful and dedicated internet service – to have multiple players in different places playing at the same time without delay,” says McGuigan. At least three or four bands will be coming in over the next eight-week period to perform live to their online followings.

“Performers,” he adds, “want to perform.”



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NINA ROSSI PHOTO

Above: “Beast” asks for MoRe.

INVESTIGATION
To Be or Not to Be... Wearing a Mask?

By KAREN GUILLETTE

TURNERS FALLS – I’m 74, in good health, and I have been wearing a mask since a student at a dental school gave me several in mid-March. I’ve been wearing it whenever I go to any of the stores here in Turners Falls or elsewhere.

At first it felt a bit strange, especially since hardly anyone around here was wearing a mask. I wondered if people thought I was “over-doing it”... taking it all too seriously. I was concerned for the cashiers who were without masks, because they were being exposed to so many people for hours on end and handling money during that whole time. I felt everyone should be paying attention to the risk that their lack of masks created for themselves, for the store staff, and, to be honest, for me as well.

At first, masks were somewhat hard to come by. Medical and construction masks sold out quickly back in March, and although there were many tutorials on making masks and many women were making and donating masks, the focus was on masks for health care professionals – as it really needed to be.

There have also been confus-



The Spinner Park statue sets an example downtown.

might be “silent” carriers of the virus without realizing it.

In any case, now it seems that more and more folks around town are donning some kind of face mask as they shop in the stores at the plaza. Some are wearing medical or construction masks, while others are sporting wildly colorful hand-made ones. A generous donor has been supplying free homemade masks to the Little Free Library on Avenue A almost daily.

And yet, there are still many folks I see in the stores in the plaza who are not wearing masks. Why? I wondered.

To better understand, I decided just to ask people how they felt about wearing – or not wearing – a mask. It was a bit challenging to broach the subject with a mask on and at a distance of six feet away, but I was so curious that I wanted to give it a try.

Survey Says

The woman I spoke with first was not wearing a mask. I asked her if she found a mask uncomfortable. No bother, she said, as she worked for a dentist, wore a mask all day long when she was working, and so

see MASKS page B6

THE AUTHORS’ CORNER: JERRY SPINELLI

By IZZY VACHULA-CURTIS

TURNERS FALLS – Happy Spring! I recently watched *Stargirl* on Disney Plus, and then read the 2000 book it was based on, *Stargirl*, by Jerry Spinelli. Today I’m going to be reviewing the movie and book, and interviewing Jerry Spinelli.

The main character in the book *Stargirl* is a boy named Leo, who moves to Arizona. Leo goes to school at Mica High, which was a pretty bland school; they never won any sporting events, or got any awards. No one in the school was really involved, and no fans showed up to their events. The most popular kid at Mica High is Wayne Parr, who is only popular because of his looks,



PHOTO COURTESY IZZY V-C

After enjoying the *Stargirl* movie, our correspondent read the book it was based on – and then tracked down the author for an interview!

not his athleticism or achievements.

So Mica High and its students were generic and mediocre – until Stargirl showed up.

Stargirl was homeschooled before she came to Mica High. Aside from her unique name, Stargirl has many interesting attributes, which are very different from the majority of the students at Mica High, who have barely any personality. For example, she sings “Happy Birthday” to students on their birthdays, even if she doesn’t know them. On Valentine’s Day, she leaves gifts on each of her classmates’ desks in her home room.

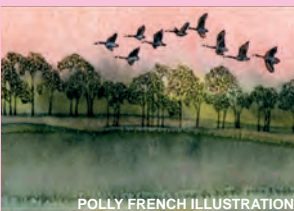
Stargirl also dresses differently than most teenage girls. She wears long, flowy skirts, she carries around a ukulele on her back, and when Leo first sees her, he describes her dress as something that “looked like it could have been her great-grandmother’s wedding gown.”

Stargirl also has a pet rat named Cinnamon, who she brings to school with her. At first, students speculated that she was an alien, that her parents were circus acrobats, or that she was “trying to get herself discovered for the movies,” because of the way she dressed, acted, and interacted with people, which Mica High students weren’t used to.

Then, shortly after her arrival, Stargirl shows up at a football game where there were barely any spectators. She gets out on the field and starts singing a song, because she senses that the school doesn’t have a lot of character, and she wants to help the school succeed. In the movie version, the song she sings is “Be True to Your School” by the Beach Boys.

After that, Mica High starts doing better in sports. Fans even start showing up at games, so much so that the stands are packed. They actually win football games, and even go to the playoffs. Then Stargirl does something controversial at one of the football games, and the school

see AUTHORS page B3



POLLY FRENCH ILLUSTRATION

WEST ALONG THE RIVER
TIME TRAVELING IN THE CITY OF LIGHT

By DAVID BRULE

ERVINGSIDE – Things being the way they are these days, the only travel anyone can do is to leave home in your mind. Armchair traveling, mind traveling. My own specialty has been time travel. So I went back to Paris this past Sunday.

Way back in the old world we used to know, back in May 2009, I wrote a piece for the *Reporter* that I called *Rambling In the City of Light*.

Back then, I always chose Sundays in July and August to go out wandering in Paris. I usually spent the first hours at home, looking out the wide-open French windows (of course!) onto our quiet street in the Parisian suburb. Coffee-rich hours, sunshine in the glistening streets after the early morning hosing-down by the city’s water truck, something wistful by Stephan Grappelli on the record-player, something called “Ménilmontant” – or was it “La Mer”?

With a good buzz from the coffee, and a couple of good poems filling my head with lyric phrasing, I’d grab my backpack and set out into the city.

I wrote back in 2009: “*Rambling in a city like Paris doesn’t have any rules...* That’s the good part, much like ambling, whereas if you’d prefer to *saunter* like Thoreau in Concord, you’d actually have to pay attention, take notes, measure things, or find deep philosophical meaning in the light upon Walden Pond, or the Seine. So none of that today, it’s a ramble for sure.

“On go the walking shoes and a backpack... set for the open road, or rather, the open street. There’s certainly no need to pack a lunch, in this city when your thirst overcomes you, there’s a café on every

corner, and a glass of wine will do just fine. And there are plenty for chances to fight off starvation, pastry shops were invented just for that. Just pick out a croissant on the fly, and keep on walking!

“I find myself following my feet, angling up the winding streets to Montmartre. Easy enough to keep oriented, with the white basilica of Sacré-Coeur high up on the hill overlooking the city, seeming quite out of place as though it should be in Constantinople rather than Paris. I can’t help thinking about the curious events that put the basilica up there...”

Back in 1870, Emperor Napoléon III got the country into a disastrous war with Prussia.

Napoléon III himself got captured on the battlefield in northern France, which brought a quick end to the war, and his government. Taking advantage of the power vacuum, the working classes of Montmartre and surrounding quarters rose up and proclaimed a radical workers’ republic in 1871.

The interim French government put down that revolt by executing thousands of Parisians. It was then decided to put a basilica on top of the rebellious neighborhoods to symbolize the extermination of the Marxist atheists who had revolted. The surviving population had to pay for the construction of the church, as the cost of redemption.

If you have a mind for history, those kinds of stories add a very different dimension to the city’s landscape.

Back then I was a free man in Paris, unlike these days of quarantine, strictly enforced by French police as this is being written. I rambled as far as I wanted and I had the license to do whatever I pleased, to think about whatever I wanted,

see WEST ALONG page B8

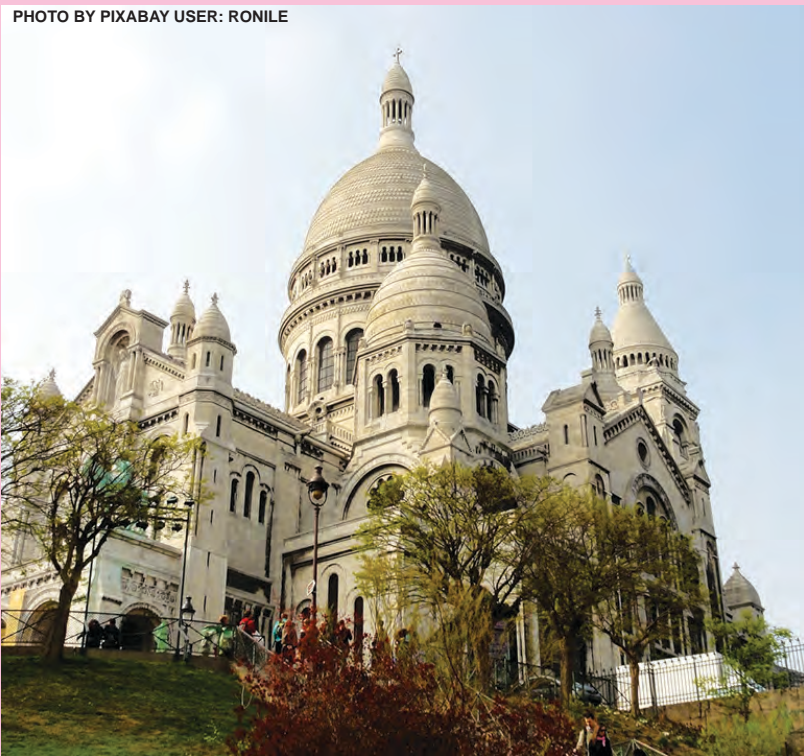


PHOTO BY PIXABAY USER: RONILE

Le Sacré-Cœur, the Basilica of the Sacred Heart of Paris.

DISPATCHES FROM THE FARMERS MARKET

It’s Hip to Be HIP....

By ANNABEL LEVINE

TURNERS FALLS – Welcome to the first installment of “Dispatches from the Farmers Market,” a recurring column where you will be filled in on all the happenings at the Great Falls Farmers Market here in Turners Falls.

In this time of COVID-19, we are having to make structural changes to how the market works, and in order to have time to make the market a safe place to shop we are pushing the start date a month to Wednesday, June 3. We plan to be open every Wednesday from June through October, from 2 to 6 p.m., at Peskeomskut Park.

We’ll be offering more details about new procedures and what the market will look like in coming dispatches. Today we have decided to focus on the Healthy Incentives Program (HIP), a program associated with Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) that allows recipients to purchase local produce – fresh, canned, frozen, or dried – as well as vegetable seeds and plant starts, for “free.”

Keeping our neighbors fed is our primary mission, and so we are starting these dispatches with a HIP refresher because our market is the only place in Turners Falls where

one can use their HIP benefits with a HIP farmer. With town residents losing jobs and incomes due to COVID-19, we want to make sure that all new and existing SNAP recipients know that they are entitled to HIP benefits, and that they can be used at our market.

Every person with SNAP benefits is automatically enrolled in HIP, and monthly benefit amounts are based on household size (\$40 for a household of 1-2, \$60 for 3-5, and \$80 for 6+). Use your SNAP card to purchase HIP-eligible items from HIP farmers, and once the transaction goes through, the money just spent gets put back on your cart instantaneously. No extra steps.

For example, if you are a household of one, you can spend \$40 of your SNAP money on HIP-eligible items, and have that \$40 returned to your card immediately. You leave the transaction with the same SNAP balance that you had before your purchase.

If you would like more information on how this program works, you can visit the state’s website (www.mass.gov/service-details/healthy-incentives-program-hip-for-clients), call Project Bread at (800) 645-8333, or get in touch with us here at the market at greatfalls-farmersmarkettturners@gmail.com.



By MISHEL IXCHEL

TURNERS FALLS – I first learned to slow down during one of the busiest chapters in my life. For starters, growing up in NYC, “moving slow” just wasn’t part of the collective programming. Fast was just the way of life.

And then grad school happened. By then, not only was I adept at speed-jaywalking my way through life, I was also enrolled in a boot camp designed to train my brain to perform all types of fancy gymnastics. Overall, I was sleep-deprived, constantly on the go, with a full course load and enough reading and paper-writing to last me for the rest of my life.

Here’s the kicker: no matter how fast I moved or how much I did, I felt like I could never catch up.

I didn’t realize the speed I was traveling until one Sunday evening in January, when I was first introduced to the notion of slowing down. I was invited to a candle-lit, women-only movement class where the instructor kept repeating to us, “Move slowly. When you slow down, you can feel more.”

And what do you know, whether it was raising my arms over my head, or doing a single hip circle, she was right. Doing anything slowly allowed for a connection that simply wasn’t there before.

It felt like a major disruptor. I wasn’t quite the same after that. Once I had experienced how good it

Slowing Down & Feeling More

felt to slow down, I knew I’d discovered an entirely new way of being. I was hooked, and I began to put this into practice in other areas of my life, until little by little, I began to carve out a new type of existence.

I am reminded of that time now, as the world collectively moves through a period of slowing down. While it’s true that on the front lines, there are people working tirelessly and the speed through which things are happening must feel fast and chaotic, the majority of us are being gifted with the opportunity to slow down.

Little did I realize, but slowing down has proven to be the one thing that was missing in my parenting game. My NYC days are far behind me; the pace in Western Mass feels way more in alignment with the way I want to live my life. And still, even though my life is drastically different than it once was, this pandemic and lockdown have revealed to me that I was still in many ways spinning my wheels.

Before this all happened, I would often feel resentment about having to stretch myself thin between parenting and keeping the bills paid. I resented my friends who only had to focus on their children and their homestead, while their partners focused their energies on work and making money. I resented my friends without children who could devote all their time, energy, and resources into growing their businesses. I felt extremely short-changed.

I never admitted to this resent-

ment, but it would always be with me, never far behind. What this often resulted in was a struggle to be fully present when I was parenting, because the creative entrepreneur in me was feeling neglected.

In the last few weeks, having had to close my business and be forced back to the drawing board, I’ve allowed myself to slow down, which has allowed the dust to settle somewhat. And with this slow down has come a greater ability to be more present with my son. To be more present with myself. This has translated to every part of our day, from the way we wake up and greet the morning, to the time taken to prepare meals, to the long walks around town.

Even the way we are home-schooling has at its core this element of moving slowly. It’s like I suddenly woke up and snapped out of it. My child is growing before my eyes, and now I have the opportunity to really savor this time with him.

I believe there’s truly no point in trying to fit our old life into this new life. The thing is, when we slow down, it also requires us to do less. The best part? We do less, but we do it better; we are more present, and we feel more.

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

Senior Center Activities MAY 4 THROUGH 8

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	

“Poet Trees” Lift Spirits at Sheffield

From combined sources.

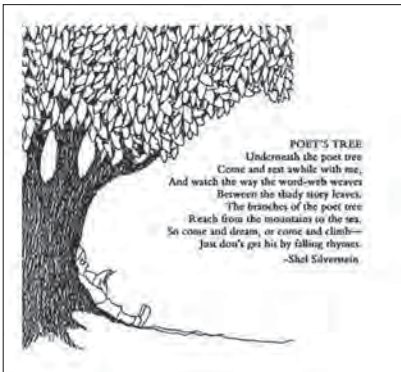
TURNERS FALLS – With the recent news of schools closing for the remainder of the year, Sheffield Elementary School principal Melissa Pitrat, teachers, and staff decided that they needed a school spirit day. They decided to expand a second-grade tradition called “Poem in Your Pocket Day” to the whole school, and the surrounding neighborhood.

For this year’s Sheffield Community Poem in Your Pocket Day, they are encouraging all Sheffield students to talk to family members, consult a book, or search online for poems that speaks to them, put them in writing, and share by placing them on temporary poetry trees in front of the school, allowing walkers to stop and enjoy them.

The increased foot and bicycle traffic gave Pitrat the idea to extend the invitation to the proximate community. April is National Poetry Month, and there is a national Poem in Your Pocket day on Thursday, April 30.

In previous years, part of the second-grade curriculum was to build a year-long Poetry Anthology in a special binder. During the First Six Weeks of School, students are introduced to the concept of “unpacking” a poem. Every week from

mid-October to June, they read a new poem that addresses topics their teachers know they will connect with. Teachers read the poem aloud, then students read the poem with their teacher. A series of questions are posed for a deep discussion, and after that, drawings are



added to enrich the poem.

Finally, each poem is added to the student’s Anthology. Cutting out and decorating a paper pocket template, adding yarn to hang it around one’s neck, and placing the self-chosen poem in the pocket are the next steps.

Traditionally, on Poem in Your Pocket Day, everyone in the school is invited to ask the second graders to read their poems aloud. Upon returning home, the students are encouraged to read their poems to family members, and tell them why they chose the ones they did.

In a press release about the tree

project, Pitrat credits this newspaper’s special April 2 youth edition for providing some of the inspiration. Fifth-grader Genesis Rio was invited by National Public Radio to read her work on the air after it was spotted in that issue, which prompted an idea by second-grade teacher Susan Pelis to invite the whole school community to showcase their poetry.

Fellow second-grade teacher Jessica Briggs shared the idea of a “Poet Tree” with her class, inspired by a Shel Silverstein poem (“Underneath the poet tree...”). This had an immediate positive response from students and their families.

The makeshift Poet Trees, made from actual branches, will be in front of the Sheffield school for the community to enjoy from this Thursday, April 30 to Wednesday, May 6. Principal Pitrat distributed 60 invitations to immediate neighbors to participate by contributing poems, but she says anyone else who wants to contribute is welcome to do so.

“We want to include more people in this,” Pitrat says. “This is just another way to showcase student work in a positive way.”

For more information about the Poet Trees, find the “Friends of Sheffield” page on Facebook. Due to the variable spring weather, participants are advised to put their poetry in a ziplock bag.

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AUTHORS from page B1

turns on her. Will Leo shun Stargirl like the rest of the school? Or will he help Stargirl get the school back on her side?

This book is really good, and the movie is amazing, too! I would recommend them to anyone who likes stories about being unique and finding yourself, or anyone who likes happy endings!

If I had to put this book into a category, I would say it’s about being the best version of yourself, but there are also a lot of parts in it that are funny, or romantic, so I think a wide variety of people would like it.

I also really liked the movie. I think that the movie gave a little more context, which is why I would recommend watching it first. That is something I wouldn’t normally do, but I think you’ll get a better understanding of the book if you watch the movie first!

Now I’m going to interview Jerry Spinelli.

Izzy V-C: Stargirl was published in 2000. How do you think it would it have been written differently if it was published now?

Jerry Spinelli: Pretty much the same, except for an added role for cellphones and texting.

IVC: The Stargirl movie came out this year. What do you think made the producers decide to wait this long to make the film adaptation?

JS: It wasn’t on purpose. There were 18 years of directors, scripts, and who wanted to do it actors (including Taylor Swift and Dakota Fanning), but it took Disney to make it happen.

IVC: What inspired you to write Stargirl, and what inspired her character?

JS: My wife Eileen. She invented the Happy Wagon. Other story elements come from her.

IVC: Were you involved in the casting/making of the Stargirl movie?

JS: My role was mostly as a screenwriting consultant.

IVC: Were any of the characters in the book inspired by people you know?

JS: See [question] #3. A couple aspects of Leo were based loosely on myself.

IVC: What was your high school experience like? Would you have been friends with Stargirl, or embarrassed by her?

JS: Good question. On the one hand I was a popular kind of kid who could fit in with most others. On the other hand, I was beginning then to have a sense of my own way, and I like to think I’d have been smart and open enough to welcome Stargirl as a kindred spirit.

Thank you so much to Jerry Spinelli for answering my questions! I hope everyone is staying safe and practicing social distancing.

A good thing to consider doing during this quarantine is to be like Stargirl and do something kind for someone else: making a little gift basket for someone who might be going through a rough time and delivering it to their house, having a phone call with a friend or relative, or sending someone a letter or a package in the mail.

If you are looking for inspiration for something good to do, Stargirl reads the newspaper to find out what is going on with people, and then sends them cards and gifts to cheer them up or congratulate them.



TV REVIEW

Lucifer: Season Four (Netflix)

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

GREENFIELD – People seem to have always been fascinated by the Devil. He has been featured in literature, movies, art, and TV. Which probably is why the TV series *Lucifer* has been reasonably popular, when it comes to being watched on television. The fourth season is now on Netflix, a TV show that you can stream. It’s apparently based on the character of the Devil in *The Sandman* comics.

The show has been good enough to last four seasons, slowly bringing more of Lucifer’s family members, and other biblical characters such as Cain, into the story. For this latest season, they decided to bring Eve into the picture. I speak of the Eve from Adam and Eve.

Besides the character of Eve being present, they have finally managed to make it so the female police detective Lucifer solves crimes with, Chloe Decker, knows he is really the Devil. This revelation has been stretched out for a couple of seasons, but at the very end of the third season, she finally realized he was indeed that.

People would probably be expecting a certain police detective to be freaking out. Lucifer, who’s a mess over her seeing the proof

that he’s the devil, is certainly expecting that. But that is not the reaction Detective Decker shows to him. She does show a little bit of the reaction he expects when he gives someone a show of one of his supernatural abilities.

However, from a glance of something, it would appear something else is going on with her and a priest – some sort of a plan involving Lucifer. Something to tune in for the rest of the season to find out about.

Another thing to see is Amenadiel, Lucifer’s brother with wings, from back in the first episode. He has not been like that since Season 1. This show has been spiced up nicely by his occasional appearances and other such characters like Cain. So the character of Eve should give us some nice enjoyment out of watching her in this show. After all, she’s technically an old girlfriend of the Devil.

Lucifer is an original and unique show. It’s not the same old thing I have seen going on with some of the shows on TV. There is either the same type of show, over and over, or there are remakes of shows, or revivals of shows. But as I said, this concept, along with the offbeat parts of himself that Lucifer displays on the show, seem to be working well.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Fridge On The Bridge; Two Big Black Bears; Cooped-Up Residents Starting To Act Like Jerks

Monday, 4/20

1:30 p.m. Caller observed a male go into Scotty’s then the liquor store next door, come out with a twelve-pack, and go into the cargo area of a white van in the Jarvis Pools parking lot. Area search negative.

Tuesday, 4/21

8:55 a.m. Report of illegal dumping at Unity Park; several white trash bags dumped next to one of the trash barrels. Advised of options.

6:32 p.m. Report that someone hit the railroad crossing near Carroll’s Market and knocked it down; caller states he tried calling the railroad but was told to call the police department. Received call from railroad company that they have a tech en route. Officer advises two signal lights have been snapped off and are hanging by the wires.

7:04 p.m. Caller from N Street states that his neighbor’s dog has been getting out again; this evening, the dog got through the fence again and came running towards his kids. Caller states he was able to scare it away, but this is an ongoing issue; would like animal control officer notified that this is still a problem. Copy of call left for ACO.

7:46 p.m. Neighbor disturbance on Seventh Street. Officer advises verbal argument; parties have been separated and advised of options. Officer advises that male did break a kitchen table with his hand and cut his hand in the process, but refused medical attention for the laceration.

10:26 p.m. Caller from Avenue A states that his mother is extremely intoxicated and causing a disturbance, throwing and smashing things in the apartment. Officers spoke with caller; mother is in her room for the night. Advised caller of options. Officers report female party is highly intoxicated.

Wednesday, 4/22

5:06 p.m. Motorist locked inside gate at Silvio O. Conte Anadromous Fish Research Center. Services rendered.

7:25 p.m. Caller states that while walking her dog on leash on Franklin Street, another dog, off-leash, came over and attacked her dog and also gave her a small bite on her hand. Officer met with caller; information passed along to ACO.

11:24 p.m. Caller reports large appliance in travel lane of bridge coming from Gill into Turners. Officer advises item is a fridge; he was able to move it out of the travel

lane into the breakdown lane; requests MassDOT be contacted to pick it up.

Thursday, 4/23

2:19 p.m. Caller from Montague Street would like to speak to an officer about some recent vandalism on her property. Officer will follow up at her home tomorrow.

4:53 p.m. Caller from Masonic Street requesting options re: ongoing issue with neighbor; she has tried to solve it on her own, but it is an unfriendly situation. Caller would just like to have this on record. Advised caller of options in pursuing a harassment protection order.

5:17 p.m. Caller requesting assistance with unlocking the gate on Migratory Way because he is locked in; advises there is another vehicle behind him as well. Officer advised. Caller called back and stated that he and the other vehicle were let out by an employee. Officer advised.

6:48 p.m. Caller from Avenue A requesting that an officer remove a male party from her apartment building. Caller states male is highly intoxicated and is swearing at her and calling her names. Caller states that party does not live in this building.

Officer reports that party is staying in an apartment for the night with a friend. Peace restored.

9:06 p.m. Shelburne Control requesting K9 unit to assist Erving PD with a drug search at Farley Flats. K9 alert to exterior of vehicle.

11:06 p.m. Caller from Federal Street requesting that an officer go to a nearby residence and tell parties to stop harassing him by doing burnouts in front of his house; states the two subjects are currently in the Plains, one driving a motor vehicle and one driving a motorcycle. Caller called back stating that he received a message from one of the parties that stated “If you

want to end this, meet me at the gate on Old Northfield Road.” Spoke with Officer Moody, who states he is on that road in that area now and nobody is around. Officer off to speak with party.

Friday, 4/24

12:48 p.m. Caller states that a man is consuming alcohol inside Peskeomskut Park. Male party had an open container but was not observed drinking from it. Male party poured it out and was moved along.

Saturday, 4/25

12:07 p.m. Report of a raccoon that fell out of a tree and is injured; currently at the dog park. Caller inquiring about someone retrieving the animal so it can be helped. ACO not on duty. Caller requested number for Environmental Police; provided. Another report of this raccoon; caller speculated it could be rabid because it is staggering but did not observe it foaming at the mouth or any aggressive behavior. Caller alluded to shooting the animal himself if police or ACO would not respond. Original caller also called back and is still standing by the animal. Per EPO dispatch, if animal is not acting aggressively, foaming at the mouth, going after people in the area, or posing a threat to public safety, it should be left alone. Officer off at park speaking with parties around the animal. One of the callers pointed out the raccoon in the woodline. No danger to people in that area. Advised of same.

5:54 p.m. Caller requesting assistance with unlocking the gate on Migratory Way so he can leave. Took a second call from a female party stating that they are also stuck behind the gate. Advised that officer is already en route to the area and will let them out. All parties let out of gate. Officer checking area for any other parties.

6:28 p.m. Shelburne Control took a call from Riverside Drive in Gill; caller states she is looking at Unity Park and can see a woman in the water on a paddleboard; is concerned that it is too early in the season for her to be out there. Officer made contact with female party; states that she is perfectly fine with what she is doing and that she is far away from the buoys where the water is calm.

6:58 p.m. Shelburne Control reporting four or five teenagers on the downtown Millers trestle. Area search negative.

7:46 p.m. Three calls reporting two big black bears in the area of Fairway Avenue and Montague Street. Call placed to EPO to advise; callers advised to remain inside.

11:52 p.m. Report of male attempting to get into Scotty’s with a screwdriver. Area search negative.

Sunday, 4/26

12:12 a.m. Report of hit-and-run accident on Third Street; vehicle owner states that she was standing near her car and a truck came by, almost took her door off, and sped off. Caller reports she is uninjured but the car door will not close. Driver of truck located; citation issued for leaving scene of property damage.

12:44 p.m. Report of female with toddler on the back of a motorcycle and two males on motorcycles, all without helmets. Parties riding both in the road and on the sidewalk in area of East Main Street and Federal Street. Officer spoke with parties. Vehicles were electric bikes. Parties advised of concerns.

9:23 p.m. Caller reporting a possibly intoxicated male operating a red scooter on Lake Pleasant Road; states she almost hit him a few times because he was swerving all over the road. Area search negative.

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 mfmontaguetv@gmail.com between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., Monday through Friday. We’d love to work with you!

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

– William Carlos Williams

edited by Christopher Sawyer-Lauçanno
Readers are invited to send poems to the
Montague Reporter at: 177 Avenue A
Turners Falls, MA 01376
or to: poetry@montaguereporter.org

Ace of Wands

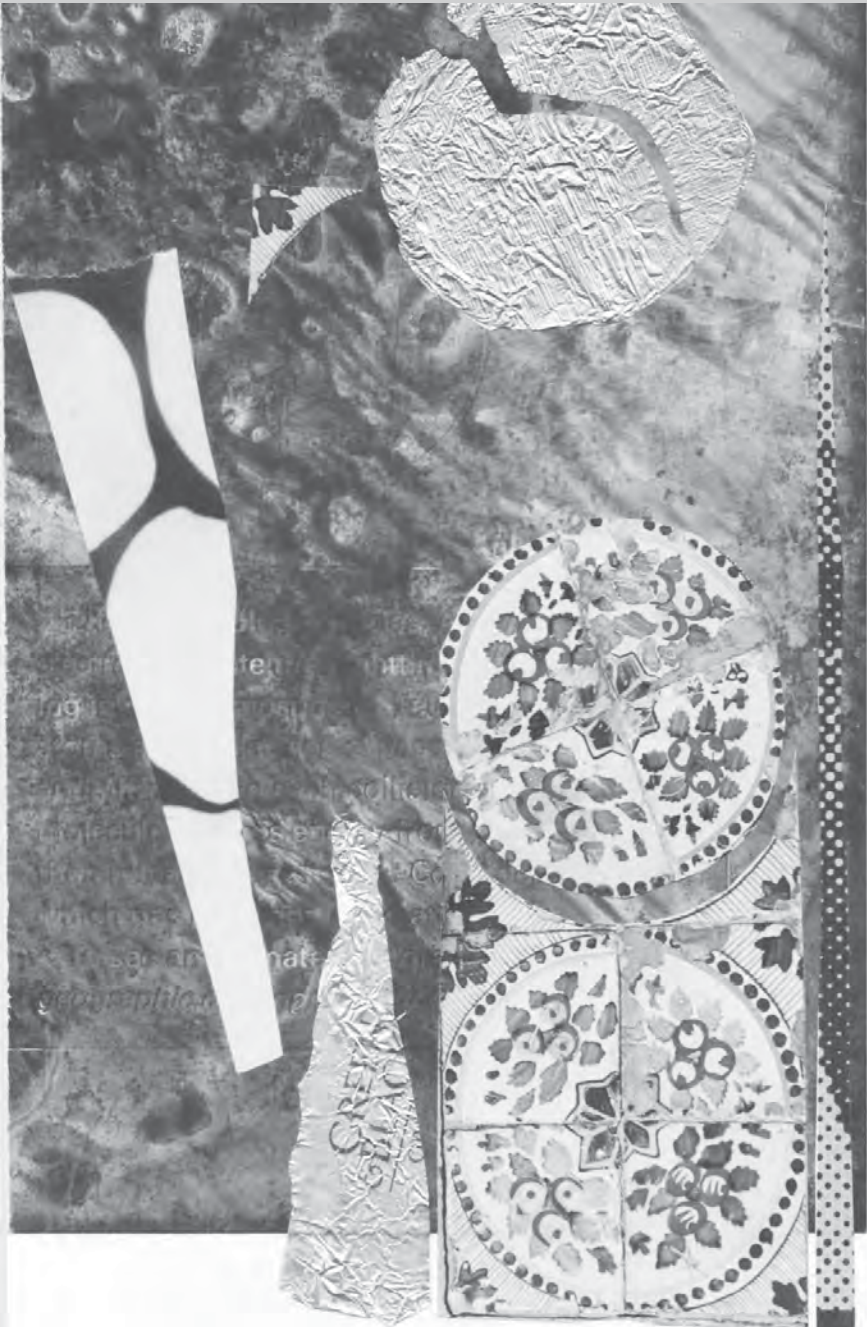
My lover brought me a blossoming branch
and lit me: My head went up in flowers.

Oh, the folly. Oh, the danger!
Husks of seeds split open.

He was a strike-anywhere match.
I was a bed of embers.

What I want is always more than I can handle.
And what I get not quite enough.

– Trish Crapo
Leyden



Six of Cups, Inverted

That second before the tray of glasses hits the tile floor
is a trap door into possibility. Only right then
can you escape without breakage.

Why do we have minds if not to imagine things
as other than they are?

I tell you to walk away without looking back, yet I cried
the morning the flowered plate from Japan broke.
I saved the pieces.

If you gave me back my childhood, it would not be the
one
I remembered. The one my father gave me would not be
the one my mother would.

Sometimes a mood settles over me that feels like wisdom
but nothing wise comes to me.
And that's OK.

–Trish Crapo
Leyden

April Poetry Pages

... in honor of National Poetry Month!

Memory is too much a burden

Memory is too much a burden.
With this acceleration,
the requisite catalog
too much to keep.

Forgetting is a luxury. On Thursday the president proposed
we inject disinfectant. How do you write a love poem?
The birds have returned to look at us.
A robin, perched on the fence,
watches me drag a chair across the yard
to sit and read a book.

A friend's bicycle helmet, hangs on a wooden beam
now a nest for finches. I cannot
remember the sweet tobacco of my mother's hair. I cannot
remember the tilt of your mother's head
as she worked a hook in yarn. I cannot
remember how sunlight beams in through the tall windows,
stretches the length of the wooden floor
as we work together. I cannot remember sitting,
our elbows on the table, as we argue the succulent oranges
from their pungent, elastic skin.

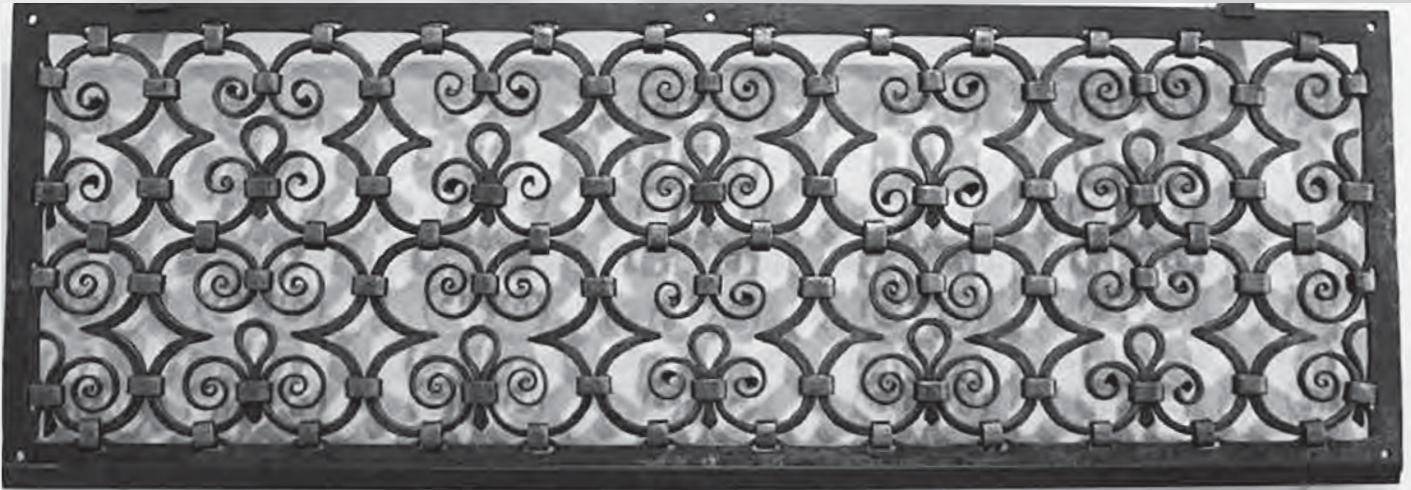
– Samantha Wood
Greenfield



Acceptance

I write this poem to iron, in honor of
its circulation from forge to song,
a magnetic domain that fasten-ates.
How the hammer swings, how the coal flares
from black to red to blue, and back again
the might and means, no pretense involved.
Each curl a signature of ore's momentum
Each twist covered by brute kisses, sweet blows.
I gasp in recognition of how we are forged
with force caloric, and bent into a state of grace.
This sketch in metal finds sacred space
uniting red hot curves and fiery clasps;
the grille finds truth an easy narrative to tell about itself.
Sympathetic, I am error's first responder, yet
I can't process the mystery in joining these
stiffened arcs of time, and my tongue curls
around iron's sour spike.
Yellin's ancient blacksmith art:
struck through, or pulled open —
a hot stretch, a prime number of perfection.
Will stars decay to iron? Do hearts of planets spin?
disemboweled, the earth rots regolith
Scrolls are geminate, uniquely inexact
a form disposed to task — nothing less will do —
metal's solo riff bared with muscular intonation,
carburized, and — *Ferrous Fatale* —
iron stings my lips, a rusty reason to love again.

– Nina Rossi
Turners Falls



Wrought Iron Grille (c. 1910-1940), by Samuel Yellin (1885-1940) Collection of the Metal Museum.

Contributors' Notes

Trish Crapo, poet, photographer and visual artist, contributes art columns regularly to the *Reporter*. She writes about her poems: "The origin of this project is that one year I was writing a poem a day for the Center for New Americans, part of their fundraising project in November. Being nervous about how I would write 1 poem every day, I decided to draw a Tarot card and then write a poem based on its meaning. Later, I made a collage based on each poem. Therefore, my image was several layers removed from the original Tarot card. During this strange pandemic, I have returned to my Tarot card project, pursuing the visual aspect of it alone, for now. There may be poems that grow from the new cards. I'm not sure. But I hope so."

Samantha Wood is a journalist, poet, and artist, and a writer for the *Reporter*.

Nina Rossi is the features editor at the *Reporter*. She writes the following about the work and artist: "Samuel Yellin, in whose workshop the grille which inspired this poem was created, was born in 1885 in a small village in Poland. He became a blacksmith's apprentice at twelve years old, achieving master status at 17, and went on to become a champion of the revival of this ancient art in America. Yellin tried very hard to make his work inviting, and saw ironwork as a bridge between buildings and people, not a barrier. He liked to include bits and pieces that could be felt, turned, pulled, or twisted. In joining parts together, he used visible elements such as collars, rivets, and tenons, making them part of the design rather than trying to hide them. "These collars are one of the elements that spoke to me in this grille that I saw in the Memphis, Tennessee Museum of Metal Work. The grille is simple in design, but has an honesty about it that is very appealing. When I saw it, I marveled at the individuality of every scroll and point. I dubbed it 'The Acceptance Grille,' for the strength of character that radiates from the celebration of individual variances in the design – rather like individuals within community! "Later, I ordered a book on Yellin, which gave me background to consider, and I found that this grille's effect on me was exactly what this master craftsman had intended to convey a hundred years ago. Iron has not changed."

All three contributors this month are members of Exploded View, a group of women artists based in Franklin County developing original work, creating in collaboration across art forms. Its members are Crapo, Wood, Rossi, and Edite Cunha.

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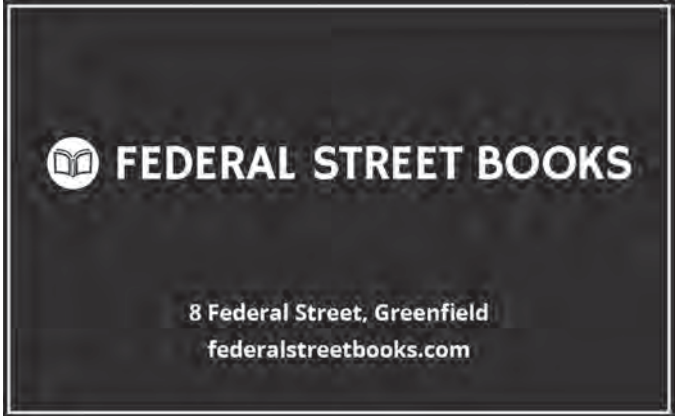
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Number Twenty: Sarah Louise

Interview by J. BURKETT

TURNERS FALLS – Sarah Louise is a contemporary musician/botanist from Asheville, North Carolina. Her newest recordings

are on the Thrill Jockey label, and she is known around the country for her acoustic and electric guitar playing, for her songs, and for other musical projects such as the duo House and Land.

She was interviewed recently on NPR, and she is planning more tours soon, so she should be out here to play soon.

MMM: Hi Sarah! So, which do you like more – touring? Or playing at home?

SL: I love touring, and I love playing at home.

I’ve been doing some livestreams on my Instagram, and that’s surprisingly satisfying, in the sense that I can still go to that place with my music that is only possible in community. But I miss my friends I usually get to see on the road.

MMM: Do you like playing overseas as much as in the US?

SL: They are both wonderful, but I am especially grateful for all the amazing experiences I have had in Europe. I love Europe!

MMM: Do you play electric more than acoustic now?

SL: More electric (so in love!), but I recently started writing very simple songs on an acoustic guitar,

which come from a very still place inside of me.

I’m also learning Abelson, and am really into hardware. My experience with fingerpicking is now being funneled into finger-drumming.

MMM: Were you ever into punk or hardcore?

SL: I like The Slits, This Heat, and the first Stooges album. Other than that I must admit I’m pretty ignorant of the genre. But the space it allows for collective catharsis and political protest is very rad. If I’m in the right zone it can be incredible live. I’d like to learn more about it.

MMM: Any recording or tour plans soon?

SL: I’m always recording. As for touring, that’s the big question for all of us now.

MMM: Your botany posts on Instagram are great... How did you come up with the idea for them?

SL: I was always teased as a kid for being obsessed with plants, so

it was a way to really show myself love by showing who I really am. And because I love them and the earth so much, I want to help others love and learn about them too.

MMM: Are there any plant guides that you recommend?

SL: Newcomb’s wildflower guide. *Mushrooms of the Southeast*. Mushrooms used to be classified as plants, but now the fungi kingdom is understood to be closer to the animal kingdom. But really we are all one!

MMM: Are you into Terence McKenna’s books?

SL: I’ve read *Food of the Gods*, and think it tells a lot of truth, but haven’t gotten super deep into his work.

MMM: What do you like most about West Mass and New England?

SL: Western Mass is honestly my favorite place in the US, aside from where I live, and maybe a few magical spots out west. I’ve almost moved there multiple times! I love the music, people, and nature.

MASKS from page A1

was very used to wearing one. However, she said she had not started wearing one in stores until a week ago when she noticed that a lot of people were wearing masks everywhere she went. Now she wears it sometimes, sometimes not. Mostly she wears a mask when she goes into bigger stores with more people.

The next person I spoke to lived in elderly housing in a nearby town. She was wearing a mask, but said that only four of the 17 elderly individuals living in the same residence wear a mask, which seemed a bit problematic for her. She mentioned that it was mostly the men who wouldn’t wear masks, for some reason. She said she gets quite upset when she sees others in a store not wearing masks. Although she hasn’t said anything yet to anyone, it’s on the tip of her tongue!

A young woman nearby offered that her dad refused to wear a mask. Both women agreed that there may be a feeling for some men that it’s not very manly.

However, as I continued on with my research, I learned that gender doesn’t have all that much to do with it. For example, another young man next in line at the register offered that he usually does wear a mask, but sometimes it’s just not convenient, and so he was without one today.

Still another gentleman had on a mask and said he wears it to be safe, although it tends to fog up his glasses.

A young man working in one of the stores was without a mask, and he said he would be wearing one but his boss ran out of masks, and so employees weren’t going to be getting any more until later in the week. (I went and got him one at the Little Free Library, since he was at work.)

Yet another man without a mask told me he wasn’t worried, that he “wasn’t the worrying type.” However, he said he does wear a mask sometimes when he’s with his wife and she insists!

As I observed people going in and out of Food City Tuesday afternoon, I saw more men with masks (12) than without (6). I also saw more women without masks (7) than with one (5). Since I didn’t speak to them personally, I don’t know what they were thinking or feeling about the issue.

Quite A Change

One young woman did offer me some thoughts about why she was not wearing a mask. She felt that if it was meant to happen, it would happen, but she was not worried about getting the virus.

Nor was her mother, she said, who still gets together with friends for their traditional, weekly wine-sharing visit. She said it has also been tough for her as she is out of work due to the virus, and is not used to, nor enjoying, all the downtime coupled with restrictions. Sometimes the mask seems to her like just one more irritating aspect of our current situation.

Until very recently, I was getting more leery about going into stores where workers weren’t well-protected and many shoppers were not wearing masks. Interestingly, when I asked staff at Au-



GUILLIETTE PHOTO

Aidan Bilodeau wears a mask whenever he is outside. He recently moved here from Chicopee, and he wants to be a personal trainer. His instagram is @Bilodeauaidan.

buchon for a rough estimate of how many people are now wearing masks in the store now, the worker said probably close to 70%. That is a big change from a week or so ago!

A Post Office employee said they are seeing almost 95% of people coming in wearing a mask. Again, that is definitely quite a change.

Finally, just as I was about to end my research, I saw a young man wearing a mask, about to get on his bicycle. I was surprised, since I don’t wear a mask when walking around town or by the river, only in stores. I asked him if he was usually wearing it outside.

He told me he wears it all the time and everywhere outside, whether he is riding a bike, playing basketball, or working out. I asked him why, and he said “Just to be safe.” He is working towards becoming a fitness trainer, he said, so health, safety, and fitness are very important to him.

Although this wee adventure satisfied some of my curiosity about this aspect of our new reality, I still have many questions, and would love to see responses from a variety of people about their views and habits related to the wearing – or not wearing – of a mask.

Please send your comments in to editor@montaguereporter.org to keep the discussion going in this paper.



PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Creative Online “Lemonade”

GREENFIELD – Local theater company Eggtooth Productions wondered what they were going to do in the midst of a global pandemic, with all the usual venues closed and all projects and classes cancelled. The board of directors wrote in a recent press release that they decided “to try to make some lemonade out of the lemons of COVID-19,” and to that end they put out a request for proposals at the end of March, seeking artists to respond to the pandemic.

Eggtooth offered local artists from Franklin and Hampshire counties the opportunity to apply for eight mini-grants of \$250 each. The works chosen are now going to be presented throughout the month of May online via Facebook, Instagram, and www.eggtooth.org.

The board requested responses to the pandemic, encouraging experimentation and innovation in theater, dance, visual art, audio art, multimedia, animation, video or new media.

With a wide range of applications to choose from, the final decision was to the following eight artists who cover a broad spectrum of art forms.

Eggtooth announces these following recipients, in no particular order:

Melissa McClung, a filmmaker from Hadley. “I will use video collage techniques and robotics to explore themes of connection and isolation during this strange and historic time.”

James McLindon, a playwright from Northampton. “With this project, I am trying to move past a simple reading, or a play limited to circumstances in which the characters are using a medium like Zoom or FaceTime, to see whether we can make a piece of fully formed, full realized theater online that can address a broad range of issues of concern to playwrights.”

Gretchen Laise. “I’m developing a series of carpet-like images and objects inspired by moss, lichen, stone, soil, sticks and leaves, which evoke balance and naturalness in a time of change and overwhelming complexity, and address my struggle to understand scale, from a tiny virus to logarithmic scales of growth to a crisis that potentially affects every living human.”

Kate Hunter from Greenfield. “I set out to photograph friends and neighbors in town from a safe distance

and the experience was like medicine for my soul! I imagine projecting our neighbors’ faces throughout buildings downtown, a memory book that would be a part of Greenfield’s history, a slideshow set to spoken word by the participants, and more.”

Katherine Adler from Greenfield. “I will virtually lead a creative meditation practice called Artifacts of the Ephemeral. In this practice an individual is presented with a prompt/score/meditation/prayer and they are invited to respond in several ways. First, through an improvisational experience, allowing oneself to respond authentically to the original idea. Secondly, to document or record the experience, thus creating ‘artifacts’ of the ‘ephemeral’ experience.”


Lori Holmes Clark from Deerfield. “I imagine a video project called Pockets of Peace and Privilege using dance, time lapse, and stop motion video to explore a human’s habitual impulses and how they have shifted/are in the process of shifting during social distancing protocol, pandemic awareness and global response. This video will combine choreographed dance phrases, domestic duties both inside a home and beyond, as well as exploration and tending to the natural environment surrounding the home.”

Whitney Robbins from Greenfield. “I am doing a series of portraits, painted and drawn, of members of my beloved Stone Soup Café community here in Greenfield. I have done a few already, but I’d like to do more.”


Jack Golden from Leyden will create “a live performance that respects all social distancing standards while allowing for an intimate theatrical experience. Welcome to Golden DriveIn Theater! The stage is a parking lot where the audience sit safely in their car (or, weather permitting, on their car). This new work called ‘Journeys’ utilizes physical clown, shadow play, and improvisation, and celebrates the multitudes that are within us all. The uncertainty of our times are viewed through an upbeat and uplifting lens. Heart leads to humor and returns to the heart.”

Stay tuned for the rollout of these creations by checking in these pages and at www.eggtooth.org. A second round of grants is planned for June, with an RFP offered at the end of May.

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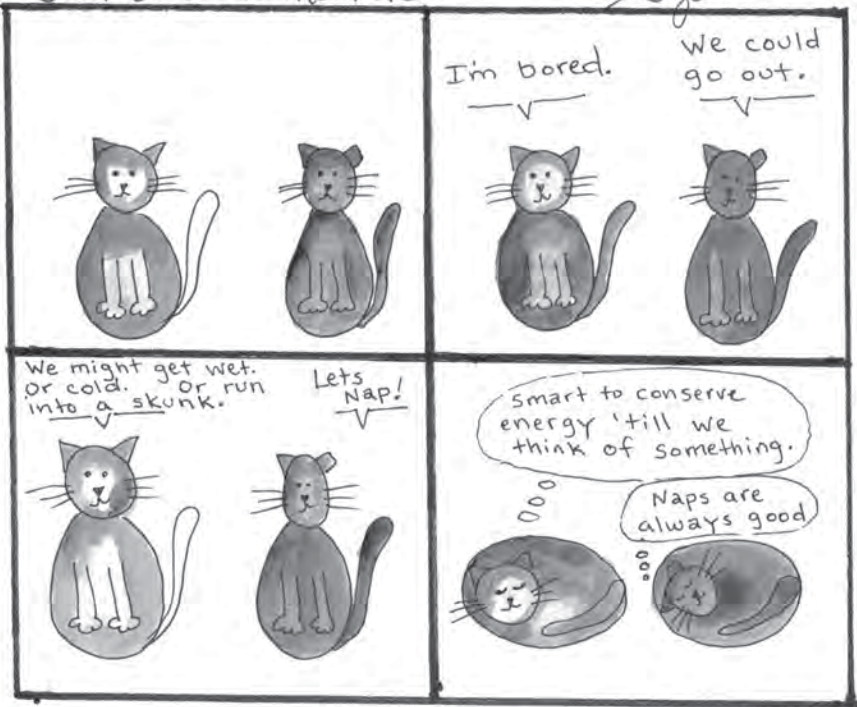
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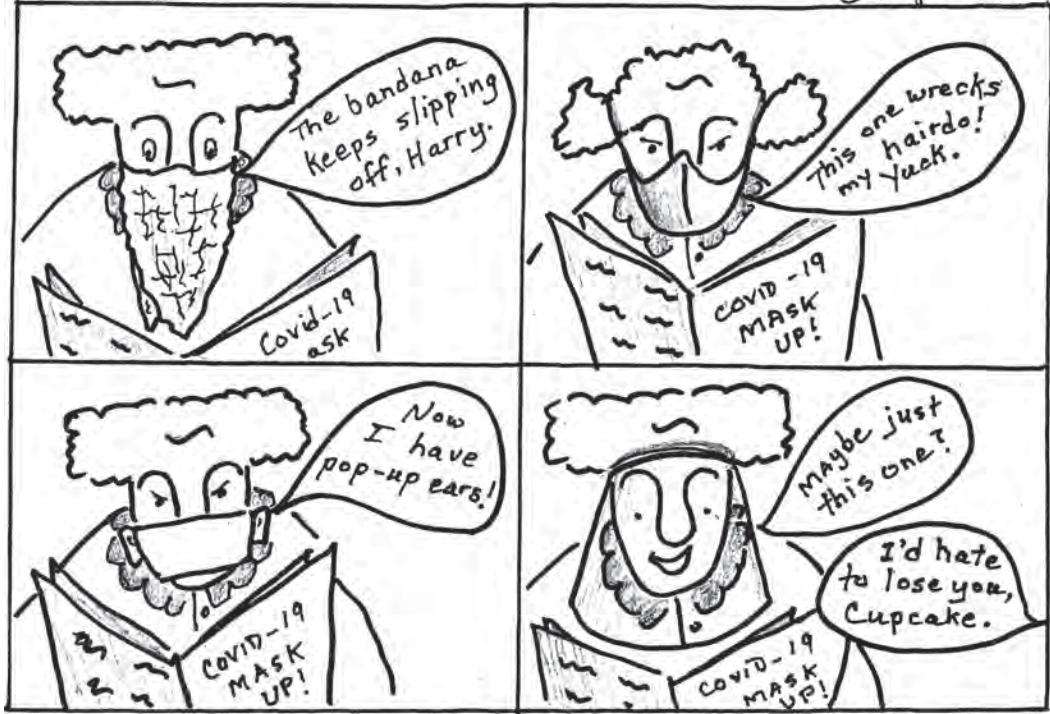
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by jay



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Carolyn Clark



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WEST ALONG from page B1 since on a Sunday morning walk, there were no rules, no restrictions.

“Most Parisians, like New Yorkers, seem to be in a rush to get somewhere else... but there are plenty of others with little to do but pass time in the Rue de la Huchette or the Boulevard Saint-Michel. There are street singers styling themselves after Edith Piaf, violinists or even entire quartets playing Mozart and Bach. There are flute-players from the Andes and gypsies from Central Europe playing mad, intricate jazz variations.

“Parisians are prone to public displays of affection – it is after all, the City of Love as well as the City of Light – so you get used to all the smooching and necking in public, in the cafés, parks, and of course along the Seine. Most people pay little attention as they rush by entwined lovers, who are oblivious to all around them. Then there are the little children out walking with their teachers in file two-by-two, giggling at the kissing couples, singing and speaking impeccable French, for six-year-olds!

“People here seem to have a lot of time on their hands, with lunch breaks that last an hour and a half... the cafés and parks are usually full during the noontime. Kids spend hours floating their little sailboats on the reflecting pools in the Luxembourg Gardens... and you can sit as long as you like on a bench there in the sun if you can wrestle one away from the couples in deep embrace.

“In the past, you had to pay 20

centimes to a war widow who had the privilege and the duty to collect the charge from you and give you an official ticket for a seat as long as you wanted it – a kind of welfare system with dignity that lasted for decades after the Occupation and War. But the little old ladies don’t collect anymore.

“Buoyed and buzzed by the last double espresso, taken at the café counter down a side street, and seeing the growing dark clouds indicating the arrival of the daily downpour, it seems like being inside the Impressionist museum of the Musée d’Orsay would be just the right place this late afternoon as thunderclouds build....

“I head to the upper floors, where the crowds are thinner and where some of the more beautiful canvases are located. Up near the top floor skylights, the natural light can bring out the feel of the *plein air* paintings as the artists intended... The subjects of the paintings are held there, caught in time, in evocative light, in a fleeting world that no longer exists.

“Our world, the world outside, just keeps on changing. After coming here year after year to visit some of these works that have now evolved into old acquaintances, one develops a rapport with a Pissarro, a Sisley, a Monet, or a Van Gogh. It’s like visiting old friends who never age. They’ve remained the same, captured in time. It’s the viewer, the visitor who is forced to recognize the toll of the passing years. But before I can fall into wistfulness and sentiment, two little girls in pigtails and

matching red-framed glasses take a picture of a Renoir with their digital camera, say something silly, giggle and pirouette off to another painting, off into their future, to continue their own growing up.

“The rainstorm outside having passed, the late afternoon sun shines on the bright wet pavement, and it’s high time to be getting back to the quiet suburbs.

“One last spot near my house brings me to a marble plaque on the wall dedicated to a young American soldier. Nearby is a park where the neighborhood children play on swings and see-saws. With May 8 coming up, celebrated in France as the day the War ended in 1945, the plaque is decorated with a bouquet of flowers for the young man who died on this spot in 1944 in the effort to push the Germans out of Paris. It’s always the last stop on my rambles. I make it a point to thank that young man who ran down this street so many years ago, and was stopped by a bullet right here. The French have not forgotten him...”

And I have to thank him, because in a way he helped give me a chance to live in this beautiful city.

So now, in 2020, I find myself back here on a rainy afternoon 5,000 miles away, finishing my sentimental journey of time traveling to that lost, romantic city of love.

At least I can say that the last time I saw Paris was this past Sunday. I went there and came back on the same day. Luckily I wrote everything down. Otherwise no one would believe me!



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