

# The Montague Reporter

YEAR 19 – NO. 8

also serving Irving, Gill, Leverett and Wendell

\$1

EDITOR@MONTAGUEREPORTER.ORG

THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

DECEMBER 24, 2020

## UNEARTHING THE ARCHIVES

### Introducing... The Western Massachusetts History Collective



MONTAGUE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

*This photograph of the Gem Market on Third Street in Turners Falls, dated to the 1970s, is one of thousands of items on view in the new online archive.*

By CHARLOTTE KOHLMANN

**MONTAGUE** – Local historical societies, with limited budgets and a lack of experience with technology, often have trouble connecting with the people they hope to provide knowledge to.

“A lot of this stuff is buried, and in forgotten cubbyholes,” says Ed Gregory, a local historian and member of the Montague Historical Society.

The contents of these special-collection repositories are often sequestered in stacks in dusty, crowded rooms, leaving artifacts unseen and hindering the opportunity for more eyes to enjoy them. The way information is shared from these very small collections is not consistent with how the world communicates today; many cater to a specific kind of patron, requiring in-person visits by those who know what they intend to find.

“Most local historical societies of today don’t get it,” says Chris

Clawson, a member of both the Montague Historical Society and the Museum of Our Industrial Heritage in Greenfield. “Old information needs to be adapted... We need translators of these materials, which means bringing them into the digital world.”

Online archives are expensive to build, and their upkeep can break the bank. An independent consumer might spend upwards of \$50,000 annually on commercial database software. Many large-scale archival undertakings are made possible only by the deep pockets of private investors, or with the benefit of cultural grants or institutional endowments.

But Gregory and Clawson have found an alternative: a zero-cost, open-source loophole on which they built the foundation of their new online project, the Western Massachusetts History Collective. Clawson, a historian and technology buff, taught himself for free

see **ARCHIVES** page A6

## MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

### Virtual Town Meeting Likely; Required for Airport Deal

By JEFF SINGLETON

The Montague selectboard held two meetings back to back on December 21. At the first, Turners Falls Airport manager Brian Camden presented a plan for the airport, which is publicly owned by the town of Montague, to purchase private property adjacent to the runway from a company called Pioneer Aviation. This was a joint meeting with the finance committee, capital improvements committee, and airport commission.

After nearly an hour, these committees closed the first meeting and the selectboard opened its regular meeting with the board of health.

The basics of the proposed purchase have been presented at previous selectboard meetings. Pioneer plans to sell its property, which currently houses a hangar, maintenance and storage facilities, a fueling station, and a flight school crucial to the town airport operation. Camden and members of the airport commission are concerned that if the property is sold to a non-aviation company, the airport will no longer be viable.

The Pioneer purchase is time-sensitive and must be approved, along with significant borrowing and an increase in this year’s airport budget, by a special town meeting this

see **MONTAGUE** page A10

## GILL SELECTBOARD

### Ward Will Not Seek A Fifth Term This Spring

By JERRI HIGGINS

On Monday evening Gill’s selectboard reviewed the draft update of the town’s open space and recreation plan (OSRP), approved a sewer rate increase for the Riverside neighborhood, discussed a backlog of town administration projects, and appointed a seasonal snow plow driver, among other agenda items. Four-term selectboard member John Ward mentioned that he did not plan to run for re-election next spring.

In 2017, when Gill’s last open space and recreation plan expired, the town collaborated with the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) to analyze its assets and needs.

Megan Rhodes, FRCOG’s senior planner, told the selectboard that the effort culminated in over 100 pages of information, findings, and recommendations for the town.

“The plan does an inventory of all the town’s open space, natural resources, and recreational assets in town that are currently existing,” Rhodes said, “and what you may need in the future – based on

see **GILL** page A4

## Feared Evictions Pushed Back As Rental Aid Trickles Down

By SARAH ROBERTSON

**GREENFIELD** – Nobody in Franklin County has been evicted since the state moratorium ended two months ago, but the sheriff’s office continues to serve pre-eviction notices and court summonses while trying to connect tenants with as many resources as possible.

“It is very troubling, because we are obligated to follow the law, but we try to be humane as well,” sheriff Christopher Donelan told the *Reporter*. “We can slow the process down, but ultimately we’re required by law to serve the papers by the court.”

According to US Census Bureau statistics, 6.7 million people are at risk of eviction in the coming months nationwide. In Massachusetts, that includes about 146,000 renters and homeowners.

For six months between April and October, housing courts in Massachusetts shut down following



*The company managing this apartment complex in Orange served seven tenants court summonses on Monday, but says it will help them access emergency assistance.*

a state-ordered halt to all “non-essential” evictions, which expired on October 17. Since then the Franklin County sheriff’s office has delivered dozens of pre-eviction notices and at least 54 “summary process

see **RENTAL** page A9

## “Complexity of the Transition” Causes Delays in Farren Closure



*A promise to provide COVID-19 vaccination to the facility’s residents before they are moved to a Holyoke home has cast uncertainty on the timeline.*

By JEFF SINGLETON

**MONTAGUE CITY** – The Farren Care Center, which began as a hospital at the turn of the last century and has served for nearly thirty years as a home to over 100 long-term residents with multiple disabilities, remains on track to close this winter, but the time frame has been delayed until at least February and perhaps later.

Originally scheduled to shut its doors at the end of 2020, the Farren’s closing was initially delayed until January 5, according to an announcement by Trinity Health Senior Communities, a Michi-

gan-based organization which owns the unique facility. The December 1 announcement stated that the postponement was due to “the complexity of the transition before us,” as well as a desire to maintain “consistency in staffing and operations.”

The majority of Farren residents are to be moved to a nursing home in Holyoke owned by Trinity called Mount Saint Vincent Care Center, which has served a very different population of elderly residents, mostly in their 80s and 90s. The current population of the Farren is 85 residents, according to Trinity spokesperson Christine Looby.

see **FARREN** page A4

## DISPATCH

### The Moody Blues, Part II On the Threshold of a Dream?

By CHIP AINSWORTH

**NORTHFIELD** – The Northfield planning board met on Thursday, December 17 with a Kansas money man and his Missouri architect to go over plans to put a \$13 million condominium complex on eight-tenths of an acre in historic East Northfield.

The key players for Northfield were planning board chair Steve Seredynski, vice chair Meg Rioridan, and members Homer Stavely, Tammy Pelletier, and Joe Graveline. The development team was represented by Christian Arnold of Clockwork Architecture in Kansas City, Missouri, and James Spencer, the chief operating officer of the Moody Center in Over-

land Park, Kansas, a hub of the Christian non-profit industry.

Earlier in the week, media operations specialist Aleana Saldana of the Moody Church in Chicago confirmed: “We are not affiliated with the Moody Center in Overland Park, Ks.”

No indeed, Moody Center’s *raison d’être* was thanks to the National Christian Foundation’s decision to give its Northfield property to Thomas Aquinas College and the Moody Center. The former now uses it for education, and the latter for profiteering.

“We already gave you permission to build [two other projects], where’s that?” asked Seredynski.

Still in the planning stages, see **MOODY** page A2



ABBE SCHOWITZ PHOTO

*Gus Beauchaine of Montague enjoys the snow. Happy New Year to our readers!*

### Extra Pages Because We'll Be Sleeping All Next Week

Letters and Illustration.....	A2
Local Briefs.....	A3
Positive Offerings.....	A5
December Poetry Page.....	A8
10 Years Ago: Going Dutch?.....	A9
West Along the River: Hemlocks and Holly.....	B1
Not Ultimately About Gelato.....	B1

Witness Tree Protection Program.....	B1
Montague Police Log: Stomping.....	B3
Widening Critical Oscillation.....	B4
MMM: Muse, Odalisque, Hippy.....	B5
The Gardener's Companion.....	B6
Five Comics and a Puzzle.....	B7
Great Falls Lamb's Quarters Column.....	B8





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## Doubling Down

As we put the final finishing touches on this edition and prepare to send it to the printer, we here at the *Montague Reporter* are looking forward greatly to many things.

First, a break next week – our last week off publication until the Fourth of July. Our next edition will hit newsstands on January 7. We made this one extra long and packed it with special features, so we hope you enjoy it, and have a safe and quiet New Year.

Second, despite what we just said, we’re looking forward to 2021. Against all odds, this has been a growth year for the *Reporter*. In March we made the decision to go digital-only for the first four weeks of recommended social distancing. We didn’t really have a business model to back that up, and some of our loyal readers let us know they were unable to read

us online, so we went back to print while continuing to let people read us online for free, asking them to pay for a “digital subscription” on what is essentially an honor system.

Thanks to everyone who took us up on that! It has allowed us to survive what would for a *regular* independent nonprofit rural community weekly newspaper likely have been a deadly economic shock.

If you’ve found us online and are reading without paying, please consider kicking us some money as a courtesy. There’s a Donate button at [www.montaguereporter.org](http://www.montaguereporter.org).

Third, not only have we survived, but we are enjoying the energy of new readers, new writers, and a deeper grounding in our community mission. We’re proud of the 46 issues we created in this topsy-turvy, difficult year. And we’re excited to see what comes next!

## CORRECTION

Just when we thought we had it figured out, it turns out we’ve gone and printed another error.

Mariah Kurtz, who is listed as both the planning assistant and the assistant town planner for the town of Erving on its website, brought to our attention that she had not, as we had reported in our December 17 edition. Ms. Kurtz, “reported that the electric vehicle charging stations on Arch Street have been activated” at a selectboard meeting.

“The EV charger on Care Drive in Erving was activated,” she explained. “The chargers at the Arch Street municipal lot have not been installed yet and we are hoping to have those be activated in the spring.”

“Their installation was delayed due to the changing incentives from National Grid,” she added, not at all defensively.

Thank you to Ms. Kurtz for setting the record straight, and apologies to our readers for the mistake.

**MOODY** from page A1 they answered.

Normally a three-story building the length of half a football field requires thirty acres of land to meet the bylaws, but religious entities are usually exempted from that constraint.

The Midwest outfit told the planning board its condo complex was a top priority because it needed to sell the condos to raise cash for the refurbishment of Moore Cottage and the Bookstore.

East Northfield residents have helped spearhead the restoration of the Schell Bridge and underwrite the expense of maintaining the Northfield Historical Society building on Pine Street. They also want the Moore Cottage and Bookstore to be refurbished, but not at the cost of having a three-story building in their backyards.

A Northfield activist who was watching on Zoom compared it to blackmail: give us our building, and we’ll give you the renovations you want.

Spencer argued that the new condos and room rentals at Moore Cottage would bolster tourism. “We’re already getting 15,000 visitors a year,” he said.

Really? That’s 42 visitors a day, 365 days a year. I can see the Moody Center from my yard, and there’s not 42 of anything, not people, dogs, cats or squirrels.

The truth is the Moody Center is to religious sites what the KC Royals are to the New York Yankees, a low-market afterthought. The Billy Graham Library in Charlotte has 888 Google reviews and the Old North Church in Boston has 667. The Moody Center has three reviews, by people who also reviewed Dunkin Donuts shops and Market Basket stores.

Moody/Clockwork’s grandiose sell job reminds me of Bill Faucher’s dream to revive harness racing in Hinsdale, New Hampshire. A successful standardbred breeder, Faucher’s plan was to open an off-track betting parlor in Hinsdale and use the profits to build a har-

NINA ROSSI ILLUSTRATION

Kara creates jewelry in between waiting on customers at Tangible Bliss, the shop she and her partner Jaero own at 38 Third Street in Turners Falls. The couple make almost everything in the store, including tie dye clothing, leather goods, silver jewelry, wire wrapped gems, paintings, and prints.

## Letter to the Editors

### Open Letter to Rep. Jim McGovern

At the moment it appears that President Donald Trump, after years of attempting to destroy core American institutions and since the election appearing to be on the verge of a dangerous mental breakdown, has found a new ally, a new set of “enablers” – Nancy Pelosi and the mainstream leadership of the Democratic party.

After months of tortuous negotiations over a federal COVID stimulus package, the parties in Congress finally came together to pass a bill that would have provided significant aid to small business and individuals. Trump sat on the sidelines doing nothing to support this effort, instead obsessing about how the election was “stolen.” Then, at the very last second, he threatened to blow the whole thing up by vetoing the compromise based on a wide range of complaints he had not raised previously.

As of this writing (noon on December 23), Pelosi and the Democrats are going along with this bizarre behavior, threatening to break the compromise by passing

a stimulus package containing larger individual checks.

I certainly could use a bigger stimulus check and think it would be better for the economy. But destroying a congressional compromise at this point is completely irresponsible on the part of Pelosi and the Dems.

The stimulus compromise contains numerous crucial elements that need to pass now, not be subject to still more tortured negotiations. More importantly, the precedent of congressional compromise will be absolutely necessary if we as a nation are to get anything done over the next decade. And then there is the additional reality of Democrats empowering a potentially mentally ill President after four years of attacking his behavior.

Hopefully there is still time for Pelosi and the Dems to back off this terrible idea.

**Jeff Singleton**  
Turners Falls

ness track on a hill overlooking the Connecticut River.

Faucher was well liked and passionate. He built his proposed gaming site from scratch south of Walmart and convinced the New Hampshire legislature to give him a wagering license. He had three years to raise the cash, but it was futile from the start.

Hinsdale OTB attracted good crowds for the Kentucky Derby and Breeders’ Cup, but most days Faucher was lucky to have three cars in the lot. He died in 2018 and three months later the OTB went belly up.

The same could happen in East Northfield. Tourists won’t come, the condos won’t sell, and the vacant building would be an eyesore.

Last Thursday’s planning board drew a Zoom crowd of over 50 participants who were watching on their iPads, laptops and cell phones.

Graveline and Stavelly pressed Spencer and Arnold about the disproportionate size of their condo complex. Seredynsi and Riordan

asked a deposition’s worth of questions – over 130 – from neighbors who’d submitted them in writing and in real time on chat box.

The Midwesterners played hot potato about water, sewer, and storm runoff. You wanna take that one Christian? Ouch! No, you take it Jim.

Spencer is on record saying he wants construction to begin in a few months, yet he didn’t – or wouldn’t – name his building contractor, or know who would manage his condo.

The lack of a firm game plan prompted Seredynski to conclude, “This tells me you need a special permit.”

“Steve,” Stavelly added, “Could we get a [hard copy] application to put on file?”

“Oh yeah,” exclaimed Seredynski. “This is going to be huge.”

Details, details, details... some would call it due process, others would call it a charade. Two years ago Moody/Clockwork filed for a special permit to convert two lumpy athletic fields into an upscale campground.

The rendering showed a handsome A-frame amidst towering pine trees that simply don’t exist in that area.

A reasonable person would have looked at the rendering and thought, *Garbage in, garbage out*. And yet, during a contentious public meeting on September 26, 2019, Seredynski said, “We’re devolving into the ‘we like it or don’t,’ but we need to consider the zoning.”

A few weeks later, Moody/Clockwork got its special permit to build the campground.

Likewise, at the end of Thursday’s two-hour meeting Seredynski said, “We’re going to make our decision based on the master plan and current zoning laws.”

What that says is that the planning board might not have the grounds to stop the project, like it or not. The developers could build a rocket ship and sell space trips to the moon if it’s in the zoning and master plan.

Most folks would prefer they get rocketed back to Kansas.

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LARKIN-ROSSI ILLUSTRATION

By NINA ROSSI

Montague / Turners Falls residents, in case you have forgotten or did not know: **you must clear the sidewalk** around your property after it snows within 24 hours, and on-street overnight parking is banned from now until April 1.

Also, according to Section 17(c) of the town bylaws, “No person shall remove or cause to be removed snow or ice from any privately owned premises and deposit it on any way, sidewalk or public parking place.” In other words, you should not shovel out your driveway into the street.

Anyone may park overnight in municipal lots on a first-come, first-served basis, but you must obey the posted signs about moving your car out of those lots for snow removal, or face towing and a fine. Note that the town does not maintain these lots on Fridays, Saturdays, or Sundays.

So, yeah. Merry Christmas! You might get stuck.

Greenfield Public Library offers a Winter “Chill Out” **teen “craftacular” book box kit**. It features a personalized book selection, do-it-yourself stress balls, plus a marble magnet and origami lantern project.

To get yours, you will have to take a fun survey on the library website about your reading preferences: [www.greenfieldpubliclibrary.org](http://www.greenfieldpubliclibrary.org).

Looking for a volunteer opportunity that you can do virtually from home? Community Action Pioneer Valley is looking for **income tax assistance volunteers** to help community members with their tax returns. No past tax experience

is necessary. Email [smartineau@communityaction.us](mailto:smartineau@communityaction.us) or call (413) 376-1179 to learn more.

FirstLight Power, owner-operator of the **Northfield Mountain Recreation and Environmental Center**, announces that it will open its trails this winter to skiers, hikers, walkers, and other recreational users while remaining consistent with the Commonwealth’s COVID-19 safety and social-distancing guidelines.

“Northfield Mountain will be able to remain open for people to enjoy fresh air, exercise, sunshine, and socially-distanced fellowship with a few common-sense precautions, including use of masks and social distancing at all times,” writes FirstLight spokesperson Carter Wall. “Due to the rising COVID cases in the area, we will not be selling trail passes or renting equipment – trail use will be free to all, but trails will not be groomed or patrolled, and no restroom facilities or warming facilities will be open.”

When snow cover is sufficient, trails at the center will be open for skiing and snowshoeing to all guests who are wearing masks and practicing social distancing at all times. At times when snow cover is absent or too icy, thin, or inconsistent, trails may be open for hiking, walking, and cycling on fat bikes, again with masking and social distancing required of all.

Visitors can get information about trail conditions and allowed activities by visiting the Northfield Mountain Facebook page [www.facebook.com/northfieldmountain](http://www.facebook.com/northfieldmountain), the website [www.firstlightpower.com/recreation](http://www.firstlightpower.com/recreation), or by calling (413) 659-4426.

**Doug Harris** has worked on behalf of Indigenous ceremonial stone landscapes in the Northeast for three decades. He recently helped challenge the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission as gas pipelines sought to destroy ceremonial landscapes in the path through the Otis State Forest in Sandisfield.

Doug has recently suffered a small stroke. A GoFundMe campaign has been launched so that Doug can continue with his preservation projects. These include recording the history of Indigenous ceremonial stone landscape research in the Northeast, and opening up the new field of protecting submerged landscapes with underwater archaeologists he met while speaking at the Smithsonian.

A press release from the Nolumbeka Project about Doug asks readers to “please show your gratitude to him and his long standing work and expertise by supporting his continuing work.” To donate, see [www.gofundme.com/indigenous-ceremonial-stone-landscapes](http://www.gofundme.com/indigenous-ceremonial-stone-landscapes).

The latest **Coalitions Connections** e-newsletter is packed with helpful information and resources. Learn about job training programs, food resources, COVID-19 information and advice – including what to consider during school vacation time, and what quarantine means – as well as recent COVID data for towns in Franklin County. Email [ilana@frcog.org](mailto:ilana@frcog.org) to get yours!

The Digital Equity Alliance is looking for stakeholders to take a **survey on the digital divide** in their community. The survey can be completed by any organization, municipality, school district, or key stakeholder willing and able to contribute to a shared knowledge base on the issue.

The Alliance is committed to addressing the digital divide affecting residents in Hampden, Hampshire and Franklin counties. Special focus is on the needs of seniors, students, and disabled

residents, Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) residents, residents of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, rural residents too remote to get internet access, and residents of low socio-economic status.

Take the survey at [sites.google.com/view/digitalequityalliance/home](https://sites.google.com/view/digitalequityalliance/home). It takes about eight minutes to complete, and closes after December 31.

Also of general interest is **free Narcan** from Tapestry and the Opioid Task Force. Please email [narcan@opioidtaskforce.org](mailto:narcan@opioidtaskforce.org) with your request. You can also call or text Tapestry’s Mobile Outreach phone (413) 221-7722 between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. They will even deliver in Franklin County and the North Quabbin area. You may save someone’s life if you can administer this nasal spray during an overdose.

The Massachusetts Cultural Council is taking applications for their **\$5,000 Artist Fellowships**. These are unrestricted, anonymously judged awards based solely on the artistic quality and creative ability of the original work submitted.

The current round of fellowships are for work in the categories of Crafts, Dramatic Writing, Film, and Video, Music Composition, Photography, and Sculpture/Installation/New Media. The deadline is Monday, February 8. Apply through [www.massculturalcouncil.org](http://www.massculturalcouncil.org).

Have a safe and happy holiday, everyone! We will **not be publishing next week** on New Years Eve. This will be the last “holiday” we take until our biweekly summer schedule resumes in July and August. Appropriate compensatory gifts of food and drink may be left at our office at 177 Avenue A on Wednesday nights for the next six months.

Send your local briefs to [editor@montaguereporter.org](mailto:editor@montaguereporter.org).

# FACES & PLACES



MAGGIE SADOWAY PHOTO

For almost four years, my now almost 6-year-old granddaughter spent two or three busy days a week with me. What a gift to both of us!

Then came Friday the 13th in March, when all that stopped abruptly – no more up-close visits, no jumping in the car to see a friend or find a playground... barely seeing each other at all.

On a beautiful October day, she led me on a long walk through the woods and along Migratory Way. Her shoulders suggest sad resignation to wearing a mask and staying at least six feet from me, but her carefree feet clearly say to keep going. Even the often-busy path is empty, and there are almost no birds on the water.

I return to the photo again and again, finding it haunting, evocative of the coronavirus year and the way so many of our relationships have changed. But also of the beauty that continues to surround us.

Maggie Sadoway  
Turners Falls

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## GILL from page A1

environmental changes and population changes, things like that.”

Besides having current and extensive data on the town’s natural and economic assets, along with input from an OSRP committee and 41 survey respondents, an up-to-date plan will enable Gill to apply for various state grants that would help fund parks, trails, playground equipment, or other recreational proposals. Once the draft is reviewed and approved by the state, the town will be eligible for those grants through 2027.

The draft OSRP identifies five priorities for Gill: protecting natural, recreational, and agricultural resources; responding to the needs of farmers and foresters; maintaining or improving recreational programs and facilities; collaborating with other entities to protect open space and recreational resources; and supporting economic development.

“To implement those priorities,” said Rhodes, “the open space and recreational plan has a number of recommendations – in fact, about nine pages of recommendations.”

Rhodes highlighted several recommendations that she said “reflect the changing conditions in town”: joining FRCOG’s regional pollinator habitat corridor project; supporting Gill’s farmers and restaurateurs in building farm-to-table relationships, learning about land trusts as a way to protect more public land, establishing more biking, hiking and walking trails – including a planned public access trail at Factory Hollow – and creating a public park along the river, “similar to the walking path and picnic area on the Montague side.”

Most of the survey respondents said that they felt the town needs to protect more land. “Most people said that the town needs to protect more land,” Rhodes reported. “Only 3%

of the respondents said that Gill has enough protected land...”

“Over half of the respondents said that they would be willing to pay higher taxes for the town to buy and protect land,” Rhodes added, “so that was pretty interesting.”

A two-week public comment period is now open on Gill’s website for residents, and anyone else who may be interested, to comment on the draft plan. Rhodes and the OSRP committee will incorporate any changes or comments that are made.

## Town Administrator Projects

The dilemma of timely work mounting due to the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown, along with town administrator Ray Purington’s request to not have another person at the town hall with him while the case numbers are currently surging, put the selectboard in the somewhat awkward position of speaking about someone who was also on the call.

“Ray has a lot on his plate, and because there is so much on his plate, there are things that are falling off,” began selectboard member John Ward, who also acknowledged that “this has been a very bizarre time to try to find and hire anybody to clerk for [Purington].”

“Because I am going to get off of the selectboard in a few months,” Ward continued, “it would be appropriate for me to say, ‘maybe we can figure out a way for the selectboard to help Ray more.’ And, since Greg [Snedeker] is not on the call right now, maybe you and I can get together and volunteer a lot of Greg’s time for this,” he joked to selectboard chair Randy Crochier.

“There you go,” said Crochier, playing along. “Another part of this is that Ray does a lot of things for a lot of boards.”

“I understand the frustration of things falling off Ray’s plate,” Cro-

chier continued, “but on the other end, he keeps all of these boards running legal – which is huge, and keeps us from getting us into binds elsewhere. I am willing to do more for Ray anytime.”

Ward agreed, and the discussion will be continued at the next selectboard meeting.

## Sewer Rate Increase

“My recommendation is unchanged from two weeks ago when we looked at the first draft proposal,” said Purington about the sewer rate increase discussed at Gill’s December 7 selectboard meeting.

Saying that he hadn’t received any feedback from residents since the proposal, Purington again recommended “Scenario C, which is a 3.5% increase. It covers the 2% rate increase that Montague has done this year, and raises a little more for the repairs we know we are going to need.”

“Because I am part of that Riverside district,” said Ward, “I will be courageous and move that we adopt a 3.5% increase.”

The rate increase was approved unanimously.

## French King Bridge

Stacey Hamel, whose stepson took his life at the French King Bridge in 2018, reached out to the Gill selectboard seeking any town officials who would be willing to appear in a documentary being made by Jared Britt, an Athol/Orange-based filmmaker.

Hamel, who has organized several “stand-outs” at the French King Bridge to raise awareness of the need for suicide barriers there, was approached by Britt to film a documentary about the effort to get the barriers installed. The barriers have been approved by the state, but funding has been delayed.

“Typically,” said Purington, “when there is an opportunity or a request for municipal employees to be a part of some type of film project – essentially it is a town employee commenting on the record representing the town. The preferred option is to have the selectboard approve that ahead of time.”

Ward said he would like to have police chief Christopher Redmond, fire chief Gene Beaubien, “or any of the guys who have to go out in boats and put themselves at risk” speak of their experiences responding to suicide calls.

Crochier agreed the project was important, but said he would like to meet with the filmmaker before making any decisions. “Although, I have seen his work, and it is very good,” he added.

*If you’re thinking about suicide, are worried about a friend or loved one, or would like emotional support, you can talk with someone now. The Suicide Prevention Lifeline is available 24/7 across the United States at 1 (800) 273-8255.*

## FirstLight License

The board reviewed two procedural schedules released last week by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) for upcoming hearings regarding FirstLight Power’s application to relicense its hydropower facilities at Northfield Mountain and Turners Falls.

“This is mostly an FYI topic,” said Purington.

Purington said he had notified FERC of Gill’s interest in filing as an intervenor on both projects, which FERC will “solicit in May as part of the ‘ready for environmental analysis’ step.”

Intervenor will have a 60-day window to file with FERC, but Purington said that the selectboard can file comments at any time.

“It gives us some time now to be thinking about what we might want to file as reasons for being an intervenor, and what we might want to file as comments” said Purington. “But we do not have a hard deadline looming where we need to get something done this week or next month.”

Crochier asked Purington to forward the information to “anybody in town that you believe it should go to, and ask them to get back to you with information.”

## Other Business

William Leh was appointed as seasonal snow plow driver. Crochier recused himself from the discussion and approval because both men are members of the Turners Falls Schuetzen Verein.

As an aside, Ward said he wanted to thank highway superintendent John Miner for the job the highway department did during last week’s snowstorm.

“I think they did a great job,” he said, mentioning that Miner’s crew seemed to not use salt on the roads by the river. “I do not mind hard-packed snow on the roads, and it was much nicer for all the people walking their dogs around down here – because the only place to walk is on the road – and you are not dealing with salt and slush, and salty paws.”

“It would be interesting to find out why they did it differently,” Crochier responded, “but whenever you are not putting salt and sand on the road, it is a good thing.”

The selectboard approved annual license renewals for Green River PowerSports and the Cielito Lindo food truck.

## FARREN from page A1

David Skoczulek, speaking for the iCare Corporation, a company that has been operating and intends to buy Mount Saint Vincent, told the *Reporter* that the population of that facility is currently in the “high 40s,” and estimated that its total capacity “in the 120s.”

Now it appears that residents of both facilities will be encouraged – but not required – to receive vaccinations against the coronavirus before the consolidation takes place. Since that will probably not begin until the first of the year and requires two shots over a two week period, the transition may not begin until mid-January.

Both Looby and Skoczulek indicated that the transition will be “phased in.”

David Roulston, a Greenfield lawyer who serves as a guardian for six of the Farren residents, said he assumed that the majority would be moved to Holyoke, but that he had not been contacted by Trinity about their plans. He said he had “put the kibosh” on one patient’s proposed transfer to a nursing home “with a poor reputation.”

Roulston noted that residents or their guardians must consent to any proposed transfer, although their options are limited. Most residents at the Farren have been rejected by three or more other nursing homes.

“They are making this up as they go along,” he said. “I’ve been shocked at the lack of planning.” Roulston, who has opposed the Farren closing since it was announced last summer, was considering seeking a court injunction until Trinity announced its plans for vaccination.

Judy Fonsh of Leverett, a former Farren administrator who opposed the closing at two fall public hearings, echoed Roulston’s comments. “There does not seem to be any planning going on,” she told the *Reporter*. “At least, little has been communicated to residents and their families.”

Fonsh said that in early December an organization called the Dignity Alliance helped facilitate a meeting about the Farren transfer with the

ombudsman at the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, Marylouise Gamache. Fonsh said complaints were raised about the lack of planning and communication with residents and their families at both facilities.

“It was a lovely conversation,” Fonsh said, but the group felt the responses from officials to their questions were vague.

Doris Bardwell, whose mother now resides at Mount Saint Vincent, reported the same impressions from the meeting with the state. She said that “very little information” has been shared with residents and their families about the move. “Most of the answers to my questions have come from reading the newspaper,” she told the *Reporter*.

Bardwell, who also testified against the consolidation at the fall hearings, has repeatedly asked how iCare planned to combine the two facilities with radically different populations.

According to Bardwell, families of Mount Saint Vincent residents have received two communications from iCare, one of which announced the facility’s “new focus” on patients with multiple disabilities. Most of these patients, she said, “probably would have been rejected” by the Holyoke nursing home in the past. Bardwell has not been able to visit her mother in her room since the pandemic began in March.

Mount Saint Vincent was formerly operated by a Catholic organization called the Sisters of Providence, which also managed the Farren for many years. The Holyoke nursing home traditionally featured a strong religious orientation, and Bardwell said her mother was raised a devout Catholic. She expressed concern that iCare was “non-denominational,” and noted that the Sisters of Providence had removed all their religious “artifacts” from the chapel in early December. “They took them away, and now it’s empty,” she reported her mother saying about the chapel.

The *Reporter* raised these concerns with Skoczulek, who is iCare’s vice president of business development. Skoczulek acknowl-

edged that the communication with Mount Saint Vincent residents and their families had “gone quiet” due to the holidays and the recent spike in COVID cases.

He also agreed that how iCare would combine two facilities with radically different populations was “critically important to residents and their families. We’ve heard that from Day One.” But he suggested that the solution was a work in progress “that takes more than a paragraph or a letter.”

If families find that their loved ones no longer wish to stay at Mount Saint Vincent, he said, “we will help them find another place. We have social workers, and we will help them get safely moved.”

Skoczulek also said that iCare, although non-denominational, operates on a “Christian basis” involving “an acceptance of all faiths.” The former Mount Saint Vincent, which will get a new official name, “will not have the same level of vibe, but residents will not be lost in a sterile environment,” he said.

“We’re not going to get the benefit of the doubt,” Skoczulek added about the concerns expressed by critics of the consolidation. “The proof is in the pudding.”

The *Reporter* was unable to reach employees of either the Farren Care Center or Mount Saint Vincent willing to speak on record for this article. During the public process leading to the closure, Trinity said that Farren employees are encouraged to reapply to work at the Holyoke facility. Farren employees have been informed, according to one source, that if they are considering reapplying to the Holyoke facility they should sign up to request more information about the application process.

The Farren closure plan approved by the state Department of Public Health includes a commitment from Trinity, in collaboration with state employment agencies, to implement a “comprehensive transition plan” for employees, including 60 days of severance pay.

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# A Time For Essential Positivity:

## Year-End Offerings by the Turners Falls High School Journalism Class

“We must accept finite disappointment, but we must never lose infinite hope.” – Martin Luther King, Jr.

**Dakota Smith-Porter**, *TFHS Journalism teacher*: In a world that feels heavy and burdened with disappointments, it is important to remember the infinite hopes that surround us all. When we acknowledge these hopes and share them with others, we may be empowered with the ultimate gift of giving. This semester I have been given the privilege of

connecting my students with our local community of *Montague Reporter* readers. In this year-end edition we would like to share with you our perspectives of positivity and our hopes for the future. Our wish is that you may be encouraged by them and be inspired to foster your own, and in turn share them with the many that surround you. So, without further ado...



Madison Gagne writes: “My cat Tigger sleeps next to me while I’m in school. He is so cute, the mere look of him makes me smile!”

**Logan Addison**, *10th grade*: Staying positive is hard, very hard. You have to teach yourself to become positive, and the teaching never ends. You learn more and more every day about being positive and about yourself. Everyone struggles with having a constructive outlook, including me, but we all have our ways of keeping the positive energy. I use music, golf, video games, movies, and YouTube to escape our sometimes seemingly depressing world.

I have taught myself that when you think positively, believe good things are coming, acknowledge you have what you need, and strive to live your ideal life, beneficial things are more likely to happen to you. In contrast, if you think negatively and down on yourself, then you too will get more negative things in return. This thinking method is based in a mindfulness theory called *manifesting* (the Law of Attraction).

I heard this quote one time online, it goes a little something like this: “Live like there’s a camera crew with you all times, documenting your life.” It makes me think how differently I would act if there truly was a camera crew with me at all times. Would I make different choices? Would I make the best of the time I have? I guess I may never find out, but it’s a good thought experiment, because it makes me want to strive for better things and live a better life.

I also use the word “future” to help me through a tough time. I use it because I’m always thinking about my future and how I’m going to do “big things” in what I’m truly passionate about – when I discover it.

Time is the most valuable thing. I am trying my hardest to not waste it, and to do the things I love and the things that make me happy. Stay positive, value your time, and make the best of it.

**Aaliyah Costantino**, *9th grade*: I keep myself thinking positively by thinking about all of my goals and what I can achieve in my near and distant future. My mother is also a source of support in helping me to think positively. I skateboard, listen to music, artistically paint my walls, and grow plants to deal with my stress and keep me motivated.

Advice I would tell a stranger to encourage them would be “never give up, and keep on going.” I am looking forward to passing this school semester and passing my upcoming semesters, so I can finish high school successfully.

I am thankful for my mom, my dad, my hamster, my guinea pig, my turtle, my Axolotl (an amphibian), my spider, my snakes, and my best friend Xavor. I have stayed healthy during stressful times by talking to counselors and healthcare professionals. I am able to relax when I feel I can express whatever and however I am feeling at a given moment.

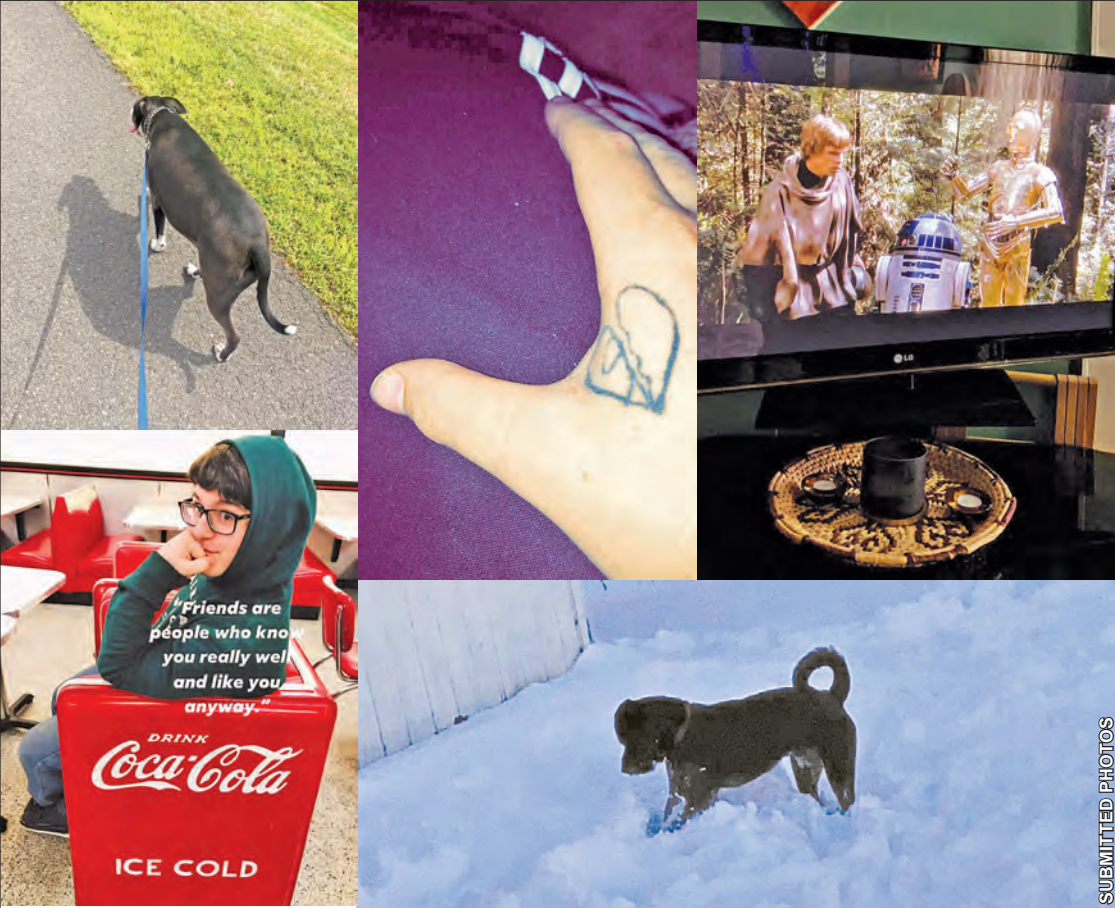
It can be hard when a lot of people are contracting COVID and losing beloved family members. I know I have felt depressed when I am asked to stay inside and am not able to do the things that I enjoy, like hanging out with my friends. To remedy those feelings I have been trying and learning new activities, like making art, meditation, and yoga.

**Bryce Finn**, *11th grade*: Once I found a video on the internet where an old man (@OM-Steve) encouraged his viewers to “take it slow, day by day, hour by hour, minute by minute, or even second by second. It’s better to wait to see about tomorrow than worry about it.”

I found inspiration when this old man took

the time to share the truths: that even though we are in a stressful time, every second of life is still precious. When I need to refocus, and slow down to the seconds, I listen to music, make art, and play video games.

In the future I hope that my friends will spread positivity amongst other people. This world feels pretty lousy at a time like this, and people need to spread positivity. We need to see the good during the bad times. When we see the good, we are able to spread the good around.



Clockwise from top left: Haleigh Greene takes Rylee for a walk down Turners Falls Road. Connor Demers writes: “My hand tattoo is a visual reminder of things that I have overcome in the past, and bad decisions that I won’t make again. It reminds me that my heart can’t be broken twice.” Logan Addison watches *Star Wars: The Return of the Jedi*. Jamie Thayer’s new puppy plays in the snow. And Bryce Finn takes a seat, commenting that “friends are people who know you really well and like you anyway,” even if you’re “ice cold.”

**Haleigh Greene**, *12th grade*: When I need words of encouragement I think to myself, “You never know what’s around the corner. It could be everything. Or it could be nothing. You keep putting one foot in front of the other, and then one day you look back and you’ve climbed a mountain” (Tom Hiddleston).

When I feel like I need motivation, I go for long drives while listening to music, and take my dog for a run. If I were to give advice to a stranger about keeping hopeful during this pandemic, I would say, “keep looking forward to the future, and you’re not alone.”

The outcome I am hoping for in my future would be to have a little more normalcy, being able to go to school (since it’s my senior year), dance at a prom, and travel with my class on our senior trip. I am thankful for my community because I always see people helping each other and taking the severity of the pandemic seriously.

When I think about how to stay positive, the words I think of are *hope*, *determination*, *togetherness*, and *courage*. I have stayed connected with my friends and family through FaceTime and texting.

Finally, I think that I share the feelings of isolation and internal conflict to stay positive and motivated, but at the end of the day, the hope is that everyone shares the responsibility to take care of ourselves, and that we’re all in this together!

**Y. R.**, *12th grade*: When I find myself in difficult situations I tend to keep myself posi-

tive by just listening to music or just watching YouTube to take my mind off of the situation. My wallpapers on my phone are always usually a positive quote or saying, so I can go back and read that, if I find myself having trouble staying positive.

This year has been crazy. Staying motivated has been really hard for myself and my family, so when we feel down, we like to go to each other for support. We have had more family game nights, family movie nights, and time to share that brings us closer together.

I have a quote I like to tell people when they’re feeling unmotivated, “difficult roads often lead to beautiful destinations,” meaning difficult situations don’t always last forever, and they can often lead to some really good and beautiful outcomes.

My hope for the future is that COVID is remedied and that we can go back to our regular lives and jobs. Even though it might not happen, I have hope that it will.

Like I said before, it is very hard to stay motivated during difficult times, but staying connected with family and friends always helps me, especially with facial video calling like FaceTime and Zoom.

I know this is a weird and really difficult time for human beings, but our shared hope is that we are all learning to live through it day by day.

**Dylyn Russell**, *11th grade*: When I start to feel down, I often tell myself, “this will be over some day in the future.” In my spare time, I often listen to music and think about my future plans. Sometimes I may choose to play video games to keep myself from getting bored during the day.

If I were to tell a stranger some words of positivity, I would tell them, “as long as you can wear masks and social distance, we can overcome this.” My hopes for next year is that a COVID vaccine becomes widely available and the spread of infection becomes controlled. I am thankful that my community seems willing to take safety pre-

cautions more seriously than other communities in America.

When I want to search for positivity, I will tell myself that “the vaccine is near. If I and many others can get the vaccine, then maybe we can finally put this to an end.”

I stay connected to my friends and family to the best of my ability while remaining safe. I can relate with the community by wanting to avoid the virus to the best of my ability, and wanting this pandemic to end so that we can return to a life that somewhat resembles “normal” life. This is all possible, we just need to put in effort to fight the pandemic to the best of our ability.

In the meantime, live your life as fully as you can. Life is always shorter than you think, so make the best of each day of our lives.

**Emily Sevrens**, *12th grade*: When I tend to find myself in a difficult position, I like to think or do something positive to try and help cheer me up. The activity I normally choose to help me stay positive is listening to music. Listening to my favorite songs has helped me feel more relaxed. Another thing that helps to calm me down is to go on walks around my block. The fresh air seems to make me feel better after a rough morning.

Advice I would give to a stranger is “never give up hope.” It not only applies to our current life with a virus, but to “regular” life as well.

An outcome I’m hoping for in my future is to finally get a job and learn how to drive.

I am thankful for people who take the pandemic seriously; it makes me feel like my life is important to them. When thinking about trying to stay positive, a phrase that tends to pop into my mind is “it’ll end eventually.” I say this to myself to keep hope that the current struggle won’t last forever. I am happy that I have been able to stay connected with friends and family through social media, and calling them on the phone.

Finally, I feel like everyone can agree that this pandemic has been worrying, hard, and overall just plain annoying. I also believe that everyone would agree that they miss their friends, family, and school, but we must look to the future, and “never give up hope.”

**Kaylyn Zimmerman**, *12th grade*: Some ways that help me think positively are focusing on my goals to get ahead. I stay motivated by listening to music and/or doing a lot more artwork.

I tell people to keep their head up because the little speed bump they’re encountering is smaller than the greater outcome on the other side of the speed bump. I’m hoping by the end of next year I will have at least a little more than half of the money I need to buy a car.

I hope to have a better year next year, for sure, with the hopeful conclusion of COVID. I’m thankful for my parents and my boyfriend for being by my side through this time, helping me when I’m down, and helping push me to do better than I have done before. I think the one phrase I have heard the most is “be strong, because it does get better.”

I have stayed decently connected with family and friends, for the most part. I talk to some on the phone, and hang out with very few of my friends. I think one thing we all can relate to is that we are ready to resume “life as usual,” but we have to be patient.

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## ARCHIVES from page A1

how to program in software languages including *DSpace*, a digital content organizer developed by MIT University and the Hewlett-Packard Company.

A snapshot of the Lake Pleasant dance pavilion in 1900, in its spiritual heyday before the fires that ravaged the village; a 1936 photograph of Samoset Island below the Turners Falls dam, enveloped in misty fog; a view of Second Street looking towards Unity Park from Avenue A, circa 1895 – these are just a few of the digitized photographs from local archives and historical societies now made available to browse on the History Collective website, [montaguearchive.org:8443/](http://montaguearchive.org:8443/).

The database is not intended to be exclusive: the project is intended to give all 26 of Franklin County's towns a greater platform to share their history. "History does not stop with a border," Clawson explains. In addition to the five villages of Montague, searchable communities include Colrain, East Deerfield, Sunderland, Greenfield, and Shelburne Falls, and the number continues to grow.

### Digital Folklore

The Montague Historical Society and Museum of Our Industrial Heritage collections can also be searched directly on the site, and Gregory and Clawson have established a blog at [montaguearchive.org](http://montaguearchive.org) as a counterpart, where they regularly publish articles high-



## Unearthing the Archives

PART XIV: The Western Massachusetts History Collective Database and Montague Historical Society



lighting aspects of the collections, such as old film footage spanning decades past, including home movies filmed by community members in the area.

One can now retrace the past iterations of this area's landscapes free of cost by sifting through over 3,000 scans of photographs, written documents, and other ephemera, courtesy of the time and effort put in by Gregory, Clawson, and their collaborators.

Users can discover how rural land was developed into urban areas, see how the industrial hydro-power revolution impacted the creation of our towns, view the after-effects of the 1936 flood, and delve into the manufacturing world that the architecture of Turners Falls reveals to this day.

The database can be browsed by subject matter, title, issue date, and community, as well as by the "author" who added the material.

"Historical societies or museums can be given their own access to the database," says Gregory. "They can edit their own materials, and add to the collection while keeping their physical collections housed in their original places."

While many small, low-budget repositories are still parsing through

their own inventories to understand them, the Western Massachusetts History Collective offers them an opportunity to bring their collections into the limelight.

A 1970s-era photograph of Gem Market, once located at 88 Third Street in Turners Falls, gives a good example of how this database is more than just a storage facility. A remark embedded in its description states, "The tiny white house to the right was occupied by 'six-finger Mort.' Mort McClary had six fingers on each hand. A small, 'finger-like' appendage dangled from each of his baby fingers."

This anecdote, nestled in the description of a grocery store photograph, conveys a personalized encounter uploaded by locals who have experienced this past personally, heard about it, or read it from those who wrote it down. It is local folklore being given a digital footprint.

### Higher Resolution, Longer Life

Proper archival preservation techniques are vital to the survival of physical collections – a photograph left in the sun will fade over time. But even digital objects will disintegrate; low-resolution scans have less of a chance to survive when the time comes to migrate

to new generations of technology. Clawson and Gregory believe digital preservation is just as important as conserving the originals.

"Curating artifacts for digital media requires you to understand how much information is actually there," Clawson explains. "You want the reproduction to be just as good as its original; you want to be able to magnify certain details in a shot. The rare, oversized John Russell factory lithographic of a birds-eye view from the 1870s took me two weeks to digitize, but a small snapshot portrait wouldn't take as long."

Creating sustainable files, scanned at high resolutions, can take time – for instance, it can take weeks to scan oversized maps section by section and digitally stitch them back together using editing software.

The amount of time it took Clawson and Gregory to produce scans of a 230-page handwritten 1937 money ledger from the Joseph Griswold Manufacturing Company of Turners Falls – of the Griswold Cotton Mill, now known as the Railroad Salvage building – could make it seem like an unworthy, daunting task to complete. Yet there is more revelatory power in flipping through this kind of forgotten ar-

The Montague Historical Society Blog has a step-by-step introduction on how to navigate the database: [montaguearchive.org/index.php/navigate2/](http://montaguearchive.org/index.php/navigate2/)

The right-hand sidebar provides options for browsing:

- *Communities & Collections*
- *By Issue Date*
- *Authors*
- *Titles*
- *Subjects*

Browsing by title is a good starting point for anyone who wants to take a look at the database. Each title also has a small photo thumbnail, which is helpful if you are not familiar with a particular name or location.

tifact than one might think, and it can help us measure to what degree money was valued and circulated.

### A Collective Effort

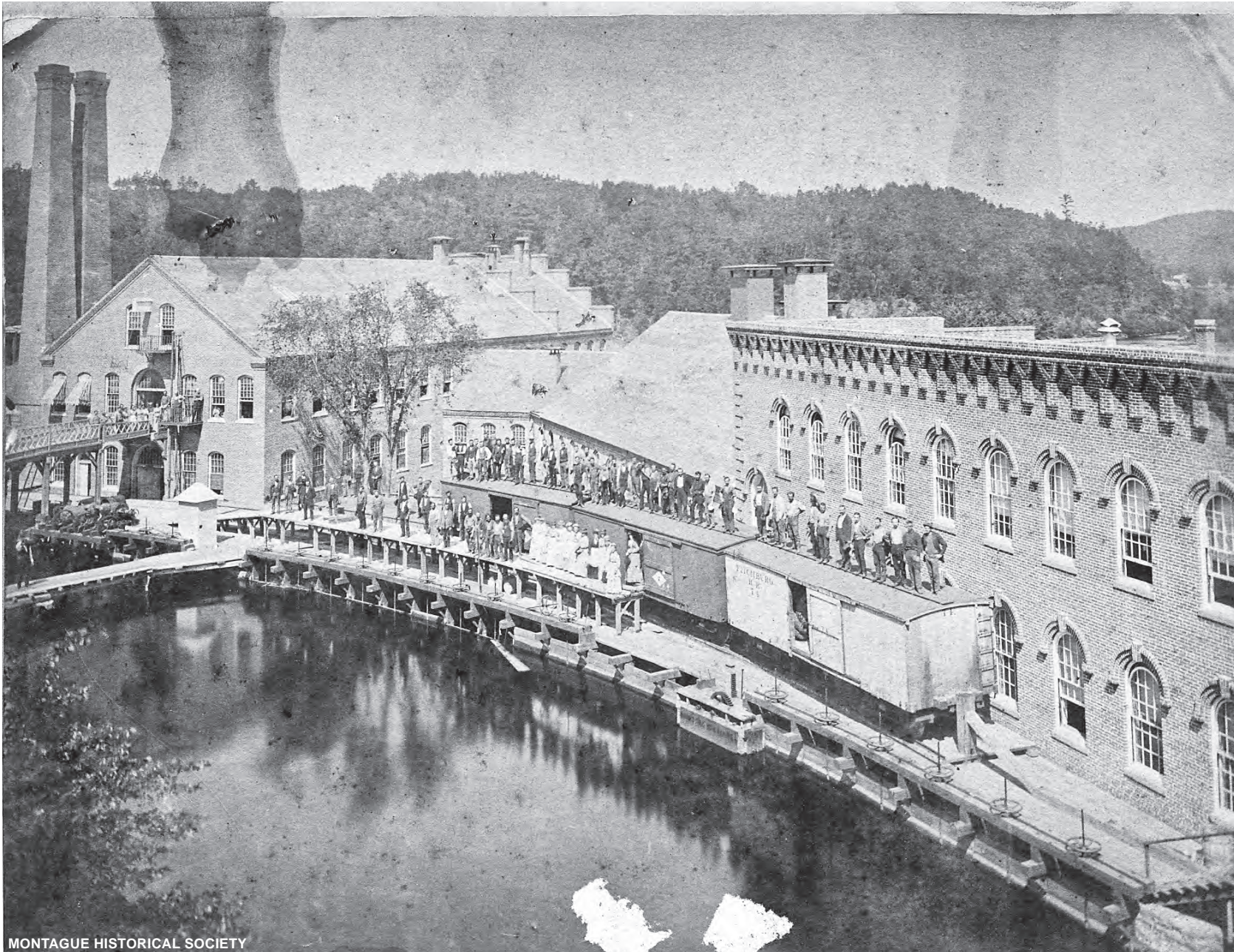
The idea of consolidating and sharing all these little pieces of history – reaching back centuries or taken from the last few years, preserved by historical societies or found in personal homes – is a driving force for Clawson and Gregory, who are making no financial gains from the project. The pair has been doing this work for years, but up until now, the challenge has been in getting it out to the public.

"If you believe in something and nobody else is going to do it, then you are motivated," says Clawson. "We might spend the rest of our lives getting this stuff out that has already been written and compiled. Where is the information, if you have photos that aren't explained?"

A DIY mentality is necessary for any undertaking this massive, but the Collective needs more archivists to participate and contribute in order to keep the momentum going. Local historical societies and individuals with private collections are encouraged to loan their materials in order to be cleaned, scanned, and shared on a bigger stage.

"The bulk of the work is to build the house for others to use and add to," Clawson continues. "No one has to surrender their collection. You're not giving up anything. If you have photographs of your great-grandparents in front of the Montague Paper Company building, why would you want to give that up? We can clean it, scan it, share the digital image, and the community can enjoy the history it unveils."


If more communities band together to build online databases like the Western Massachusetts History Collective, utilizing their individual strengths and resources, so much more historical knowledge could emerge to inform the present. This kind of meticulous recognition and organization of each participant, storyline, and particle of land could make the work of remembering a little less arduous for future generations.



MONTAGUE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

*A canal-side view of Montague Paper Company from around 1876, part of the Carnegie Library collection on the website.*

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# Career Services: A Resource Every Student Needs

Malcolm X once said, "Education is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it today."

While this is particularly true at Greenfield Community College— where programs are aligned with current and emerging employment opportunities— for many students, owning tomorrow requires more than a degree.

How do students successfully bring their skills into the workforce? How do they leverage their education in order to have an impact? How does learning lead to purposeful and lucrative careers?

These questions inform the mission of GCC's Career Services Center, whose goal is to empower students to become career ready by giving them: resources to make informed career decisions; tips and tools to prepare for internships and job applications; access to professional connections and employment opportunities; and the chance to align their education path with their life goals as well as the job market.

Head of the center, Shannon Doran, came to GCC in September of 2019 from the MassHire Franklin Hampshire Workforce Board, where she worked with Franklin County high schools, helping students make informed career and education decisions and giving them access to work-based learning opportunities.

"When we are researching occupations, it's like we are looking at a catalogue of life," says Shannon, "I think the process as well as the career/education path we choose can be very fulfilling."

This isn't just her opinion— research has shown that graduates who engage with career services are more likely to find their more jobs satisfying and meaningful.

Shannon has been building GCC's Career Services Center steadily over the past year, designing and implementing services and programs to meet the needs of all students. While she started by focusing on workshops and individual career counseling, this year she has brought the center to a new level — adapting to the reality of Covid and implementing programs that speak specifically to marginalized students who experience greater barriers in breaking into their dream jobs.

According to a Gallup poll, college graduates who visit their college career centers are "more likely to be employed full time." This is even truer for black graduates, where a 12% point gap in full-time employment separates those who visited career services (66 percent) from those who didn't (54 percent).

In order to serve students with a wide variety of resources, GCC Career Services Center will often promote the work of regional MassHire Career Centers. In fact, one of Shannon's former colleagues, Jen Drosch—the Executive Assistant at the MassHire Workforce Board— has since become a student and tutor at the college.

Jen's personal story of coming to GCC illustrates the value of charting a course towards one's own future. Three years ago, at 30, Jen decided she wanted to change careers. She started by writing down what she wanted out of a job— a process of self-reflection which led her to set her eyes on UMass for a degree in engineering. But when Jen saw the price tag of a four year degree, she decided GCC would be a smarter and more sustainable next step.

One of her colleagues at the Workforce Board was associated with the Manufacturing Skills Initiative and introduced her to a faculty member in the GCC Science Department. That faculty member went on to introduce Jen to Amy Ehmman, her current Faculty Advisor who, two years later, is helping Jen apply to UMass to pursue her degree in Civil and Environmental Engineering.

The skills Jen Drosch demonstrated in pursuing her path follow key learnings she has acquired within the realm of career services. One of those is understanding the cost to benefit ratio of pursuing a particular degree. But another, which Jen calls out specifically, is the advice to **build a network and leverage it often**.

When asked how her experience at the workforce board has impacted her, Jen says, "The biggest thing it has drilled home for me is the lack of workforce development readiness given to people who attend college. You get tons and tons of educational requirements thrown at you, but you never learn how to write a resume or a cover letter. Some schools throw a job fair out there, but even that isn't mandatory."

"You are your resume," emphasizes Jen, "Regardless of your education, it can be one of the most valuable tools you have."

Resume development is something that GCC Career Services promotes actively and regularly. In addition to providing a 3-part webinar series on resume development each semester, they also match students with volunteer Career Success Mentors to get additional 1:1 development and editing support.

A Licensed Guidance Counselor with a Master's in Education, Shannon has a long-standing commitment to increasing education and employment equity. In addition to increasing access to equity-focused career development resources, she has launched Career Success (CS) Groups, where BIPOC students or students with disabilities can meet with Career Services monthly, in order to talk through their career aims, make a realistic action plan, and get extra support in achieving their goals over the course of the semester.

"It's often the middle upper class that have been taught to advocate and to feel comfortable asking for what they need," says Shannon. "If we passively wait for students to come to us for support, we end up inadvertently excluding and not serving the students who have not been enculturated to advocate that way. That is *not* equity."

Like Jen, many people will have more than one career in their lives, let alone numerous roles in a particular area of interest. "I think of this whole process as empowerment. The truth is, most of us are doing some level of career exploration as long as we are employed," says Shannon, "Career research, self-reflection, networking, and work-informed learning like internships, can help us hone in on an industry or field that is consistent with our interests, values, strengths, and goals. Then, when we have found our career path, we can keep exploring ways to actualize our emerging potential."

As Shannon or Jen will attest: engaging with your own career development doesn't mean automatically getting your dream job right out of the gate.

"But it does mean we increase the chances of that happening within our lifetime," says Shannon. "Often sooner and in a more strategic, affordable, and fulfilling way."

TO LEARN MORE:

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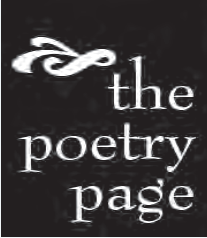
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It is difficult  
to get the news from poems  
yet men die miserably every day  
for lack  
of what is found there.

– William Carlos Williams

edited by Christopher Sawyer-Lauçanno  
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*Montague Reporter* at: 177 Avenue A  
Turners Falls, MA 01376  
or to: [poetry@montaguereporter.org](mailto:poetry@montaguereporter.org)

# December Poetry Page

## Dear White Evangelicals

### Remains

America: dirty laundry,  
Tattered and filthy,  
Heaped on the floor,  
A shrine to the human stain.  
Takes only one to sway  
Others to cut and divide the core  
Then, mold as clay  
The blistering sores  
of social decay  
Where no blistering words restore  
the radiant light of day.

– Jake Brown  
*Spokane, Washington*

### The Mirror’s Tale

Take a chance on your life,  
Three shots for a quarter;  
Behold the fat porter,  
And his bank account wife;  
He’s a wee bit shorter,  
But she’s measured in strife

Is your garden still blooming?  
Mary stays in the backyard,  
So the plants get their grooming,  
Though she works much too hard,  
Contrarily rooming  
With her solitaire cards

For the army recruit,  
Life’s explosive parade  
Is a stain on his boot,  
A distinguished tirade  
Dressed in freshly-starched suit  
And a tin accolade

View the world through a mirror,  
Introspective reflections;  
Glass cracks, in rejection  
Of a face once held dearer;  
Upon closer inspection,  
The remnants seem nearer

– Kevin Smith  
*Turners Falls*

“I need to tell you something: People have had it with you.  
They’re done.  
They want nothing to do with you any longer, and here’s why:  
They see your hypocrisy, your inconsistency, your incredibly selective mercy,  
and your thinly veiled supremacy.  
For eight years they watched you relentlessly demonize a black President;  
a man faithfully married for 26 years; a doting father and husband  
without a hint of moral scandal or the slightest whiff of infidelity.  
They watched you deny his personal faith convictions, argue his birthplace,  
and assail his character — all without cause or evidence.  
They saw you brandish Scriptures to malign him  
and use the laziest of racial stereotypes in criticizing him.  
And through it all, White Evangelicals —  
you never once suggested that God placed him where he was,  
you never publicly offered prayers for him and his family,  
you never welcomed him to your Christian Universities,  
you never gave him the benefit of the doubt in any instance,  
you never spoke of offering him forgiveness or mercy,  
your evangelists never publicly thanked God for his leadership,  
your pastors never took to the pulpit to offer solidarity with him,  
you never made any effort to affirm his humanity  
or show the love of Jesus to him in any quantifiable measure.  
You violently opposed him at every single turn — without offering  
a single ounce of the grace you claim as the heart of your faith tradition.  
You jettisoned Jesus as you dispensed damnation on him.  
And yet you give carte blanche to a white Republican man  
so riddled with depravity, so littered with extramarital affairs, so unapologetically vile,  
with such a vast resume of moral filth — that the mind boggles.  
And the change in you is unmistakable.  
It has been an astonishing conversion to behold: a being born again.  
With him, you suddenly find religion.  
With him, you’re now willing to offer full absolution.  
With him, all is forgiven without repentance or admission.  
With him you’re suddenly able to see some invisible, deeply buried heart.  
With him, sin has become unimportant, compassion no longer a requirement.  
With him, you see only Providence.  
And White Evangelicals, all those people who have had it with you — they see it all clearly.  
They recognize the toxic source of your inconsistency.  
They see that pigmentation and party are your sole deities.  
They see that you aren’t interested in perpetuating the love of God  
or emulating the heart of Jesus.  
They see that you aren’t burdened to love the least, or to be agents of compassion,  
or to care for your Muslim, gay, African, female, or poor neighbors as yourself.  
They see that all you’re really interested in doing  
is making a God in your own ivory image and demanding that the world bow down to it.  
They recognize this all about white, Republican Jesus — not dark-skinned Jesus of Nazareth.  
And I know you don’t realize it, but you’re digging your own grave  
in these days; the grave of your very faith tradition.  
Your willingness to align yourself with cruelty is a costly marriage.  
Yes, you’ve gained a Supreme Court seat, a few months with the Presidency as a mouthpiece,  
and the cheap high of temporary power — but you’ve lost a whole lot more.  
You’ve lost an audience with millions of wise, decent, good-hearted,  
faithful people with eyes to see this ugliness.  
You’ve lost any moral high ground or spiritual authority with a generation.  
You’ve lost any semblance of Christlikeness.  
You’ve lost the plot.  
And most of all you’ve lost your soul.  
I know it’s likely you’ll dismiss these words.  
The fact that you’ve even made your bed with such malevolence,  
shows how far gone you are and how insulated you are from the reality in front of you.  
But I had to at least try to reach you. It’s what Jesus would do.”

– John Pavlovitz  
*Raleigh, North Carolina*

### Contributors’ Notes

John Pavlovitz, forty-eight, is a Wake Forest resident, minister at North Raleigh Community Church, and father of two young kids. He’s also the writer behind *Stuff that Needs to be Said*, a blog that calls out our loser president and his ardent followers within the religious right. This year alone, 23 million people have viewed his blog, and he has over sixty thousand Twitter followers. His words have been featured in *Slate*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *Quartz*. His recently released book, *A Bigger Table*, explains that finding that voice was the result of a years-long process of soul searching. A former megachurch pastor, Pavlovitz didn’t fully arrive at his new, progressive mindset until a few years ago. Pavlovitz is now a youth minister at North Raleigh Community Church, a congregation that welcomes people who are questioning the Christianity they grew up with.

Originally from western Massachusetts, Jake Brown is a painter of landscapes, a songwriter and poet.

Kevin Smith, tuba player and frequent Poetry Page contributor, lives in Turners Falls with his wonderful and inspirational girlfriend Stephanie.

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RENTAL from page A1

summons and complaints,” court orders requiring tenants to appear in court on a specific date. Alongside these notices, the sheriff’s office provides information about rent relief programs, legal aid, and food assistance.

“We’re a very compassionate county, I believe,” Donelan said. “Our approach from the very beginning was to contact all the attorneys and social service agencies in Franklin County who assist renters when they’re in trouble.”

The largest available pool of assistance is the Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) program, originally designed to provide one-time financial aid to families facing homelessness. During the pandemic, the upper limit for RAFT has been increased from \$4,000 to \$10,000.

Governor Charlie Baker’s Eviction Diversion Initiative, introduced after the state moratorium ended, pledged \$100 million to the RAFT program, as well as \$12.3 million towards legal aid for tenants and landlords and \$50 million towards emergency rehousing.

Community Legal Aid (CLA), which provides free legal service for low-income defendants in central and western Massachusetts, was one of six such organizations in the state to receive funding under the Initiative. With the additional money, the organization has been able to add 20 more case-workers to their staff of about 100.

“We are taking in every eviction case that comes to us now, which is huge and expansive and exciting,” said Jennifer Dieringer, CLA’s managing attorney for Franklin, Hampshire, and Berkshire counties. “RAFT funding is helpful, but it’s not a forever thing, and at some point these folks are going to be on their own,” Dieringer said. “There are still gaps, and I think for us what we see in our evictions cases is that there is always something underlying the eviction issue.”

With the additional case managers, Dieringer said CLA can now help defendants with other forms of assistance, such as assistance in accessing food stamps, veterans’ benefits, or addiction services.

Meanwhile, all housing court hearings for the four western Massachusetts counties are taking place each day on one busy Zoom session, with the same judge, clerk magistrate, and housing specialist overseeing all cases. Dieringer said the online format is slowing down the process, and complicating their work.

Waiting For RAFT

On Monday, seven housing court summonses were issued for residents at King Pine Apartments, a subsidized housing complex in Orange. Among the residents who received the court orders was Autumn Upham, a co-organizer of the Black Lives Matter marches in Greenfield and Turners Falls this summer.

“I was a waitress and made decent money before this,” Upham said. “COVID has put me in this spot, for sure. Unemployment is nothing close to what I’m used to making.”

With two children to take care of, Upham said that half of her post-COVID income was going towards food until she was approved for food stamps last month. After she fell behind on rent payments, King Pine’s management company, Schochet Companies (a.k.a. Federal

Management Co.), contacted her about applying for emergency rental assistance.

“They have reached out a couple times advising me about RAFT, and then asking if I had applied, which I told them I did,” Upham, who has lived at King Pine for four and a half years, told the *Reporter*. “I’m not sure if they have to send out these summons for eviction just because of protocol, or what.”

According to Dieringer, even if an eviction case is resolved, whether through full payment, negotiations, or mediation by the court housing specialist, it can still leave a mark on a tenant’s record, making it harder to secure housing in the future.

“There seems to be a disparity across the state to how RAFT has flowed,” said Schochet Companies chief operating officer David Flad. Schochet manages King Pine on behalf of its owner, the national faith-based organization Retirement Housing Foundation (RHF).

King Pine was originally two adjacent complexes: Pine Crest Apartments, which catered to low-income residents, and King James Court, reserved for the elderly and disabled. The two were officially combined in 2019 after RHF received \$11.6 million from MassHousing through state income tax credits, bonds, and loans to renovate and preserve the 234-unit complex. The non-profit owns nearly 200 subsidized housing communities nationwide.

According to Flad, of the 26 subsidized housing communities Schochet manages in New England, 15 are dedicated to elderly and disabled tenants who receive Section 8 subsidies; the remainder have been “significantly economically impacted” by the pandemic.

“We’re in the affordable housing business, and our goal always and forever is to preserve tenancy,” said Schochet president and CEO Richard Henken. “We deal with folks who have fallen on hard times, and we do everything in our power to work with them.”

In Massachusetts, Flad said, rental assistance appears to be inconsistently distributed. “Some got RAFT money in July and August without being threatened with eviction,” he told the *Reporter*, “but places like King Pine have a very high percentage of folks who haven’t been able to get RAFT money.... King Pine is one of the properties where we’ve been watching delinquencies very closely. The numbers are starting to creep up.”

Upham said she receives rental subsidies through Section 8, but without regular income, she was simply unable to keep up on her portion of the payments. She is not alone: according to Flad, 28 households at King Pine are behind on rent.

“I feel like something like that may be hard on some people, mentally, who are struggling so badly right now,” Upham said. “If I didn’t feel like I was going to get the help from RAFT, I’d be a mess right now after receiving that summons.”

Maintaining Tenancy

“Industry wide there are lots of landlords like us who really work hard to maintain tenancy and take care of folks,” Henken said. “In this world, nobody wants a vacancy.”

A federal eviction moratorium enacted by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), set to expire on December 31, will be extended through January if the omnibus

relief package approved by Congress on Monday becomes law. The protection offered by the CDC is limited; to qualify, tenants must file an affidavit testifying that they are pursuing all available forms of emergency aid.

The bailout bill also includes \$25 billion for rental assistance, \$600 one-time direct payments to individuals, and a \$300 per week increase to unemployment benefits. As of Wednesday the outgoing president has threatened to veto the bill unless the individual checks are increased to \$2,000.

At the state level, the budget finalized last week includes an additional \$55 million for RAFT, and protects any tenant seeking assistance through the program from eviction. It also allocates an additional \$4.75 million for housing counseling.

Locally, resources and personnel brought together through the Opioid Task Force have shifted to help address the new crisis created by the pandemic.

“We had the relationships and public health model from fighting the opioid crisis,” Donelan explained, “and we pivoted to COVID with the same people, the same relationships, and the same models.”

As sheriff for 10 years now, Donelan said homelessness in Franklin County seems worse today than when he was first elected. “I think a lot of this has to do with mental health and substance abuse issues,” he told the *Reporter*. “With the Opioid Task Force, we’ve been working hard to support homeless shelters and warming centers, to at least keep them safe and alive during the winter.”

While the court system is not an ideal means of dealing with the compounding crisis, Donelan said helpful staff members from the Greenfield Court Service Center and CLA have been working to get information and resources to people in need before they lose their homes.

“So far we haven’t had that dilemma, because the judges have been very compassionate, and the courts,” Donelan said.

Still, a backlog of pending eviction cases is sitting in the Western Housing Court. 800 cases were in the pipeline before the moratorium was enacted last April, according to housing court clerk Christina Thompson, and fresh filings are being added each week.

This month, for example, another notice to quit was sent to a resident of the Leisure Woods Estates mobile home park in Orange, bringing the total number of pre-eviction notices there to 12. Before his tenure as sheriff, Donelan was a state legislator who sat on the Massachusetts Manufactured Home Commission, and he said he remembers receiving complaints from residents of Leisure Woods.

“I can say this company that owns Leisure Woods is a notoriously nasty landlord, with a long history of not-nice behavior,” Donelan said. “It wouldn’t surprise me that they would take advantage of the pandemic to get these people out of there.”

Though any potential evictions at Leisure Woods are subject to review by a Mobile Home Rent Control Board in Orange, recent requests to that board and the Orange selectboard for information on the pending cases have gone unanswered.

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## LOOKING BACK: 10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

*Here's the way it was on December 23, 2010: News from the Montague Reporter's archive.*

### Erving Spends First, Then Meets With Montague

The town of Erving has proposed adding \$70,000 to Montague's annual bill to help cover capital costs at the Ervingside wastewater treatment plant, which the town of Montague shares. The proposal came toward the end of a December 16 meeting between the selectboards of the two towns, who came together at Erving's request to discuss the joint agreement governing cost sharing at the plant.

"Not bad for a first meeting... very civilized" said Erving administrative coordinator Tom Sharp.

Sewer systems were certainly one of the early hallmarks of civilization, but the agreement between the towns to share costs on maintaining the treatment plant in 1973 might have just been ancient history if the Erving board had not unearthed it earlier this year.

Unfortunately, Erving had already gone ahead on its own and spent \$5.6 million to renovate the treatment plant on the Erving side of the Millers River without notifying Montague in advance.

The meeting last Thursday was an attempt to bring both towns to the table to talk about the past agreement, how the cost of current improvements should be divided, and what should happen next.

According to the 1973 agreement, Montague should share the costs of any upgrade at the treatment plant proportionally to the amount of flow it contributes to it. Now that the Millers Falls paper mill is closed, Montague contributes about half the flow to the plant.

Montague currently pays approximately \$166,000 per year to Erving in sewer user fees, but if it were to share half the capital costs for the recent upgrade, it would result in Montague paying Erving an additional \$230,000 per year, according to initial estimates.

### The Strathmore Mill: A River Runs Through It





"A phenomenal amount of water" poured through one of the Strathmore Mill buildings on Friday night, December 10," said Montague building inspector David Jensen, after a pipe in the building's sprinkler system broke.

"It is part of a dry release system," Jensen told the selectboard on Monday. "But when the pipe broke, it charged the system, and it just rained down all five levels. There's still ice on the floors. Most of it ended up in the basement.

Jensen, who has been working with members of the highway department to drain down the system, said ice in one of the lines was the likely culprit in Friday's debacle.

December temperatures this year have been colder than last, noted Jensen, and selectboard chair Pat Allen agreed. "Global warming is fickle, isn't it?" Jensen said, on a day in which he was called to the Strathmore Mill complex three times to investigate problems there.

On the plus side, Jensen enumerated a few successful projects completed at the Strathmore since the town took ownership of the mill in March of this year: more debris from the 2007 arson fire was removed, "Franklin County inmates have cleared out a bunch of recycling," and many points of possible illegal access to the mill have been blocked.



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MONTAGUE from page A1

winter. However, the actual purchase price – presumably a product of a purchase and sale agreement – awaits an appraisal.

In November Camden had estimated that the final purchase price could be up to \$1.5 million, with a federal grant paying 90%, a state grant covering 5%, and a local share of 5%. He presented spreadsheets designed to show that revenue from the facility would be sufficient to cover increased operating costs and borrowing while the federal and state grants kick in.

Camden said he hoped the appraisal would be finished in early January, and also told the *Reporter* that both federal and state borrowing will require that the facility remain open for at least 20 years under Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)’s system of “grant assurances.”

Camden covered much of the same ground at Monday’s meeting, with some updated estimates for additional costs and revenues for this fiscal year. He estimated that the airport will need to spend an extra \$52,300 this year, but would generate an additional \$57,000 in revenue in the spring from the operation of the former Pioneer facilities. The additional spending would need to be approved by town meeting – the meeting did not discuss a funding source – and the higher revenues would flow into the town’s “free cash” at the end of the fiscal year.

Camden said he had good “historical data” on Pioneer’s revenues and had made “conservative” estimates of what the town could earn. The warehouse and two hangars are the main “revenue generators,” he explained, and the hangars “have multiple tenants that are not looking to relocate any time soon.”

Camden also discussed the timeline for FAA grants and options for borrowing to cover the purchase. During this discussion Camden was assisted by Dave Rich and Janice Bland, aviation planners at Stantec, Inc. of Northampton.

Rich, who has been in the airport

design consulting business for 20 years, said the FAA has been very reliable with so-called “entitlement grants,” which do not tend to be impacted by federal budget problems. Bland said the initial grant would probably be issued for three years, with a new grant of uncertain duration issued in 2024.

Camden estimated that reaching the total federal commitment would take eight years.

Town treasurer Eileen Seymour assisted Camden with a long and rather technical discussion of various bonding options the town could use to cover the purchase while waiting for the federal and state money to arrive, as well as borrowing to cover necessary improvements to the current Pioneer facility. Seymour said these options had been discussed with the town’s “bond counsel.” She estimated a total of \$1.8 million in borrowing would be needed, either through short-term notes or a long-term bond.

Camden said he believed that the airport could fund the 5% local share and the cost of borrowing “out of the revenue generated by the property, starting next fiscal year.”

“Is there any chance of this not happening?” finance committee member Fred Bowman asked.

Camden responded that “the only thing as of right now that would give me any concern is the vote that is required on the local level.”

The date for the “local level” vote at a town meeting has not yet been set, but probably will be in February. None of the committees at this week’s meeting, which can be viewed on Montague Community Television, have yet voted to endorse the Pioneer purchase.

A Virtual Meeting

The next phase of the selectboard meeting reconvened with the town board of health in attendance.

Dave Harmon, a member of “the public,” asked what the “next steps” in the Pioneer process would be. Selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz said that he anticipated another meeting

“of some sort” with the airport commission in January.

Town administrator Steve Ellis added that the town was considering a “large-scale webinar,” not only to discuss the airport issue, but also to “pilot” some of the technical aspects of holding a town meeting virtually.

According to Ellis, 74 of 126 town meeting members had returned surveys about options for the winter meeting. He urged the remaining members to respond, and said executive assistant Wendy Bogusz would be doing outreach to members in the following week.

Ellis said the “vast majority” of those who had responded indicated that they had a viable internet connection, and 67 said they were “very likely” or “likely” to participate in a virtual meeting.

Pandemic Continues

The board held its weekly discussion with public health director Daniel Wasiuk about the number of COVID-19 cases in Montague, and changes in state policy. Wasiuk said there were 37 “active cases” from December 5 through December 19, and the “fall case count” from October 1 has been 95 cases. Throughout most of the summer the total cumulative count since the pandemic began in March stood at 30 cases.

“Certainly a big surge since October,” said Kuklewicz.

Wasiuk said there will be three phases of vaccinations in Massachusetts. The first will inoculate those in medical facilities, and some emergency responders, in December and January. Phase 2, in February and March, would vaccinate the elderly, those with preexisting conditions, and retail employees, among others. In Phase 3, April through June, the vaccine will be available to the “general public.”

With regard to vaccination sites in or near Montague, Ellis said it had become clear that the town and others it is collaborating with – Erving, Wendell and Gill – may not have sufficient emergency personnel to staff vaccination sites as originally



Joe R. Parzyjko writes: “Northern Construction Service LLC, general contractors out of Palmer, use a Komatsu PC138USLC excavator to dig a trench at the intersection of Gill’s Main Road with Route 2 and the Turners Falls-Gill Bridge. Changes are being made to the intersection in preparation for the closure of the General Pierce Bridge. Please stay tuned for coverage of the work on that and other local bridges.” Joe took this photo in mid-November, and resubmitted it with the caption in early December. Our fault. We look forward to more of his photojournalism in 2021!

planned. Wasiuk discussed the possibility of a “regional clinic at U-Mass,” which is “still in its infancy.”

Other Business

Another topic which took up a good deal of the second meeting was the question of replacing Horace Moody, the current town hall IT coordinator, who according to Ellis will be leaving “at some point in the near term.”

Ellis said that replacing Moody will not be an easy task, due to his diverse skills and the extra workload he has taken on. “He has been working for us far, far more than he ordinarily would,” said Ellis, noting Moody’s role in the Department of Public Works building project during the COVID emergency.

A range of options was discussed for replacing Moody, including hiring an in-house IT coordinator, con-

tracting with an outside source, or a combination of the two. Ellis said the town would “enter into a conversation with Moody” about his replacement, and said the solution might involve “a significant cost increase.”

The selectboard approved a long list of permits and licenses for local businesses, and discussed options for broadcasting CodeRED emergency telephone messages in languages other than English.

At the request of Ellis, board members agreed to sign a revised host community agreement with the Greenhouse Cannabis Group Inc, a pot delivery service proposed for Millers Falls. The original document had to be edited because it contained several instances of an incorrect name for the firm.

The next selectboard meeting is scheduled for January 11.



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Above: Turners Falls goes into winter mode!

BOOK REVIEW

# Lynda Mapes, *Witness Tree: Seasons of Change With a Century-Old Oak* (Bloomsbury, 2017)

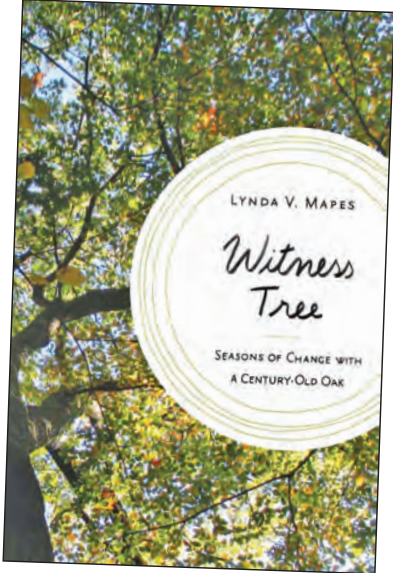
By DONNA PETERSEN

**MONTAGUE** – Most conservation biology, wildlife, or forest research focuses on ecosystems, landscapes, a species population, or an ecological community. A scientist may look at interactions, health, or behavior over a period of time in a research location. But how much can be learned by observing a single individual of a species over a year?

Lynda Mapes, a book author and science journalist for the *Seattle Times*, decided that would be her approach when she accepted a Bullard Fellowship in 2014 at Harvard Forest, a research forest located in Petersham. Mapes, with the help of scientists, picked one oak to follow for one year. She observed it, climbed it, and spent time in its presence during all kinds of weather.

What she learned fills her book, *Witness Tree*, with the wonder of how one old oak tree can show us how climate change can affect our forests and the future of our local, regional, and global ecosystems. With the help of local researchers and tree experts, she discovers and embraces the tree’s lessons, and shares those lessons with us in her book. She writes that “You could... take a deep long look at even just one tree, and see so much.”

Harvard Forest, a part of Harvard University, is a research forest that has supported a variety of investigations into the woodlands that surround us here in western Massachusetts and New England. Founded in 1907



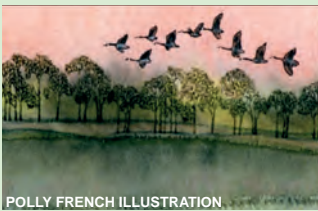
and performing long-term research projects since 1988, it has become one of most intensely studied forest landscapes in the world. Drones, installed cameras, and sensors are used to monitor research sites. Resident and visiting researchers conduct their work year round and changes in the forest system have become more apparent with all the monitoring and observing.

Mapes shares some of the history of the acres that make up the Forest and the surrounding human landscapes. David Foster, director of the Forest, tells her this was “a forested landscape, dominated by natural forces,” and that Native tribes had some impact, but “their big resource was nuts; acorns, hickories, and chestnuts.” The tree and plant composition of the forest was different then, and there were none of the pathogens introduced from other parts of the world after settlement. There was hunting, of course, but little clearing by cutting or fire.

When settlers arrived, they lived a subsistence life, first cutting trees and then clearing the planned agricultural fields of rocks and stones. The Fisher Museum at the Forest has 23 dioramas (models) showing landscape changes starting around 1700. New England forests were cleared in vast tracts, and this forever altered the landscape and helped shape what would become the second growth forest we see today.

Mapes also makes early Petersham life more personal by writing of the Sanderson family, who

see **BOOK REVIEW** page B8



## WEST ALONG THE RIVER

### KEEPING THE WINTER COMPANY

By DAVID BRULE

**THE FLAT, ERVINGSIDE** – The day stayed gray all day. This is December, what do you expect? This is achingly familiar territory. For those of us born in December, we have a deep connection with this winterscape.

So it was with glad heart that I followed the weatherman’s cautionary news of a massive snowstorm moving in from the southwest. Some were calling it a nor’easter but how could it be? The weather maps showed the storm coming in from Ohio and crossing New York. To me, a nor’easter should come in off the North Atlantic. Either way, the radio dramatically blared that millions of us are now under a winter storm warning. It should be starting around 7 p.m.

Around 6 p.m., blow-by blow reporting had Pittsburg prepping their highways; Hartford was still clear, but expecting the onslaught. The weather station was desperate for a breaking story.

Down here in my own little lair on the edge of the known world just off River Street, in the last house where the sidewalk and pavement end before

the woods take over, my personal storm-prepping was about making sure I had a good back-supply of firewood for the fireplace, while the Glenwood C cookstove had its own two cords stashed away on the back porch since October.

The evening wore on and still found us going window to window, looking for the first flakes. I had brought in the feeders and suet basket for the night – didn’t want no bear wrecking things out there, or challenging Nikolaï, our Siberian, for dibs on the suetpost.

Ten o’clock brought nothing up here in Massachusetts, but there were scenes of blowing snow in Philly and Hartford. Tired of waiting, with a last look at the bare landscape outside, we were resigned to heading upstairs for a snowless winter’s sleep. The weatherman had it wrong again.

But by 10:30, one more desperate glance out the window caught the vision of snow suddenly swirling under the street light. Within a few minutes our street was slowly disappearing under the whiteness.

Having patiently waited and witnessed the storm’s arrival, there was nothing else to do but to make

see **WEST ALONG** page B4

## THE AUTHORS’ CORNER: JENNA EVANS WELCH



Our correspondent reports that she absolutely fell in love with this book.

By IZZY VACHULA-CURTIS

**TURNERS FALLS** – Happy Christmas! In today’s article, I’m going to be reviewing one of my favorite books ever, *Love & Gelato*, and interviewing its author, Jenna Evans Welch. Enjoy!

*Love & Gelato* is about a girl named Lina who is moving to Italy for the summer to live with her dad, Howard, who she’s never met. Lina isn’t especially excited about going to Italy; the only reason she’s going at all is that before her mom passed away, she told Lina that she wanted her to go to Italy like she did when she was a teenager.

Once Lina gets to Tuscany, Italy, she is set on going home to live with her best friend Addie as soon as possible, because she doesn’t even know her dad, and she would rather

be with her best friend. Then her dad’s friend gives Lina a diary that her mom kept while she was living in Italy, which talks about secret bakeries hidden around Florence, her different romances, and lots and lots of secrets for Lina to uncover.

I absolutely fell in love with this book! I love reading about Europe, and it was so fun to have Ms. Evans Welch describe what kind of food they ate, or what kinds of gelato they were having. “It was warm and melty and tasted like every perfect thing that could ever happen to you. Italian Summers. First loves. Chocolate,” was the way Ms. Evans Welch described the *Cornetta con Nutella*. It sounds so yummy!

All the descriptions of what the different towns, buildings, and scenery looked like are so fun, and

see **AUTHORS** page B5



Nicky, the Siberian husky, waits for the next winter adventure.





CHRISTOPHER CARMODY COLLAGE

# “PEPE”

Do you want to make a difference in a special kitty’s life? Consider adopting one of Dakin’s “Spirit Cats.” These cats are fearful of people and don’t require a lot of attention. What they do need is a place to park their paws in a quiet home where they’ll be loved just the way they are.

Pepe is a sensitive cat looking for a calm, patient family to call his own. He really likes other cats, so if you have a cat looking for a friend, he may be the one for you. He must

go to a home with another cat or be adopted with one of his friends at Dakin. It will take him some time to get used to his new home and he will likely not want to interact with people until he’s feeling comfortable.

Interested in adopting? Animals at Dakin are available only in Springfield currently. Contact adoption staff at [springfield@dakinhumane.org](mailto:springfield@dakinhumane.org) and include your name and phone number. For more information, call (413) 781-4000 or visit [www.dakinhumane.org](http://www.dakinhumane.org).

## PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

# Holiday Recycling Guidelines!

**FRANKLIN COUNTY**—During the holiday season the average American family throws away 25% more trash than they usually do (US EPA). Could some of this trash be reduced, reused, recycled, or composted? Reducing holiday trash can help households save money on “Pay As You Throw” trash stickers or bags, reduce carbon and methane emissions, and protect our environment.

Wrapping paper, gift bags, tissue paper, and greeting cards/envelopes are all recyclable. However, paper items that contain glitter, wire, metallic inks, or foil (e.g. foil-lined envelopes) are not acceptable in recycling. Tape and labels are OK. Remove batteries from singing greeting cards before recycling the card.

Here’s a tip: when opening or wrapping presents, use a paper bag to collect paper recyclables. Recyclable paper includes catalogs, calendars, paper shopping bags, and cardboard (corrugated and paperboard).

Please *do not* include the following items in household recycling: ribbons, bows, tinsel, glossy photo cards, holiday light strings, Christmas tree netting, bubble wrap, paper envelopes lined with bubble wrap, packing peanuts, Styrofoam, plastic shipping envelopes, plastic bags, and “blister pack” packaging (formed plastic used to package toys, etc.).

Holiday light strings, power cords, and Christmas tree netting are not acceptable in municipal recycling programs – these “tangles” get wrapped around and jammed in the sorting equipment at recycling facilities. Holiday light strings are accepted for recycling at scrap metal dealers and in the scrap metal dumpsters at town transfer stations.

Clean, dry packing materials such as bubble wrap, packing peanuts, Styrofoam sheets, and inflatable “air pillow” packaging are accepted free for reuse at UPS in Greenfield.

One of the most important steps

is unwrapping gifts carefully and saving gift wrap, boxes, ribbons, bows and bags for reuse.

Another way to reduce holiday trash is by composting food and paper waste from holiday meals. The municipal compost programs at the transfer stations in Bernardston, Conway, Deerfield, Greenfield (open to non-residents), Leverett, New Salem, Northfield, Orange, Wendell, and Whately accept all types of food waste (no liquids), including meat, bones, cheese, plus paper waste such as paper napkins, paper towels, and more. No plastic or plastic bags. Free; permits may be required.

When the holidays are over, check with your town about Christmas tree recycling!

For more information, contact Franklin County Solid Waste Management District at (413) 772-2438, [info@franklincounty-wastedistrict.org](mailto:info@franklincounty-wastedistrict.org); or visit [www.franklincountywastedistrict.org](http://www.franklincountywastedistrict.org).



# Sex Matters

a sex-positive health column

by STEPHANIE BAIRD

Tired of giving your partners the same ol’ wool socks, flannel shirts, or mugs? Try giving them something a little more erotic and sensual this year – especially since many of us will still be stuck “pod-ing” by ourselves or with our partners for the next couple of months.

I’ve compiled a sensual shopping list of ideas to get the blood flowing and heat up your holiday season. These are in no particular order, and I receive no monetary gain from mentioning them. If this list reaches you past prime gift-giving time, keep the list handy for when Valentine’s Day rolls around.

**Toca CBD Oils:** “intimate oils for all your erogenous zones.” These oils are made from organic, high-potency CBD oils combined with various herbs. I got wind of these oils through an email from the Royal Frog Ballet, a regional performance art troupe. There are two versions: “Toto,” which can “increase arousal and pleasure, prolong orgasm, and aid in working through barriers like inflammation, pain, or tension during sex,” and “Qulo,” which focuses on “warming and opening” the back door and can also prevent inflammation. See [tocatocatoca.com](http://tocatocatoca.com).

**Romance and erotic books:** The *How Not to Fall / Belhaven* erotic books series (2016). Although these may not have been published this year, they are written by a local sex educator who uses the *nom de plume* “Emily Foster.” The books portray sex-positive, hot feminist cis-gender heterosexual erotic interactions, with accurate naming of body parts and realistic descriptions of the nuances of sexual desire and interest. Anyone with a geeky bent will also enjoy the neurophysiological terms scattered throughout. This series deliberately counteracts the misinformation and harmful stereotypes perpetuated in the *Fifty Shades of Gray* series.

**The Omgies.com website:** I’ve mentioned this website in a previous article, but I am mentioning it again in case this is your first time reading this column. There is a one-time membership fee for this site, but once you join, be prepared to take a deep dive into all the ways pleasure can be experienced by female genitalia. A perfect gift for someone who owns those body parts, or who would love to assist in pleasuring someone else’s bits.

**Hot tubs:** Arrange surprise appointments for your lovers at local outdoor hot tubs: Element in Amherst, or East Heaven in Northampton.

**Melt, Pivot, and Verge We-Vibes:** Melt, a pricey toy for the clitoris, features pulsating waves and gentle suction, with 12 intensity levels. The same company also sells penis stimulators shaped like rings that provide different sensations during sex, possibly extending longevity. We-Vibe also makes some remote stimulators, perfect for when you want to be in control of providing sensation while Zooming. See [www.we-vibe.com/us/melt](http://www.we-vibe.com/us/melt).

**A history book:** *The Stonewall Generation: LGBTQ Elders on Sex, Activism, and Aging* by Jane Fleishman (2020). This recently published book interviews

LGBTQ elders who came of age around the time of the Stonewall Riots. This would be a great gift for your older or younger LGBTQ parent, aunt, uncle, cousin, nibbling, sibling, and anyone interested in history.

**Feminist-approved erotica:** Simply clue your paramour in about the Reddit page [www.reddit.com/r/chickflixxx/](http://www.reddit.com/r/chickflixxx/), where women-identified folks post links to their favorite feminist erotica and porn. Why is it so important to know about a website such as this? Because the more we seek out these sites, the more female-bodied pleasure and desire gets normalized and seen as hot, crucial, and beautiful. One caveat: sex educators often emphasize the importance of paying for your porn in order to honor and pay the sex worker for the time and effort they put into putting themselves out there. As you peruse videos, pick ones you can purchase or rent. Hopefully it will be money well spent!

**Sexuality webinars:** While much of the Institute for Sexuality Education & Enlightenment (ISEE) website at [instituteforsexuality.com](http://instituteforsexuality.com) is geared towards sex educators, there are a number of sex-positive webinars that are appropriate for the curious layperson. Some of those topics include tantric sex, consensual BDSM, and spirituality, healing, and sex. See if there is a webinar you and your partner might enjoy together.

**A sex log book:** To help document and focus on increasing chances for pleasure, give your partner a sex journal. It will help them live the concept that “pleasure is the measure” (a quote from Emily Nagoski), and hopefully motivate them to decrease their sexual brakes and increase their accelerators by reflecting on intimate encounters. Available on Amazon.

**Board games:** Many of the usual board games eventually publish fun, adult-oriented versions of their old standards. Some adult games I have enjoyed are Codenames: Deep Undercover (adults only) and the ever-popular Cards Against Humanity.

**Gift certificates:** Running low on time? Give your paramour a gift certificate to a local shop such as Oh My Sensuality Boutique in Northampton. This is the premier local sex toy and paraphernalia store for all your erotic needs, including body-friendly lubes, sex toys, kink accoutrements, etc. Online at [ohmysensuality.com](http://ohmysensuality.com).

**Chocolates:** If all else fails, chocolate is often a great warm-up to sensuality, uplifting the serotonin and paving the way for intimacy, especially if you eat it mindfully. Local chocolatier Heavenly Chocolates at Thornes Marketplace, Northampton always has delicious concoctions to experience, from Earl Gray to lavender truffles.

Since life in general is a bit limited at the moment, I bid you to enjoy yourself and others this holiday season!

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

# Senior Center Activities

## DECEMBER 28 THROUGH JANUARY 1

**GILL and MONTAGUE**

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

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

**ERVING**

Erving Senior Center director Paula Betters writes that the Center is closed until further notice:

“All programs are canceled or postponed. With that said, I will be here or at least checking my messages daily. I want anyone to call me and leave a message if they have any questions or concerns regarding food or other services. I

will call them back and if we can help with services of any kind we will do so. I am working with other agencies so we can be sure to keep our seniors healthy & safe.”

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

**LEVERETT**

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

**WENDELL**

Wendell senior activities have been canceled. The Wendell Senior Center is closed. The Senior Health Rides program is also suspended until advisories change. For more information, 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 November 30; hours and accommodations are still changing.*

<b>Big Y:</b>	Senior hours from 7 to 8 a.m.	(413) 772-0435
<b>Foster’s:</b>	Senior hours from 7 to 8 a.m.	(413) 773-1100
<b>Green Fields Market:</b>	Senior hours from 8 to 9 a.m. Monday-Saturday and 10 to 11 a.m. on Sunday. Curbside pickup available. Order by 8 p.m.; order ready for pickup between 1 and 5 the following day. Delivery also available.	(413) 773-9567
<b>McCusker’s Market:</b>	Curbside pickup only 10 to 11 a.m. Order between 12 and 1 p.m. for pickup the following day. Email <a href="mailto:pickup@franklincommunity.coop">pickup@franklincommunity.coop</a>	(413) 625-2548
<b>Stop and Shop:</b>	Senior hours from 6 to 8 a.m.	(413) 774-6096

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PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

## Community Legal Aid Announces COVID-19 Eviction Legal Help Project

**FRANKLIN COUNTY** – Community Legal Aid has received funding to launch a new COVID-19 Eviction Legal Help Project (CELHP) to provide urgently needed legal assistance in pandemic-related eviction cases. The project is part of a statewide deployment of legal services, community agencies, and the private bar to combat the rise of evictions arising out of the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic fallout. The project is funded by the Baker-Polito Administration’s Eviction Diversion Initiative.

Community Legal Aid provides free civil legal services to low-income and elderly residents in the five counties of Central and Western Massachusetts. With this project, Community Legal Aid will hire a team of attorneys, paralegals, case managers, and support staff to provide legal assistance to income-eligible tenants facing eviction and homelessness in the wake of the expiration of the Commonwealth’s eviction and foreclosure moratorium on October 17.

Legal assistance through CELHP is being offered to tenants who live in households with income up to 200% of the poverty level (for 2020, \$4,367 a month for a family of four). Through the project, attorneys will provide a variety of essential services including representation of tenants during mediation and in court.

Attorneys are also staffing Lawyer-for-the-Day programs, which are being held virtually. New-

ly-hired intake paralegals and support staff are the first point of contact for tenants seeking help.

In addition, case managers will work with tenants to help them apply for and access augmented benefits offered by the state as part of the Eviction Diversion Initiative, such as the increased benefits available under the Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) Program.

RAFT can be used for a variety of needs, including rent or mortgage arrears, security deposits, or other expenses to help a tenant preserve current housing or move to new housing. The CELHP case managers play an important role in the project, as it is estimated that 1/3 of renters owe and are unable to pay back rent due to unemployment or reduced hours since the pandemic began earlier this year.

Jennifer Dieringer, managing attorney of the Berkshire, Hampshire and Franklin County offices of Community Legal Aid, said, “The CELHP funding allows Community Legal Aid to increase our existing eviction defense resources and add critical case manager positions, all of which will allow us to help tenants who are facing eviction and homelessness during the pandemic.”

Residents of Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden, Hampshire and Worcester counties who would like to apply for assistance should visit Community Legal Aid’s website, [www.communitylegal.org/get-help](http://www.communitylegal.org/get-help), or call 1(855) 252-5342.

## MOVIE REVIEW

### A Nashville Christmas Carol (2020)

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

**GREENFIELD** – It seems that everybody wants to do their own version of *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens. I have seen several movie versions that follow the original story to the letter, and others that do their own version while following the original format. I have seen a couple of TV shows with Christmas episodes which have done that, too.

The latest version that I have seen done with a movie is one that I would have written up myself, because I love country music. It’s a country music take on the story called *A Nashville Christmas Carol*. It features Sara Evans, a country music star newcomer named Raellynn, Brad Paisley’s wife Kimberly, Kix Brooks from Brooks & Dunn, and Wynonna Judd playing characters in the movie. Their roles are tastefully done, and their appearances don’t make the movie feel cheesy. I loved the movie. It was my favorite new one the Hallmark channel did for the holiday season.

The plot is that a TV producer, played by Jessie Schram, is putting on a Christmas country music special, and becomes the Scrooge in the plot. Wynonna, Brooks, and Kimberly Paisley, an actress I know of well, are the spirits that visit her. The deal involved, of course, revisiting her present and past, but also maybe giving love – with her love interest played by Wes Brown – a

second chance. He’s involved in the story through being the manager to Sara Evans’s character in the show being produced.

Both his character and the one played by Raellynn are tastefully done as well. In fact, I will give you a little hint about those two: *Maybe they would be good singing together*. You can see what I mean by that if you see the film.

Speaking of seeing the movie, I would be surprised if this wasn’t the most popular one Hallmark has done for this year. I just can’t see people not liking it that much – at least when it comes to those who like country music. How nicely it is featured in the movie should certainly help with the popularity of the film among country music fans.

It also might mean this will be rerun tons of times next year, like they do during the holidays with their movies. That makes it the fan-favorite with the people, in my eyes.

I have happily added this to my list of things I have seen that have done their own versions of *A Christmas Carol*.



## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

### Tree Workers; Direct Action; Vehicles Sliding Or Stuck; No Friday Towing; Stomping Child; Just Take Care Of It

#### Monday, 12/14

8:51 a.m. Report taken of broken window at the Franklin County Regional Housing Authority.

9:53 a.m. Caller from Greenfield Road reports that a suspicious white vehicle operated by an older male was parked on her lawn for around 15 minutes. When asked why he was there, the party was unwilling to provide any information other than that he was waiting for someone. Party then parked across the street on her neighbor’s lawn before leaving the area. Area checked; no vehicles matching description. Caller called back advising that her neighbor realized that the party had previously done tree work for her, and is no longer suspicious.

10:47 a.m. Caller states that he was doing tree work for a client on Kingsley Avenue when his boss advised him that he needed to discontinue the job for insurance purposes. Caller states the homeowner came out and started pushing and shoving him, and was verbally aggressive. Units advised. While on the line, caller stated the male party was coming back out for more. Parties separated.

12:13 p.m. Caller requesting to speak with an officer regarding how Carroll’s Market breaks federal laws surrounding the Americans with Disabilities Act. Officer spoke with caller, who advises he is getting a lawyer. Caller called back stating that officers only protect the rich and that he took matters into his own hands. Caller disconnected when asked how he took matters into his own hands. Units advised.

#### Tuesday, 12/15

5:11 p.m. Report of four or five kids around 10 years of age banging on people’s doors and windows on Davis Street. Caller states they hit his window so hard it almost broke. Caller was able to make contact with one of the kids, who stated his name was Dominic, but the other kids ran into the bushes next door. Officer made contact with a group of four kids and advised them they can’t go onto people’s property and do that. All parties seemed to understand.

9:16 p.m. AAA advising that they are responding to a disabled vehicle in the middle of the Canal Street bridge which may be impeding traffic. Rico from Sirum’s called to advise he moved the car to the parking lot on Canal Street but will be back for it shortly.

#### Wednesday, 12/16

2:40 p.m. Caller from L Street reports that a male in a vehicle just dumped

a large amount of construction materials in his dumpster. Caller’s son witnessed and spoke with the subject, who left approximately 10 minutes ago. Officer spoke with caller and son. Suspect claimed that he was disposing of the items for a resident. Caller and son are going to attempt to rectify the situation with the involved parties.

2:43 p.m. Report of gray Subaru with no plates in public lot on Fourth Street. Vehicle has reportedly been there for a few months and is covered in a tarp. Caller inquiring if it can be towed due to the impending storm. Officer made contact with registered owner and advised he is not legally parked and needs to have the vehicle moved.

8:07 p.m. Report of small fire in woods near the alleyway behind Keith Apartments. TFFD advised.

#### Thursday, 12/17

1:36 a.m. DPW requesting assist with snow removal. Attempted number for involved vehicle owner; auto message stating party not in service. Rau’s requested and en route.

2:29 a.m. Caller reports he went off the road and hit a guardrail at Randall and Greenfield roads; reports significant damage to his red Chevy Silverado. Caller continued on to work in Greenfield. Officer located minor paint transfer on a section of guardrail; no significant damage. Advised officer party will stop at the station tomorrow.

5:17 a.m. Tractor-trailer unit unable to back out of Lyman Street to Millers Falls Road; seems stuck due to road conditions. DPW and officer able to help TT unit on his way. 5:34 a.m. Reports of vehicles stuck in snow at Franklin and Newton streets, the First-Second Street alley, and Randall and Turners Falls roads. 2:01 p.m. Caller from

Third Street reporting suspicious death of his chickens; believes someone may have poisoned them. Message left for animal control officer.

5:14 p.m. Caller would like it on record that he briefly parked his truck in front of a neighbor’s driveway on Keith Street and she came out and started yelling at him.

#### Friday, 12/18

7:02 a.m. DPW requesting snow tows for numerous vehicles and a boat on a trailer in the Third Street public lot. Before tow arrived, it was confirmed that the sign in the parking lot states lot is not maintained Friday, Saturday, or Sunday; therefore, no vehicles were towed. DPW will clean around vehicles as much as possible.

1:41 p.m. Party into station to report that while he was driving in Montague Center, a dog ran into his vehicle. Caller spoke with owner, who was in the area. Caller advises he is not injured and the dog ran off. Caller advises owner told him that the dog was out running in the snow and that it wasn’t the caller’s fault that the dog ran into his vehicle. Dog’s owner called advising that when her dog was struck, it ran off. Dog is one-year-old golden retriever; unknown if he is injured. Contact information for ACO provided. Received call in general mailbox from nearby resident reporting a golden Lab that was in her driveway and appeared to be bleeding from several places on or around its legs. Dog’s owner advised.

5:03 p.m. Caller states that there are two people in a small gray car in the parking lot next to his residence on Fourth Street. He witnessed one of the occupants appear to “shoot up.” Investigated.

11:06 p.m. Caller states that a dog at a Grove Avenue residence has been outside barking for over

an hour and she does not see any lights on in the house. No answer at either door. ACO requested call be placed to owner’s place of employment to see if owner can go let the dog inside; otherwise ACO advises dog should be taken to shelter due to cold temperatures. Contact made with dog owner, who has brought the dog in for the night.

#### Saturday, 12/19

9:20 p.m. Report of a male party stomping around in his apartment. Caller advises she will call every day as long as he continues the noise. Officer advised. Male party was a small child; advised of complaint.

11:32 p.m. Caller from Avenue A states that the female who lives below her has her music playing loudly. Officer advised. Caller called back stating there is now a vehicle parked behind Booska’s with headlights shining in her bedroom window. Officer advised. Caller called back irate yelling that police are not taking care of the lights in her face. Attempted to talk to caller and let her know officers are on the way, but she hung up. Caller called again wondering why the lights are still shining into her bedroom; is concerned someone might be shooting up or passed out in the vehicle. When told that it takes a minute for officers to get there, caller started yelling again to just take care of it and hung up. Vehicle took off when officers arrived in area.

#### Sunday, 12/20

1 a.m. Officer conducting stop of vehicle from previous call. Verbal warning issued.

10:38 p.m. Report of intoxicated female banging on the walls of her apartment and refusing to open the door to speak with anyone about it. Officer wasn’t able to get female to come to the door. Advised her through the door to quiet down. Quiet on departure.

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WEST ALONG from page B1

sure the woodstove was quietly flickering out, before heading upstairs. I don't like to try to keep a fire going all night. Later, when the house chills down, the furnace will kick in. We'll revive the fire in the morning.

Upstairs, the new whiteness outside the bedroom window brightens the whole room like a full moon. Down below, the familiar ranks of rhododendron darkly line the edge of the back lawn. I know that sparrows and juncos have settled in for the night, tucked away in their thick sheltering hemlocks and holly all around the house. They sleep without, we sleep within, snug under the white down comforter.

Nicky comes quietly up the stairs on padded feet to turn in on the spare bed in the north bedroom. He's checked everything downstairs, and satisfied that the house that is his responsibility is safe, he curls up snowdog style, nose in tail, and sleeps.

We'll see what the morning brings.

"All night the hoary meteor fell..." Then by noon it all stopped, like they said it would.

"Boys, a path!..." I permit myself to evoke lines from John Greenleaf Whittier's poem, first introduced to us in Rita Kersavage's eighth-grade class almost 60 years ago, when we were grammar school hoydens up on Crocker Avenue.

Like Whittier's family in *Snow-Bound*, we spent the day digging out: cars were disrobed of their wintery finery, crests of snow brushed off, the garden gate shoveled out, the path to the compost pile cleared, a space around the fire hydrant dutifully shoveled, and a path dug to the fuel oil pipe intake to feed the hungry furnace when needed.

In and out to warm up, to change gloves and mittens; out I go through the upstairs north bedroom window to shovel off the piazza roof. After 130 years, I can't afford to have that old roof collapse under a winter's accumulated snow. It's held up since great-grandfather's time, but no sense in taking any chances.

Inside, Monique moves around the kitchen in her felted Swedish clogs and blue apron, hard at work preparing a savory *boeuf braisé*. All day long the stew simmers on the cookstove; can't wait until supertime!

By twilight, the outside work is done. Now to walk the impatient husky up the street to the village. Across the bridge that links the two neighborhoods of Millers Falls we go, with dog marking every snowbank along the way. How does he do it? Nicky, in his husky element, greets all comers with enthusiasm. One neighbor laughingly blames the "damn husky" for wanting all this snow! In response, Nick cheerfully jumps on the nearest snowbank,

peeing his yellow signature doodle as his contribution to the neighbor's shovel-work.

Once back at the house, and satisfied with his snowy twilight walk, he'll spend the evening loafing on the couch. Ah! It's a dog's life.

The next few days, with the digging out done, we can spend time enjoying the new landscape and the first days of winter.

Ahead there will be days that start with an hour on the porch with coffee and dog. Birds will flow quietly around the yard, ignoring the wintering bald eagle perched in the tall dead tree just beyond the lawn and woods. With the main part of the Connecticut River freezing up, he'll spend more time here upriver, cruising over the rushing water, looking for carrion or an easy fish to catch.

Out will come the snowshoes that have been mostly loafing and gathering dust for the past two winters. We'll trek out along the river and wind through the woods over summer paths, now buried under 18 inches of snow. As in past winters, the snowshoe trails will become pathways for the fox, saving him the time and energy spent wading through deep snow.

This coming Solstice evening we'll be watching for the Grand Conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn. But right now, looking out towards the southwest, the cloud cover will likely deny us the sight that last occurred

more than one thousand years ago.

The last days of the year will soon be fading away, and most of us will say good riddance.

The one saving grace for me has been the lucky choice I've made to start the day keeping the weather company. It sets me in the right frame of mind, and lasts through the day. As a wise person once said, we will get through this, too. And although I thrive in the winter, the cycle out here is unending, and deep stirrings underground will once again begin.

With wishes on the eve of a New Year,

*Bless this house under the white pines  
Where cardinal flashes and the eagle calls,  
Where I live and work simply  
Where the birds gather in winter to be fed  
And the squirrel dines  
From the squirrel-proof feeder...*

*Protect us from the fire's long teeth,  
And the lashing of the hurricanes  
And the government...  
Keep this house safe  
Watch with care over those of us  
Cutting and splitting firewood  
And mostly keep us from our sharpening fear  
As we skate over the ice of the new year.*

(Adapted from Marge Piercy, "On New Year's Day")



# In Review: The Best & Worst Movies of 2020

By SEAMUS TURNER-GLENNON

**CHARLEMONT** – For a year with comparatively few movie releases, 2020 has already shown itself to likely be one of the most consequential and important years in the history of the film industry – not just in the recent past, but maybe ever.

COVID-19 has largely shut down movie theaters, and for a long while they were completely closed. Not even *Tenet*, the new effort from mega-blockbuster wunderkind Chris Nolan, was able to revitalize the theater experience. It drew out crowds much smaller than what Nolan's likely used to, and this audience largely saw the movie without the purchase of concessions, either in drive-ins or alone.

Warner Bros. dealt a blow to the institution of the American cinema, a blow that may very well be fatal, with their announcement that a massive volume of their planned releases for 2021 will be released on their streaming service HBO Max at the same time they are released in theaters.

Of course, it's not as if COVID-19 entirely put a stop to the release of new films in 2020. Streaming services like Netflix thrived, maybe more than ever, with their original releases, and services like Amazon Prime made bank by releasing new movies which were supposed to have come out in theaters at jacked-up rental prices.

As always, the corporate media found a way to make as much money as possible given the circumstances, and we got our pictures. Enough of them, in fact, that I'm still able to partake in one of my favorite end-of-year traditions: looking back on the best and worst releases of the year. Here, I count down my five least and five most favorite films of 2020:

**5th Worst: *Mank***

I've said it before and I'll say it again: as a dramatic director, David Fincher is really good at making thrillers. While *Mank* may not be Fincher's worst *per se* (that title still

goes to *Benjamin Button*), it's without a doubt one of my least favorites of his work.

*Mank* attempts to present itself as serious and artistic, but ends up just becoming dull and overlong in its almost comical attempts to take itself seriously. The lead performance from Gary Oldman proves that he is, at this point, fully past his prime: it makes one wonder if Oldman explicitly set out to prove to the world that he has, in fact, fully earned his own last name.

The worst offense *Mank* commits is its screenplay, which is hilariously incompetent on its own until one remembers that it is a screenplay written by Fincher's father which they had been attempting to get made since the 1990s, and which Fincher only now brought to fruition.

I am not sure why Fincher decided to do this. I know if I found my father had written a screenplay this terrible, I would have a reaction roughly equivalent to the same one I would have if I discovered that he was the Zodiac Killer. There's something uniquely hilarious about a screenplay that took years and years of fighting to get produced immediately nosediving directly into a slab of concrete.

**5th Best: *Capone***

Josh Trank's vulgarian gangster biopic of Al Capone was one of the most misunderstood films of 2020. *Capone*, which stars Tom Hardy as the titular gangster, received an almost total panning across the board from critics for its focus on Capone's later years as a dying, coughing, seizing, self-deprecating retiree living at his Florida mansion, stumbling and cussing and coughing his way to the grave.

These detractors miss an essential component of *Capone*. All it really is is a spin on Albert Serra's *The Death of Louis XIV* recontextualized for 20th century America. This is not Al Capone the gangster, but Al Capone the old dying emperor, the head of a crime empire and one of the most feared criminals of his time, reduced to the weakest, the least in-control he has ever been.



**4th Worst: *Sonic the Hedgehog***

Let's be real here: the live-action *Sonic the Hedgehog* movie never really had any chance of being good, nor was I really expecting it to be, yet even still it managed to be worse than I expected it would be.

Everything about *Sonic* is just dreadful, but the icing on the cake is the titular blue hedgehog himself. Pure CGI, this incarnation of Sonic is a sort of wisecracking, sarcastic adult/baby (?) voiced by what sounds like a very drunk Ben Schwartz.

Deeply, deeply awful.

**4th Best: *Birds of Prey***

The newest – and this year, sole – entry in the DC Comics cinematic universe, *Birds of Prey* (and the *Fantabulous Emancipation of One Harley Quinn*) serves as a semi-sequel to David Ayer's 2016 nightmare *Suicide Squad*.

Although the title refers to the DC team the Birds of Prey, who do appear here, *Birds of Prey* is, by all accounts, really just about Harley Quinn, a sometimes-villain sometimes-antihero who exists within the little corner of DC Comics inhabited by Batman, Nightwing, *et al*.

If the other entries in the DC Universe are visually based in the darker, more serious interpretations by artists like Jim Lee, Frank Miller, and Greg Capullo, then Harley Quinn is a candy-colored piece of pop superhero cinema more akin to the work of Amanda Conner or Jimmy Palmiotti.



**3rd Worst: *I'm Thinking of Ending Things***

To go into any more detail analyzing this pseudo-intellectual, self-satisfied, pretentious tripe any more than I already did in my review of it feels like somehow validating this dull nonsense, so I'll simply leave my thoughts at this: I, for one, wish Charlie Kaufman was thinking of ending his screenwriting career.

**3rd Best: *Arkansas***

I initially assumed (unfairly) that *Arkansas* would be an attempt at recreating things like *Burn After Reading*, the more comedic end of the CCC (Coen Crime Catalog), and at first that's what it set itself up to be. But by the end I realized the true nature of *Arkansas*: a serious, somber Southern noir which disguises itself as an attempt at comedy.

The secret that makes this damn thing work so well is that the only time it ever feels like a comedy is when the characters aren't taking the immense danger they're in seriously. It wasn't until the bathhouse fight sequence that I realized what Clark Duke was really doing here and the movie really clicked for me.

*Arkansas* is a southern noir in the exact opposite way as, say, *Killer Duke*. Films like the aforementioned Friedkin effort put up a campy, obnoxious view of the South which leans heavily into "trailer trash" stereotypes and over-the-top campy accents. But *Arkansas* leans into a

sort of hazy, small-town Southern feeling with its slow-moving dialogue and muted color palette. That makes the violence all the more potent as it comes in contrast with the world around it.

**2nd Worst: *Happiest Season***

Dull, lazily made, formulaic Hulu-Original romantic comedy which seeks to cash in on woke points from the representation politics crowd. More just unremarkable in a technical sense and abhorrent as a piece of blatantly woke corporatist approval-seeking. Very good to know that a company which would let me, you, both of us, or any other amount of people die in order to turn a profit says that It's OK to Be Gay™.

**2nd Best: *Alone***

Pure, pulse-pounding genre fare which is not afraid of and makes no apologies for being pure, pulse-pounding genre fare. Masterfully paced and all-around excellent. Praise Hyams!

**Worst Film: *Miss Americana***

A self-serving, navel-gazing, narcissistic documentary which pop superstar Taylor Swift had made about herself. This is 85 unbroken minutes of an ultra-wealthy, ultra-famous megastar whining about how hard her life is because she... was nervous about doing a tweet?

Genuinely enraging cinema, and a documentary I'd advise any and all readers to avoid.

**Best Film: *Color Out of Space***

'80s cult director Richard Stanley is back, baby, and he has been restored to his full power. Although IMDb will tell you this is a 2019 release, it wasn't actually released to the public until this year, and it came at exactly the right time.

Adapting H.P. Lovecraft is a hard task because to adapt his stories exactly is damn near impossible. But Stanley pulls it off here by simply putting his entirely new twist on Lovecraft's existential cosmic horror fare. Stanley has taken his classic short story and made it into a mind-melting neon alien horror montage. *Bravo!*

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## MONTV / MUSIK / MOUNTAIN

ROSEMARY  
SIMPSON

#30

...of the  
Incredible  
String Band

Interview by J. BURKETT

**TURNERS FALLS** — Rosemary Simpson was part of The Incredible String Band for an important few years in the late '60s. She has a new memoir out, *Muse, Odalisque, Handmaiden*, and was nice enough to talk to us about her years in the band.

It has been said that the Incredible String Band were the most artistic band of all time, and for sure they were a hugely influential folk/rock band. They were a big influence on Led Zeppelin, Bob Dylan, and hundreds of others since. Check them out! Rose's memoir is also highly recommended.

**MMM:** *It seems like you were a member of ISB during a really important period for them. When you joined the band, did it feel like it was special? Did it feel like there was a lot of interest in the ISB's music?*

**RS:** No, it didn't feel like a special time, or that they were anything other than a good working folk duo. They never talked about this sort of thing between themselves; it just didn't seem to be important.

Once I started to be aware that people "in London" were taking notice of ISB, then I did get the idea that we were perhaps more famous than I thought, but even then it wasn't an important factor in the way they lived their lives in Scotland, or when I was with them in those early days.

**MMM:** *Had you heard much of their music before you joined?*

**RS:** I hadn't heard any of their music when I first met them, and I never heard a whole LP until I was actually living with Mike Heron.

**MMM:** *Did you have bands before ISB? Did you have a musical family?*

**RS:** No, I wasn't interested in pop music, folk music, or even classical music. It just didn't come into my range of experience, apart from what was on the radio in the family home, or the music we danced to when we went to a dance on Saturday nights. Discos hadn't been invented yet. There was a jazz club I went to sometimes, and I enjoyed that, but mainly the dancing rather than sitting around listening to the music.

My family were entirely unmusical, but it was normal for a child to learn an instrument at school, so I did. Unfortunately, since I could never tune my violin at home and

nobody explained to me how to do that, or to get over musical problems, I didn't get very far with it.

**MMM:** *Did you spend time with Clive Palmer, too? [Clive was the third member of ISB for their first LP, and was involved in other LP releases.] Did you feel like he was good friends with Robin and Mike over the years?*

**RS:** Clive wasn't around when I met them. And no, I never met him, and got the impression that they weren't friends during the time I was with ISB.

**MMM:** *During those years did you feel like this music would be relevant in the future?*

**RS:** I hoped it would, because people enjoyed it so much, and I did too. I thought it was relevant to me, so it should carry forward, because it was honest and open about experiences that everyone knew about or thought about. I realised that some of it was obscure and only relevant to a particular group of people, but the best was good enough for ever.

**MMM:** *You guys toured quite a bit. That must have been hard in some ways, but also I bet was a cool way to see the world. Do you have favorite places that you went?*

**RS:** I liked the USA a lot. It seemed more free, more exciting, possible to do anything there, less bound by conventions and history than the UK.

But I can't say I saw much of the world through touring. We worked hard, and when we weren't working we were tired and not inclined to do tourist things. I saw a lot of hotel rooms, streets, and roads, but we were usually glad to get back home as soon as we could, not hang about looking at the sights.

**MMM:** *How was Woodstock? I've heard that you guys didn't quite fit in, but the footage online seems amazing. What was it like playing there and being part of all that?*

**RS:** It was astonishing and a revelation to me. It seemed like the hippy ideal could really work on a large scale level for whole groups of people, and that we really might change the world through music and being youthful together.

I admired the audience who stuck it out in the mud and came up smiling, who took responsibility for each other and worked together when they were miserable and scared

sometimes. It was on the knife-edge of disaster, but all those young girls and young men, who looked so stoned, so frivolous, so impractical with flowers in their hair, and hardly no outdoor clothes, made it a great event by sticking together and believing that they could do it for themselves, as long as they kept the faith in peace, love, and music.

It was life changing for many, I think. They could see that the older generation didn't understand what was going on and felt threatened by that. It gave the youth movements some proof of their own power in society, made sense of the clichés of flowers in the barrel of a gun and all that stuff.

**MMM:** *Wow! So what's your favorite ISB record?*

**RS:** "The 5000 Spirits or the Layers of the Onion."

**MMM:** *Were you guys working other jobs while you did the band, or was it music full time?*

**RS:** It was music full time.

**MMM:** *Do you still talk to Mike and Robin much?*

**RS:** Hardly ever. Sometimes over the years I have met one or the other, and it feels awkward quite often. We were so close, and I think none of us can quite adjust to a situation where we are now almost strangers, with different lives.

**MMM:** *And any recent news about Licorice? ["Licky" was in the band at the same time as Rose.] What's your gut feeling about how she is? Were you good friends over the years?*

**RS:** I'm afraid not; she remains just a gap in the texture of our lives. She is definitely dead to the lives we have now, but whether she is really dead or cut away totally from the present, as we know it, I'm not sure. I would think that she might have wanted to see friends and family again as she got older, but I have not heard about her making contact with anyone for a long time.

We were never good friends in the usual meaning of that. We were so different, just like members of a family, who share a life and a deep bond but who have little else in common. I can say I loved her in that family kind of way, almost as if there were no other possible way of being, and sometimes we were friends, but she always was there as part of my life from meeting ISB to leaving them.

**MMM:** *To our ears you guys always sounded otherworldly... but there are a lot of elements that were similar to the '60s folk scene. Did you feel like you fit in to that scene? Were you friends with other bands or solo artists back then?*

**RS:** To me it was also otherworldly, and often to others too I think. Mike and Robin were superb musicians so they fit into any musical scene because of that. Musicians recognized and respected their talent. They had times when they were friends with, and met, other people and bands and people.

But really we mostly kept apart, didn't get involved in a "music scene" or any social events that go with that. We fled back to Scotland as soon as we could and lived in our own little world, although there were visitors sometimes. But mainly it was just us.

**MMM:** *What music were you*

*listening to back then on your own? How about these days?*

**RS:** Mainly world music, the music of other folk-cultures, particularly Indian or Oriental and sometimes British Folk. I did like loud rock music, but not at home. That was in front of giant amps in dark clubs, when I could get the full volume and the vibe of it.

Now I listen to mostly vocal music, classical, opera often. Schubert *Lieder* are some of my favorite at the moment.

**MMM:** *Do you think the overall musicianship of bands these days is up to par with the '60s at all? And do you ever regret being involved in music?*

**RS:** I never regret the music or that life through music. It was the most amazing gift, to have those years alongside wonderful musicians and see the world a bit through their eyes.

I can't really judge the musicianship of bands, either then or now. I have been around with people who absolutely knew how to judge it, Joe Boyd and people like that, so I have learned not to make judgments which would only be superficial ones. Maybe that's just a let-out, but there we are.

**MMM:** *Are there any other music projects you have done over the years?*

**RS:** The only thing I ever played on after ISB was a track or two with Mikis Theodorakis. I never played music again.

I couldn't bear it in a way, not to be part of ISB, so I just turned my back on it all. Like going "cold turkey," the only way of leaving something behind that I loved but which was not good for my health and sanity.

**MMM:** *Did you ever think of doing a solo album?*

## AUTHORS from page B1

it makes you feel like you are really there, which is magical.

One of my favorite parts of *Love & Gelato* is when Lina's friend Ren, who she meets in Italy, shows her the Point Vecchio — a famous bridge in Florence that goes across the Arno River and is lined with fancy jewelry shops. I love this scene because the way Ms. Evans Welch describes it is so pretty. One of my favorite lines is: "Stretched across the river, about a quarter mile ahead of us, was a bridge that looked like it had been built by fairies."

I interviewed Ms. Evans Welch and asked her if she has ever been to Florence. She said, "Yes! I went to high school in Florence, Italy, so the setting was inspired by my experiences as a teenager."

I also asked her if any of *Love & Gelato* was based on something that has happened to her or someone she knows, and she said, "One of my friends lived in the American cemetery right outside of Florence. She was a runner and she'd get up in the morning and go running through the headstones. That image definitely stuck with me, I remember at 17 thinking it would make a great setting for a YA book!"

This connects to *Love & Gelato* because Howard is the caretaker of an American cemetery, and Lina is a runner, so everyday she goes

**RS:** No, because I'm not a "musician." I don't have anything musical that I wish to share with the world, and never did have, apart from with ISB.

**MMM:** *How about the ISB film... Was that fun to make?*

**RS:** No, it was damp, cold and miserable in Wales. We weren't very happy together at that point, and Mike and I were not convinced by Robin's multi-media inclinations.

Some of it was funny, by accident, and there were moments of joy, as always in the countryside and with people you love, but in general it was not my favorite time.

**MMM:** *If there was a really magical and special element to ISB, different from other bands, what do you think that might be?*

**RS:** We were really what you saw on stage. That was not us pretending; that was our life, and the best of it, I think. What we sung was what we believed and lived by.

We didn't care about money, in the early days at any rate, and we did have utopian ideas of a better world and tried to live in ways which worked towards that. We lived very simply, recycled, shared lots of things, kept away from cities and that frantic rush of the masses of people working to artificial time schemes. We tried to live along with nature, and respect its wonders and think of spiritual things as part of our everyday lives.

We weren't the only band who thought those thoughts, but maybe we were the one that could live them as fully. Mike and Robin, when I first met them, valued all of that far more than fame and fortune. They wanted a higher, more spiritual life at that point, and did try to achieve it... We girls followed them, mostly anyways, because we believed in it as they did.

on runs through the cemetery or through the hills behind their house.

I loved all the parts with Ren. Lina and Ren go to secret bakeries and parties together, and ride on his scooter through Florence, and it was so exciting to read about the different journeys they went on. I also really liked reading Hadley, Lina's mom's, journal entries!

I asked Ms. Evans Welch who she thinks is most like her out of all the characters in *Love & Gelato*, and she replied with, "Hadley! When my husband read *L&G* the first time he said, 'So this is you?' LOL. Artistic, messy, impulsive, and interested in everything."

I think anyone who loves love stories would absolutely adore this book. It's definitely one of my favorite romance novels I've ever read! Ms. Evans Welch said that she loves Rainbow Rowell and Stephanie Perkins books, so if you have read novels by either of those authors, you would probably really enjoy *Love & Gelato* too.

Thank you so much to Ms. Evans Welch for letting me review *Love & Gelato*, and for letting me interview her! I had so much fun reading this novel and writing this article.

If you love *Love & Gelato* as much as I did, there are two more books in the series — *Love & Luck* and *Love & Olives* — which I am super excited to read.

I hope everyone has an amazing holiday!



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PERSONAL INJURY, WILLS & ESTATES, WORKER'S COMP





By LESLIE BROWN

**MONTAGUE CITY** – The winter solstice this year happened at 5:02 a.m. on December 21. It is the longest night and the shortest day of this year and symbolizes the death and rebirth of the sun. The solstice is often celebrated with the light of bonfires, candles, and lights on the trees. It is also called Midwinter Yule. Yule is a festival which includes burning a huge log for warmth and light. It is an ancient rite from Scandinavian and Germanic peoples.

This year it looks like we could have a white Christmas, and if the snow holds it would be safe to build a bonfire. A couple of weeks ago some folks in our neighborhood had fireworks for a tradition we don't recognize, but any of these activities could well be associated with Christmas and the season of light.

This Yuletide will be a unique one because of the pandemic. The mailman rather than Santa will be delivering presents, and these gifts seem to be arriving earlier because of worries about their timeliness. We've also succumbed to sending gift cards. This is less expensive than sending packages and has the distinct advantage of pleasing the recipient, who can choose what he or she wants.

These "modern" Christmases lack some of the romance of the originals. My sister and I woke up to the sight of lumpy stockings on our beds that Santa filled long after we went to bed. We can't say we'll miss opening our gifts one by one while everyone *ooh*-ed and *ah*-ed, but that was my mom's tradition years ago.

We still enjoy hanging up our stockings, and it will be just for two of us and our cat Amiga.

We have always enjoyed the local traditions like Welcome Yule but somehow the option of a virtual performance sadly lacks the excitement of sitting in a theater, watching live players and feeling the emotions within you.

But on this dank and chilly day we can get out the pile of colorful seed catalogs and start to plan for next season's garden. Ken has just made a batch of baked yellow-eyed beans from Maine. He thinks he'd like to grow his own next year. He remembers that his maternal grandmother made and served baked beans every day. He has enjoyed his own beans this morning, whereas I have grown up with distinct breakfast foods like toast, English muffins, or cereal.

My parents went to a doctor who believed children should eat a little of everything served at any given meal. Furthermore, if you didn't eat your salad, for example, it would be served to you again at the next meal. I won't disgust anyone by talking about soft-boiled eggs. Suffice it to say that the only eggs I enjoy as an adult are firmly scrambled or deviled. This is still a food I can take or leave, unless the eggs are disguised in baked goods, or such breakfast treats as pancakes with maple syrup.

But on to the colorful seed catalogs, which entice you to order one

## THE GARDENER'S COMPANION

# This Winter Solstice

of everything. All those vegetables look fresh and tasty. We will not waste time or energy this year growing much from seed except such early crops such as salad greens and peas. We'll let other gardeners grow tomato plants for us, and squash, cucumbers, and the like.

I'd also like to start another strawberry bed with hardy plants from Nourse Farms. This planting requires a bit of special attention because the birds want to share the fruit, too. We've even caught a few chipmunks checking out our strawberries, though mostly they stay away because of our cat.

Believe it or not, our cat is so smart that we have only to speak to her and she remembers, "no birds!" Thus we can still enjoy feeding the birds, and this year the feeder is right outside of the kitchen window. You can stand there with your first cup of coffee and watch titmice, chickadees, and woodpeckers, as well as the occasional jay.

The larger birds and the ground feeders mostly eat the seeds other birds drop, and we do indulge them with their own supply on the back stoop or on the ground near the window. Our bird friends prefer sunflower seeds, especially the striped ones, but they enjoy black oil seeds as well. These prime seeds are the most favored, and thus the most expensive. Many bird food mixes include tiny little light-colored seeds we can't name, but the fact of the matter is once there is snow on the ground our friends will eat any and all kinds of seed, as well as stale breadcrumbs. Celebrate this festive season in whatever ways you choose. A bonfire in the snow or a cheery fire in the woodstove is cozy.

Even without a literal fire, you can enjoy an edible Yule Log:

## Yule Log

4 large eggs

1/4 tsp salt

1/4 tsp cream of tartar

4 oz. semi-sweet chocolate, melted and cooled

1/3 cup water

1 tsp vanilla

1/3 cup sugar

1/2 cup flour

1/2 tsp baking soda

2 tbsp confectioners' sugar

2 cans chocolate frosting

Separate eggs. Beat whites with salt and cream of tartar until stiff. Mix yolks, melted chocolate, water, vanilla, and other dry ingredients. Gently fold in egg white mix, and bake at 350° F in lightly-buttered flat pan for 12 minutes or until dry to the touch. When cake has cooled, remove and spread with frosting. Roll gently into a log, and top with more frosting if desired.

*Serves 10.*

Now bundle up and take a long snowy walk to shed all those calories. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all!

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE GILL POLICE LOG

# Road Rage, Injured Deer, Stolen Road Sign

**Sunday, 11/1**

10:35 a.m. Caller at French King Highway and Main Road reported an offensive sign on a phone pole.

1:38 p.m. Report of male in his 60s who appears ready to jump off the French King Bridge. Taken for evaluation by Erving PD.

3:08 p.m. Mountain Road caller requested check of a female sitting in the woods.

7:56 p.m. Caller asked for help with pellet stove.

**Monday, 11/2**

1:28 p.m. Hoe Shop Road sign reported stolen.

**Tuesday, 11/3**

7:22 a.m. Loose cows in the area of West Gill Road.

12:52 p.m. Caller from Mountain Road reported she could hear a bunch of screaming and swearing from residents above her.

1:33 p.m. Report of male on French King Bridge who appeared to be suicidal.

5 p.m. Caller from Main Road reported people on Facebook are making threats to kill him.

**Wednesday, 11/4**

4:57 p.m. Caller from Mount Hermon Road looking to have chocolate Labrador returned to owner. Found dog with owner.

**Thursday, 11/5**

12:44 p.m. Dole Road caller reported a stolen motorcycle.

**Friday, 11/6**

10:15 a.m. Medical emergency on Boyle Road.

6:24 p.m. Chappell Drive caller would like to speak with an officer about smoking marijuana in the car.

**Saturday, 11/7**

3:36 p.m. Caller on French King Highway reported she lost a stove out of the back of her truck. Stove is in the breakdown lane.

3:47 p.m. Caller from French King Highway asked PD to check on a family of four at building. Family was taking a rest before walking to Turners.

**Sunday, 11/8**

12:55 p.m. Assisted Erving PD with disturbance on French King Highway.

4:16 p.m. Assisted Northfield PD responding to party on Main Road who reports there is a male coming at him with a knife. Says it was a road rage incident, gave license plate.

7:57 p.m. Assisted Erving PD with call from a subject on French King Highway.

**Monday, 11/9**

10 a.m. Hunter reported an older ATV abandoned off of Deer Run.

1:33 p.m. Call on the French King Highway about two parties fighting. All involved denied it.

**Tuesday, 11/10**

4:38 p.m. Caller from French King Highway is behind tractor trailer which may have brake fire.

7:47 p.m. Removed deceased fox from French King Highway travel lane.

**Wednesday, 11/11**

12:08 p.m. Assisted environmental police on Deer Run Lane.

**Thursday, 11/12**

1 p.m. Bus company reported a silver sedan passing a school bus.

**Friday, 11/13**

7:27 p.m. Injured deer on North Cross Road.

**Saturday, 11/14**

9:15 a.m. Report of suspicious vehicle in woods off the French King Highway. Determined to be a hunter.

4:23 p.m. Report of ATV which may be trespassing near French King Bridge.

6:46 p.m. Loud party near Gill and Hoe Shop roads.

**Monday 11/16**

6:58 a.m. Tree blocking Grist Mill Road. Highway department advised.

7:49 a.m. Tree and wires down on Mountain Road. Eversource advised.

6 p.m. Injured deer at West Gill and Atherton roads. Located and dispatched.

**Wednesday, 11/18**

3:39 p.m. Call from Munn's Ferry to keep the peace.

**Thursday, 11/19**

12:29 p.m. Choking emergency on Boyle Road. AMR transported.

**Saturday, 11/21**

3:56 a.m. Brush fire near French King Bridge.

4:43 p.m. Medical emergency on Riverview Drive.

8:03 p.m. Report of someone blowing donuts in Riverside. Unable to locate.

**Sunday 11/22**

10:15 a.m. Report of empty canoe in the river. Nearby resident owned it; no one missing.

3:36 p.m. Medical emergency, French King Hwy.

**Monday, 11/23**

10:04 a.m. Medical emergency on Camp Road.

**Tuesday, 11/24**

3:15 p.m. Officer requested in the area of Pisgah Mountain Road. Party took off into the woods after a roadside dispute.

**Wednesday, 11/25**

4:42 p.m. Assisted Bernardston PD with accident.

**Thursday, 11/26**

12 p.m. Suspicious vehicle, French King Bridge. OK.

4:27 p.m. Assisted Erving PD with trespassing call on Papermill Road.

5:07 p.m. Report of subjects on French King Bridge throwing items.

**Friday, 11/27**

12:11 p.m. Caller reported disturbance between subjects in the field by North Cross Road.

2:04 p.m. Caller on the French King Highway reported three motorcycles operating erratically.

**Saturday, 11/28**

8:20 a.m. Assisted Bernardston PD after motor vehicle hit a tree; injuries reported.

4:44 p.m. Injured deer on Main Road.

**Sunday, 11/29**

5:49 p.m. Loose dog reported on Main Road.

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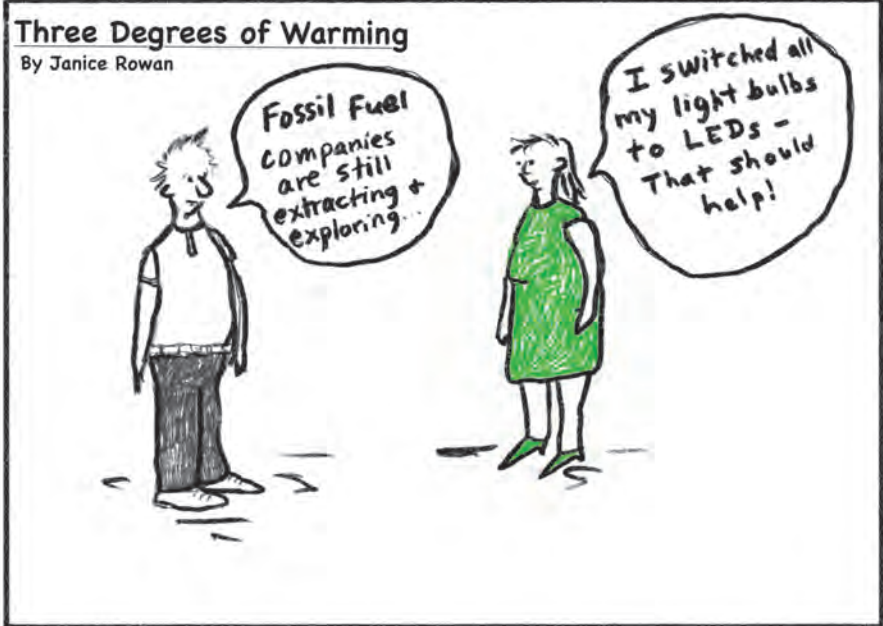


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**BOOK REVIEW** from page B1  
“carve the farm from hills and valleys covered with a primeval forest of red oak, red maple, white ash, paper birch, and scattered white pine and hemlock.”

Mapes spent time with scientists like John O’Keefe, who shared his knowledge and research and gave her insight into the life of the tree and forest. O’Keefe and the other researchers at the Forest keep detailed records of everything that affects the forest: precipitation, levels of different gases in the air, temperature, timing of budding and leaf out, pests, diseases, and the animal communities that live in the forest and live in trees – even in the canopy – and depend on the forest for food, nest sites, and protection. Even the underground life is studied; insects, micro-organisms, and beneficial mycorrhizal fungi.

While on a walk with Mapes, O’Keefe pointed out to her that a brook “was running hard” due to the late November date so the surrounding trees were going dormant. She describes the stream flow as “an indicator of the symphony of the forest transitioning to the slow movement of winter.”

Melissa LeVangie, Petersham town tree warden and an expert arborist, taught Mapes how to safely climb the tree, and introduced her to the plant and animal community of the tree canopy. LeVangie, along with her twin sister Bear, have a company that holds tree climbing workshops for women, workshops whose motto is “Climb Like a Girl.” She explained to Mapes some of the detrimental effects of climate warming that she sees in trees. (I’ll present more on LeVangie and her sister’s work in a future article!)

The actual Witness Tree is a 100- to 118-year-old red oak, *Quercus rubra*, that stands about 83.5 feet at its crown with a base diameter of 8.2 feet. Big, but not



Melissa LeVangie, the Petersham tree warden and arborist who taught Lynda Mapes how to climb the oak tree she studied for a year at the Harvard Forest.

giant. Mapes describes it as “growing like a teenager” at this point. Like many of the trees around it, it is monitored by cameras and sensors and has been cored, which is the drilling of a small sample of the wood to examine the rings that can reveal past weather conditions, amount of rain received, general health, and more. It has its own webcam, too!



John O’Keefe, one of the scientists Lynda Mapes interviewed at the Harvard Forest.

With help from foresters, researchers, and other skilled locals, Mapes became a regular visitor to her tree. What she observes and learns reveals how conditions created by climate are affecting her tree as well as the whole forest. She writes about the carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) levels that have increased over 40% since 1950 as a result of fossil fuel use. The effects of that increase can be seen at Harvard Forest, in your yard, and globally by just observing the changes in seasonal budding and leaf out, later autumnal colors and leaf fall, and the declining health of some tree species. And we know that trees are carbon sinks, absorbing that CO<sub>2</sub> and mitigating its increasing levels somewhat.

If you have any interest in trees or forest or climate change, you will savor this book. The scientific writing is clear, easily understood, and thorough. What makes *Witness Tree* a great read is also the wonderful prose about the value of trees and forests beyond the science. “Trees remain wild, essentially other, a kingdom apart. We need them, but they do not need us,” Mapes writes.

What she learned from her tree and her time at the Forest is that we won’t have the forested landscapes we know now if climate change is not addressed. “We are not separate from nature, we are of it, and in it,” she writes. “People and trees are meant to be together... Dwelling in our common home on this beautiful earth.”

Read and enjoy, read and learn, read and maybe help change things!



# GREAT FALLS APPLE COLUMN

By ANNABEL LEVINE

**TURNERS FALLS** – Back in March, when we were all starting to grasp the gravity of our COVID situation, it was my turn at the helm of the Apple Column. I wrote about feeling uncertain about the world and our food supply, and how I had decided to channel that uncertainty into a new gardening endeavor: a conventional vegetable plot.

If you’re a regular reader of this column, you may know that “conventional” is almost the polar opposite of the Apple Corps aesthetic. We advocate for planting edible perennials and “food forests,” and we have waxed poetic about the deliciousness and usefulness of many so-called “weeds.” While I think that the focus on alternative ways to look at gardening is important, I decided that I would try to take the gardening books’ advice this season and try making one patch of my backyard into a neat, rectangular vegetable patch.

I did manage to start out the season with neat plants in rows, open ground spreading between grids of lettuce, kohlrabi, and one long line each of radishes and peas. The peas gave us a significant harvest, and the radishes produced enough spicy seed pods for both eating and seed-saving. Once the kohlrabi was ripe they were picked and pickled.

When summer came the weeds started to appear, and my neat garden got inevitably cluttered. While I usually embrace the weeds, with this patch they had to go! I was trying an experiment.

I tried to stay on top of the weeding, but as the season progressed, my initial expectation of a summer of free time vanished and I was having trouble maintaining the garden. I cleared a quarter of it for a second summer planting of popcorn, beans, squash, and sorghum, but at some point shortly thereafter all weeding stopped, and I felt like a failure.

The “weeds” in question here were mainly just one: lamb’s quarters (*chenopodium album*). I’ve written before about this handsome local cousin of amaranth and quinoa that grows ubiquitously in vegetable gardens and disrupted soils alike. The leaves are triangular and pointed, are gray and fuzzy when young, and can be eaten like spinach. You can also eat the tender stem tips and seeds.

I soon realized that while no “vegetables” were planted where the lamb’s quarters were growing out of control, the abundant weeds were a crop in and of itself! We added many a leaf to our summer dinners, and I blanched and froze several pints of leaves to keep for the winter. Once the leaves were too mature and unsuitable for eating, I kept the plants up. Their usefulness wasn’t over yet! Seeds were coming.

I meant to harvest the seeds over a month ago, but time got away from me again... another failure. But last week, when I found myself with free time on a mild December morning, I was happy to discover scores of seeds still left on the stalks, thanks to a long and mild autumn. I ended up collecting almost a quart of tiny seeds between the vegetable bed in the back and another in the front yard.

Having collected the seeds you may think that the era of the 2020 lamb’s quarters was over, but there was still one last gift in its arsenal. This past week, after inches of snow fell, I looked out my back window and saw



Lamb’s quarter stalks, like this one rising above the snow in the author’s home garden, have proven to be excellent sources of winter bird food.

about a dozen birds flitting in and out of the rectangular garden patch. They were eating the lamb’s quarters seeds I left behind! No suet, no having to shoo squirrels away – I had unintentionally planted my own bird feeder, and was enjoying the fruit of my lack of labor.

I can be hard on myself when I set goals and don’t meet them. I did dream of a neat little garden patch all in rows back there, but gardens have minds of their own, and these pandemic times have had us all adjusting expectations. This time I was lucky: my “failures” still stocked my freezer and pantry, and fed the birds who in turn let me watch their snowy escapades. For us all to be so lucky in our failures!

I take away from all this a reminder to see my failures less as a failing and more as a transition to something new, and to be more gentle with my feelings when things don’t go as planned. Perhaps that resonates with you, too, as we put this awful year to bed and start looking ahead to another year bound to be characterized by uncertainty. A reminder that our universe is too complex for us to have total control, and that’s okay. So okay, in fact, that letting go can sometimes lead us to more fruitful pastures... or vegetable gardens!

Please note that the Great Falls Apple Corps is still hosting a **free food and clothing table** every Saturday from 12 to 3 p.m. This week we’ll be moving (location TBD as of press time), so please keep an eye on our Facebook and Instagram, both @greatfallsapple-corps, for more information. You can also reach us via email at greatfallsapplecorps@gmail.com.

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