

The Montague Reporter

YEAR 19 – NO. 22

also serving Erving, Gill, Leverett and Wendell

\$1

EDITOR@MONTAGUEREPORTER.ORG

THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

APRIL 8, 2021

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Town OKs Events, Watches New Cases

By JEFF SINGLETON

Montague, like much of Massachusetts, has experienced a spike in COVID-19 cases over the past two weeks, putting the town in the green and potentially the yellow zone under the state's "incidence reporting" system. Although the meaning of the colors and their impact on policy is not clearly stated on the state health department website, Montague closed town buildings when it moved into the red zone late last fall, and then reversed course in

March after it moved to the green and then gray zones.

Despite concerns expressed by local health officials about the new color status, the health board and selectboard decided to allow the parks and rec department to begin spring and summer programming at Monday's joint meeting. Both boards also endorsed a public event at the Unity Park Community Garden in April, and an "Ice Cream Ride" for bicyclists beginning at the park this summer.

The COVID numbers reported by

public health director Daniel Wasuk showed 21 new cases during the previous two weeks, an increase of fifty percent over a week earlier. The state incidence dashboard, which reflected an earlier timeframe, showed Montague with 14 cases, but its "incidence rate" per capita moved the town into the green zone.

Town administrator Steve Ellis said the next set of state data, expected this Thursday, could well push the town into the yellow zone. Explaining the significance of the colors,

see MONTAGUE page A7

Eight-Term Board of Health Incumbent Faces Challenger

By MIKE JACKSON

MONTAGUE – Chris Boutwell has sat on the town board of health since 1997, the selectboard since 2010, and a number of public boards and committees before that. "It's been busy," he told the Reporter this week. "There's enough to do in the health department, to say nothing of the pandemic."

Despite his longevity, Boutwell finds himself in one of the only competitive races in the June 22 annual town election, after Melanie Zamojski's runaway win at last week's Montague Democratic caucus meeting. The town Democrats can nominate candidates directly onto the ballot in Montague, though no other group does so.

"It is what it is," Boutwell said. "I believe she ran against me three years ago. Whatever happens, happens!"

see HEALTH page A8



Boutwell (top) and Zamojski (bottom).

Women's Center Reopens Its Doors

By LILY WALLACE

TURNERS FALLS – "The impact of being isolated for so long affects you," says Andrea Sears, program coordinator of the Women's Center on Third Street. "It doesn't matter how mentally healthy you are."

After closing down traditional in-person operation a year ago due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Women's Center, a program of Montague Catholic Social Ministries (MCSM), reopened its doors this week for a soft opening. The Center, which normally hosts up to twelve women at a time, is limiting its capacity to six individuals in an effort to stay in line with statewide reopening guidelines.

Sears says she is excited to have the Center open again, and highlights the social benefits of offering programming in person to women who have been without it during the pandemic. In addition to being a social space, the Center is a non-denominational provider of social services, and helps connect anyone who identifies as a woman with resources they might need.

"Whether it is domestic violence or drug treatment, I would refer them to an agency that can help, and I walk with them through the process," says Sears. "Many times, if someone is under a

see CENTER page A5



The downtown Turners Falls center is reopening at half capacity, and regular programming should be able to start soon.

ERVING SELECTBOARD

Erving Seeks Public Input On Church Street Bridge

By KATIE NOLAN

At Monday night's meeting, the Erving selectboard accepted a \$195,000 proposal from Weston & Sampson for engineering, permitting, and consulting services for the repair or replacement of the Church Street bridge.

In February, an engineer with the state Department of Transportation (MassDOT) told Erving officials that the bridge, at the North Street intersection over Keyup Brook, is in poor condition and must be closed

or made one-lane only.

At the March 27 special town meeting, where the \$195,000 cost was approved, voters asked about alternatives to repair or replacement of the bridge, such as restricting Church Street to local access only or demolishing the bridge. They asked the town officials to study traffic patterns more carefully, to consider the effect of changes at Church Street on traffic on North and High streets, and to ask Church and North Street residents for their preferences.

see ERVING page A8

Activists Hail Biomass Permit Decision

By SARAH ROBERTSON

SPRINGFIELD – What would have been the largest wood-burning power plant in Massachusetts, in a city with the highest asthma rates in the country, lost a vital permit last week. The state Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) announced on April 2 that it had revoked a project permit granted to the Palmer Renewable Energy Company to build a biomass power plant in Springfield.

"We're celebrating, we're taking a breath, and we're going to find the next thing we have to fight, because there's always something,"

said Zaida Govan, president of the Indian Orchard Citizens Council in Ward 8, where the power plant was proposed. "They might appeal it and they might still decide to go forward with it."

The state's decision followed a years-long campaign against the power plant led by activists like Govan and a network of community-based social, racial and environmental justice organizations called the Springfield Climate Justice Coalition.

"Because of the number of people who did voice their concerns about it, they had to be heard," said Govan. The permit was rescinded, ac-

ording to a statement from Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs Kathleen Theoharides, due to concerns about the health impacts on the surrounding community, and the fact that construction had been delayed for nine years since the permit was issued.

"[A]ny new permit process MassDEP would require Palmer Renewable Energy to demonstrate the proper air controls are in place, and consider air quality impacts on the surrounding Environmental Justice community," Theoharides said in a statement.

The 42-megawatt power plant see BIOMASS page A5

Youth Service Corps Adapted to Shutdown

By CHARLOTTE VALLE

ERVING – Project 351 is an organization that brings 8th-grade students together from the 351 cities and towns in Massachusetts. Each January students from all over the state gather at Faneuil Hall to celebrate the launch of their Ambassador year, where they will grow together as a community and lead service projects in their hometowns.

Unfortunately, because of COVID-19, this year's launch had to look a little different. Instead of being able to come together as one big group to learn about each

other and begin our work with different service projects that day, we had to unite from the comfort of our own homes. However, although launch day looks different this year, the team at Project 351 made everyone – including the new class, along with returning alumni and ALC (Alumni Leadership Council) members – feel welcome and excited for what the next year will bring us. On March 7, we welcomed the Project 351 Class of 2021 from our homes to our growing family across the state.

As a member of the Ambassador Class of 2020 representing the town of Erving, I was one of the people see YOUTH page A6

By JEFF SINGLETON

MONTAGUE – At the beginning of Monday's meeting of the Montague selectboard, a local resident named Jane Alessandra urged the town to "opt out" of a new state law which allows aerial spraying to reduce mosquito habitat if the state health commissioner determines there is "elevated risk," a term not defined in the law. Alessandra called the spraying "toxic to aquatic organisms, highly toxic to bees" and its impact on humans was "largely

untested" but potentially "harmful if absorbed through the skin."

Alessandra said a town needs to opt out by May 15, but would also need to submit its own mosquito management plan by that date, according to the 2020 law.

Selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz recommended that the issue go before the board of health at its April 21 meeting and then back to the selectboard on April 26. He also recommended that the town conservation commission and the Turners

see MOSQUITO page A5

BUMP!



Turners Falls volleyball players Abbi Holloway and Emily Young during the first match of a doubleheader win against the Green Wave Tuesday afternoon



We Made This For You While You Were Outdoors

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The Montague Reporter

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Scaling Up

Our March 25 and April 1 editions featured articles on a large "dual-use" solar project proposed on Pine Meadow Road in Northfield, tens of thousands of panels tracking the sun back and forth as sheep graze upon a grass-and-legume mix growing in their shifting shadows. The town planning board has been weighing a special permit for the project, though it has reportedly been pre-approved by the state as an Agricultural Solar Tariff Generation Unit, eligible for the top tier of subsidy under Massachusetts' solar incentive policy, SMART.

As a news update, developer BlueWave Solar has asked the planning board to hold off on taking a vote while it works out details of its plan with the Eversource electric company and liaisons of the Abenaki band which has a historic and ongoing relationship with the land.

If this project goes through, the potential implications are huge. It was announced last year that SMART will be doubling. During its first round, Eversource's western region filled up with about 95 MW of large projects and 25 MW of small ones. But in the next round, Eversource will combine its western and eastern regions to take on 854 MW more in generation capacity. Much of that is likely to push into to Western Mass where land is cheaper.

Solar has already had a huge impact on open land, and proponents of dual-use offer it as an alternative to deforestation, or to the permanent loss of farmland.

But it also provides a shortcut to profitability, since SMART's base subsidy is designed to decline as the program fills up. A large project like the one proposed in Northfield would have harvested between

14 and 11 cents per kilowatt-hour during the first round, and this would continue to shrink down to 9 cents during the second round. If it counts as dual-use, though, it gets an extra 6 cents.

So what happens if this experimental model scales up? The science of growing food in shadows is young, we are told, so developers are likely to propose using the ground as pastureland for livestock. Can a company contract with a mobile flock, showing up to graze periodically in order to unlock an array's subsidy eligibility?

In Northfield, roughly 3 MW (AC) would be provided at the interconnection, on 65 acres of farmland. That's 1/284 of the new capacity in Eversource's allotment.

In the USDA's 2017 Census of Agriculture, the four counties of Western Massachusetts had 75,000 acres of cropland and 24,000 acres of pasture. If all that subsidy were to go into replicating the Northfield project, it would convert over 18,000 acres of cropland to pasture.

Maybe that's a ridiculous thought experiment, but it does underline the potential distorting effect Massachusetts' solar incentives could have on our food system. Small tweaks to the formula can impact our lives. And if dual-use becomes widespread, it will likely become more difficult to purchase or rent farmland for crop production.

These are tradeoffs. Preventing a 35 MW biomass plant from being built in Springfield probably improves residents' health, keeps trees in the ground sequestering CO₂, and increases demand for natural gas fracking in Pennsylvania. The best policies are the ones that reduce our energy use outright, and that's where we should be focused.

CORRECTION (& CONFESSION)

In our April 1 edition, the Art-Beat column (page B1) accidentally went through with an error in the title of an exhibit at Northampton's Oxbow Gallery that comes from a quote by James Baldwin. The correct quote, and show title, is "Nothing Stable Under Heaven" rather than "Nothing Stable Under the Sun." Our apologies!

Sharp-eyed readers also spotted an April Fool's Day article nestled within the same edition (page A7). Thanks to everyone sharing laugh-

ter and positive feedback! Some readers were misled, and have also shared their feedback.

To set the record straight: A secret underground chamber housing the severed limbs of sacrificed mill workers arranged around a circular dais was *not* discovered under the former Griswold Cotton Mill on Power Street. The EPA's cleanup work continues there as normal, and contractors have asked us to encourage the public to steer clear of the work zone. Thanks!

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Mark Furrick puts away vegetables in the produce section at Food City in Turners Falls. The owner-employee has worked at the grocery store for over 20 years. Currently he serves as the interim produce manager.

Letters to the Editors

Three Readers Remember Ariel Jones

I was so sorry to read about the death of Ariel Jones in *The Montague Reporter* last week. When I was going through my divorce and living in North Bernardston, I somehow wangled an invitation to the artists' salons that Ariel was holding at the studio on Avenue A. It was there I met so many people who remain my friends to this day. In fact, when I bought my house in 2004, it was largely because of the warmth I felt toward the town as a result of those connections.

In 2002, I participated in the first Dog Days of August parade with my

dog Flame along with my sister-in-law Patti and her dog Billy. He was the big, thick-furred dog that stopped walking and lay down in the middle of Avenue A. It was a beastly hot day and he had reached his limit, refusing to take another step. Billy really didn't care about the dignitaries awarding the prizes and Ariel loved his refusal to keep walking. She had a great sense of humor.

In no way do I consider myself a photographer, but Ariel's "Doors of Turners Falls" poster encouraged me to look at the architectural detail in town in a different way

and play with my little Canon instant camera. I became somewhat obsessed for a time, taking hundreds of pictures of brick work, metal embellishments, and other architectural details that resulted in a pictorial scavenger hunt and some knitted garments inspired by the brick work.

I suspect I'm like many who have regrets for losing touch with Ariel and Susan in recent years.

Fondly,

Anne Harding
Turners Falls

Jack met Ariel first when he attended one of her salons. I visited her after that, and the three of us had some great conversations. Ariel was such a powerful creative energy in the downtown. She not only did monthly salons, but held small concerts in her studio, shows displaying her work and others, and generally solidified a creative center for the downtown area and beyond.

Two things stand out in my mind. We bought a house near us in 2004 that had been in the same family for 100 years. The house had not been lived in for 15 years when we purchased it! Ariel offered to photograph the different rooms, and suggested that we exhibit the photos at the open house.

Photos and house came together, and what a collaboration! Suddenly old faucets and soap holders were memorialized as these vessels of history and a century

of family stories.

She also did a series of photos shot in her studio of working people in Turners. Looking through the photos, I came upon John, the Shady Glen owner. The photo captured a gesture, a posture, a look that was so intense that I felt as if I were intruding or eavesdropping on a very intimate, personal conversation between Ariel and John. When I told Ariel of the feelings that were triggered, she just smiled a sly smile and said, That's exactly what I was looking for.

Her work was always a few steps beyond what you thought it might be – always clear, always strong and powerfully creative, always Ariel! I do miss her.

Eileen Dowd
Turners Falls

I remember Ariel Jones, local artist and photographer. She was a very knowledgeable, amazing, and interesting artist and photographer. At one point she was a contributor to the *Brattleboro Reformer's* sister paper, the former Greenfield *Town Crier*, and the early years of the *Montague Reporter* during the early 2000s. She advertised her studio in the paper. You can search for her business card. She also had photos and articles in the *Montague Reporter* which you can see in the archives online.

I enjoyed her wonderful artwork. She was an amazing person, ahead of her time. Her wonderful artwork will be admired and enjoyed, trea-

sured for many years to come.

She gave many amazing tips about taking photos to other local area photographers, artists, and the like. I recall that she talked to my late grandfather, and convinced him to get into digital photography at a time when he was in between Windows 95 and an XP computer, also switching his professional Nikon SLR 35mm film camera to a Canon professional DSLR camera while he was taking digital photography classes at Greenfield Community College. He was writing and submitting photos as a freelancer going back and forth with the *Town Crier* and *Hard Hat News* magazine.

In the early days of the *Montague Reporter* David Detmold got his first digital camera from my late grandfather and also learned tips of photography from both Ariel Jones and my grandfather. It got David into the digital age with the newspaper along with help from many others, including the Local Color/As You Write It senior citizens writers' group.

At one time Ariel and my grandfather combined an article he wrote with photos she took. She captured a lot of amazing local scenes. She will truly be missed. We are grateful for her amazing talent.

Joe R. Parzych
Greenfield and Gill

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(ORIGINAL CONTENT ONLY, PLEASE)

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LOCAL BRIEFS

By NINA ROSSI

The Shea Theater is presenting a **virtual album release with Daniel Hales** this Friday, April 9 at 7:30 p.m. “Unstable Oscillators” is being released on the 12th anniversary of Hales’ group the Frost Heaves, and will be livestreamed partly from the Shea Theater with a solo acoustic performance and partly from Hales’ living room with looped bass and percussion accompaniment. There will be psychedelic projections and theatrical segues as well.

Tickets are available on a sliding scale from \$1 to you-name-it, with 40% of sales directly benefiting the Shea Theater Arts Center. Tune in through the link at sheatheater.org.

Human Error Publishing is hosting a **performance of “Do it Now,”** an improvisation of words and music. Also recorded at the Shea Theater, the show features Paul Richmond (spoken word), Tony Vacca (percussion), Avery Sharpe (upright bass), special guest Charles Langford on sax, and percussionist Derrik Jordan.

The show is available throughout April for \$7 in honor of National Poetry Month. Check out the link at humanerrorpublishingconcerts.vhx.tv/.

The Mass Aggie Traveling **Pop-Up Seed Library** will be coming to the Leverett Public Library on Saturday, April 10. Visit by appointment between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.

The seed library’s mission is to educate patrons about seed saving

and supply the public with seeds to plant, grow to seed, and save the seed to return to the seed library. To learn more about the Library, visit guides.library.umass.edu/seedlibrary.

Appointments will be for one person at a time, to facilitate six feet of social distancing. Each appointment will be for 30 minutes to allow for seed viewing and packaging. Email leverettlibrary@gmail.com for an appointment.

Turners Falls native Jon Bander has a one-man show of his metal sculptures called **“Notorious Weld”** at the Jones Library Virtual Burnett Gallery during the month of April. At 26 years old, Bander (who is, full disclosure, also my son) is at the beginning of his career welding sculptures from recycled and other materials.

He started welding when he was 14 at FCTS, and the show features selections of his projects from the last four years, including birds, motorcycles, tattoo guns, a tree, flowers, a honeybee, a *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*-inspired steampunk aquarium, and various other items. Visit www.joneslibrary.org/virtualburnett.

Ever heard of something called **“Bicycle Day”**? Bicycle Day apparently commemorates the discovery of lysergic acid diethylamide as a psychedelic compound on April 19, 1943. Swiss chemist Albert Hofmann had synthesized LSD in 1938, but didn’t realize it had psychedelic properties until he took 250 micrograms of it at 4:20 p.m. on that day. At that time

in Basel, travel was limited to bicycles because of war restrictions. Hofmann had to enlist an assistant to get him home from the Sandoz Laboratory where he worked because he was, well...

Brattleboro venue Epsilon Spires will be offering a virtual cinema screening of *The Substance: Albert Hofmann’s LSD*, a movie about the history and science of the chemical, starting on April 19. Their announcement promises that the film is “chock-full of rare archival footage of LSD-defining celebrities from Timothy Leary to Jimi Hendrix, as well as interviews with principal historical witnesses, including scientists, psychiatrists, and Hofmann himself, interviewed just before his death.”

View online at www.epsilon-spires.org.

Great Falls Books Through Bars is planning another **outdoor volunteer day!** If you are interested in joining them at Just Roots Farm in Greenfield to sort and pack books for incarcerated persons on Sunday, April 25, you must RSVP by April 18.

There are two time blocks, and volunteers are limited to 12 persons per block to maintain social distancing, and must wear a mask at all times. RSVP to gfbbooksthroughbars@riseup.net.

Repeating this news: The **Millers Falls Community Improvement Association** (MFCIA) writes that there’s quite a bit of spring cleaning needed along the streets, paths, and byways of the village. All the trash that has collected over the winter is starting to pop up.

To celebrate Earth Day they are asking volunteers to go out during the week of April 18 to 24 – or anytime between now and then – and collect the trash in Millers Falls.

They ask folks to take a picture of what they collect and post it on the MFCIA Facebook page.

The Saturday Salon at The LAVA Center returns on May 1 for an eclectic offering of local art and shopping.

On view in the gallery during May and June will be “Words from the Rookery” by Lindy Whiton. Whiton chronicled a local heron rookery every day for six months during the pandemic, documenting it in photographs and in text.

An art installation by JuPong Lin called “Poetics of Repair: Being Earth, Being Water” will also be on view. The installation responds to climate catastrophe using poetry and papercraft. JuPong will offer a live and online workshop on Saturday, May 15, at 2 p.m. The workshop includes guided meditation, poetry reading, poetry writing and paper folding lessons. Updates on the installation can be viewed at www.juponglin.net.

The Lava Center seeks more artists and crafters for display; find out more at localaccess.org.

The Northampton Arts Council is looking for artists to submit work for consideration for the **Utility Box Mural Program**. This program is designed to encourage community pride and beautify the streets of Northampton. Murals will be installed in public places and must be suitable for viewing by all ages.

The Commission anticipates selecting artwork for up to seven utility boxes and will fund \$350 per box, inclusive of all artist’s fees, paints, and materials. The deadline for the application is Monday, May 3. Apply online by going to www.northamptonartsCouncil.org and looking under the Call to Artists tab.

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OP ED

Righting Our Wrongs

By LEE WICKS

MONTAGUE CENTER – It feels good to be wrong and admit it. I live in Montague Center and every time I walk by 15 School Street, the old elementary school now converted into apartments using the latest energy-saving technologies and beautifully landscaped and maintained, I remember that I was part of a neighborhood group that fought to prevent this development.

It would cause too much traffic; that didn’t happen. The night skies would be light polluted; nope, they are shielded. Oh, the noise would be awful; again, no. The building is thickly insulated, and neighbors never hear a sound.

During this year of long walks, I’ve passed by the building a lot. I’ve stopped to watch the ducks on the pond and from time to time seen a blue heron rise awkwardly into the sky, and I think Montague would be lucky if the developer, Mark Zaccheo, bought and restored every abandoned building in town, and I’m sorry that neighborhood objections, including mine, delayed the project and raised his costs.

I remember that some of the frustration among Montague residents existed because of the way the Town managed the transaction. It seemed like the Town was bending over backwards to please a developer, and just the word “developer” made people nervous. Maybe someone should have said it straight: “Yes, we will practically give this building away, and we’ll enlarge the water line; we’ll bring the developer breakfast in bed if that’s what it takes, because he has a great reputation and we can’t have another abandoned shell

of a building in town.”

Sadly, it probably wouldn’t have worked. Once people start to bristle, they gain their own momentum. Those of us in opposition to the plan held meetings and spread fear. We could not be reasoned with. We were a little bit like Trump supporters who still believe the election was stolen from him.

I’ve met a few of the tenants and feel like apologizing. They are well aware of how people felt about their building. Now they are members of the community, but this is a hard community to get to know, unless you have a dog, and 15 School Street is not a dog friendly building.

After thirty years in town, my closest friends live on Center Street or have dogs, or both. There’s a group of younger, hardy people in town, who hike, bike and ski all kinds of challenging terrain. Some who go to the yoga classes at the Common Hall overlap with the hardy people. The writers who hang out at the Killigrew (pre-COVID) are bound by the silence they keep to protect vital writing time. There are artists and musicians, farmers, church goers, and people who once commuted but now work at home, and they all have dogs.

Dog people greet one another and then talk about their dog’s age, eating habits, training, tick and flea prevention, and poop quality. A biodegradable poop bag is the accessory of choice in town. If Mark and Barbara Zaccheo would allow dogs in the building, their tenants would make friends more easily. Also, I could consider moving in some day. While I can imagine giving up my house, I cannot imagine life without a dog.

Though it is possible that I am wrong, as I was wrong about the development. Maybe a life without dog hair, muddy paw prints, expensive vet bills, loud barking, and dog farts would be blissful. The tenants at 15 School Street know this kind of peace. It could be one of the reasons for choosing to live there.

Because I was so entirely wrong about one multi-family unit in Montague Center, I now have to rethink other areas where I have been misguided. When long skirts replaced mini-skirts, I said I’d never wear them. After Birkenstocks, I thought high heels with pointy toes would never come back into style. When I struggled to live in Amherst, and the town kept acquiring land to preserve, I said there’s plenty of land; we need more affordable housing. In that case, I was only half wrong. The town needed both. In this year of walking, I’ve made good use of trails and open space in Hampshire and Franklin County.

I was wrong one year when a neighbor in Amherst hung a twisted barbed wire wreath on her door during the holidays. I thought she was making a cynical statement about consumer excess. In fact, she was from Texas ranch country and missed her family, and her dad made the wreath from a section of fence wire.

And I’ve been wrong more than once when I swore I didn’t have my husband’s car keys and later I found them in the bottom of the bag I carry that has too many pockets and pouches.

In a time when I feel resolute about a lot of things, it is good to be humbled, so I close with an apology. Dear Mark Zaccheo, if you ever meet opposition for a future project, you can call on me.

Lee Wicks lives in Montague Center, and contributes reporting to this newspaper.

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PERSPECTIVES

Portrait of a Graduate: Hero to Zero (A Love Letter)

By DAKOTA SMITH-PORTER

GILL-MONTAGUE – On the front page of the December 4, 2003 edition of the *Montague Reporter*, founder and editor David Detmold featured a story entitled “The Democratic Lunchroom.” It was an article that retold the age-old story of David and Goliath. A lone third grader in the Gill-Montague Regional School District was requesting the right to vote against her new principal’s demand for arranged seating during lunch time.

The story portrayed the third grader as not knowing much more than the simple truth that she wanted to sit with her friends. However, Detmold bequeathed the superlative of “thoughtful” to her request for change. Reading the article now, I assume it was not an easy task for an eight-year-old to confront her adult, and rather tall at the time, principal of esteem and authority. After all, she was challenging the intellectual hierarchy of the very institution she was being educated in.

Yet, she still did. In the end, the tallies were counted and revealed an overwhelming school-wide majority agreement: freedom in the lunchroom was the true democratic choice. David had defeated Goliath, metaphorically at least.

Seventeen years later, I feel very inspired by that young, naive heroine. I would never have predicted that the innocent love of eating lunch in the company of my friends would have fostered a stance for democratic equity within the elementary school community. It is a portrait of character I would never have imagined.

The “Portrait of a Graduate” is currently a buzzing terminology within education. Many school districts have adopted its ideology of envisioning the student as a holistic human, focusing on preparing them for success after graduation. Districts are encouraged to envision, or “paint,” a picture of what they want their students to look like, and how they propose to “get them there.”

Character skills that are deemed essential in a healthy portrait might include critical thinking, creativity, problem solving, collaboration, communication, empathy, accountability, self-awareness, resilience, and grit.

For example, if you look at the Turners Falls High School student handbook, Page Three describes exactly what the school proposes for its students:

Our curriculum encourages higher order thinking so that young people can develop the skills they need to effectively evaluate and utilize information. We seek to teach young people how to think, not what to think. We believe that this framework will enable them to become critical consumers of data and media who are able to thrive in a diverse society. Furthermore, we strongly embrace a growth mindset. We believe that with hard work in a supportive educational environment, young people can understand and enhance their inherent strengths, embrace challenges, and live up to their potential.

“You should stand up for what you believe, and give it a try.” That was the last line of David Detmold’s “The Democratic Lunchroom,” a direct quote from the third grader he had taken the time to interview.

I still remember when Mr. Detmold came to Montague Center School for that interview. We sat in a corner of the large brick and plaster foyer at the front of the building. I remember feeling confused and unprepared. Today, I can imagine the third-grade me would have responded to the random call to leave class with, “An interview? Huh, what does that mean? With some reporter guy? About our vote? Ok... sure?”

Hindsight being 20/20, I feel very thankful to Mr. Detmold for conducting that interview, and recording in writing the unrehearsed words of a third grader.

My public school portrait began in the Gill-Montague Regional School District. Beginning in kindergarten and climbing up to twelfth grade, my educational experience was one of holistic success. I thrived academically, socially, and athletically.

I earned outstanding grades, acquired useful knowledge, and challenged my views of thinking in the classroom. I was able to comfortably socialize and connect with different demographics of people: peers I knew since kindergarten, and kindred spirits I grew to know later. I participated with elite athletic teams on the softball diamond and volleyball court.

I challenged myself to take uncomfortable risks of growth. I was encouraged to embrace my inner strengths, and given the confidence to let them lead me within the public school habitat and subsequently the “jungle-like” outside world.

I cannot deny I am a walking, living, breathing outcome of the GMRSD system. I have become the portrait of success those educators commissioned. And I now own a self-portrait of a proudly standing GMRSD alum.

In respect for their labors, I passionately wanted to join their noble guild. After my graduation from Mount Holyoke I chose to “kindle an educational flame,” and became a Turners Falls High School Special Education Teacher in the fall of 2019. A job of community service which I truly love.

Having said that, it was a challenging day when I chose to write the following statement in my resignation letter on March 1, 2021:

With much sorrow, I presently no longer have the authority of my conscience to promote the Gill-Montague Regional School District and its practices based on its present day level of operation and neglectful treatment of its “familial” faculty. At this time, effective immediately, I choose to respectfully submit my resignation.

“You should stand up for what you believe, and give it a try.” As I grow older, and my portrait develops, I continually realize that making a decision of conscience is no simple task. In my short life, I have heard attacking personality descriptors like: insubordinate, disgrace, rogue, punk, free agent,



The author's photo in the December 4, 2003 edition of this newspaper.

different, radical, renegade, and divergent as attempts to quiet me into cordial compliance. Believe me when I tell you, I know that standing up for what you believe to be correct is hugely difficult.

Because of this, I have always felt it is my first responsibility and priority to advocate for my students, who are innately in a position of institutional submission. My mission in teaching is to bolster their abilities so that they have the strength and confidence to advocate for themselves, handing over the power of independent voice and action to prepare them for the day I am no longer there to support them. I envision their portrait with a vibrant full life of healthy interdependence.

When I see my students hesitate to advocate for themselves, I place myself within the shoes of that eight year old in “The Democratic Lunchroom.” How did she feel when she chose to confront her authority figure? I can imagine feelings of nervousness, fright, and discomfort.

And though I try very hard, I still cannot relate to all of the experiences of my students. It is an undeniable fact of my life and portrait that I am a person of social privilege: a white, middle class, college-educated American, raised in a supportive home in one of the top educationally ranked states in the country. And advocacy is *still* never easy or comfortable for me. I have grown to recognize that my place of privilege has committed me to the responsibility of human advocacy, and I cannot ignore that.

COVID-19 has put my responsibility to advocate to the test. My personal comfort has been challenged with the need to speak up for those I have been deemed responsible. I have been pleading for health safety through emails, letters, statements, posters, discussions, and challenging questions.

My message: There is a threat to human life with a presumptuous return to in-person education with the presence of COVID-19! Return to this traditional, prehistoric, one-room-school style of education, is in fact, uneducated in our current world. Its flippant “rewards” do not outweigh the monumental accumulation of risks. Therefore, I cannot endorse it.

Thankfully, I was educated in a school district that taught me *how to think*, not *what to think*. I have been thinking, thinking for countless hours. I sometimes even think a reduction of thinking would grant me a simpler and less turbulent life.

But that was not the way I was educated – that is not my portrait.

I possess the *skills needed to effectively evaluate and utilize information*. I know how to be a *critical consumer of data and media*.

I have been empowered with these skills of discernment so that I am able to determine fact from fiction, and call out a mere marketing mirage when I see one. If I were to acquiesce these standards and return to a learning environment the administration itself confesses is “unsafe,” I should follow with an encore declaring my own hypocrisy.

How can I continually ask my students to take a stand against bullying, racism, injustices, insensitivity, and the mistreatment of fellow humankind if I cannot lead by example when put to this test? How can I be professionally trained in trauma sensitivity, but allow myself to coax students into a potentially trauma-inducing environment?

How am I exhibiting an understanding and belief in equity and cultural responsiveness if I ignore the fact that “people of color have an increased risk of getting sick and dying from COVID-19,” in the words of the Centers for Disease Control, and cheerfully welcome my students and families of color to compromise their safety?

These unprecedented circumstances have granted my adult eyes the opportunity to once again see from the perspective of a subordinate student. I want to make sure I am practicing what I preach: a respectful truth to power.

As it turned out, that third grader was not alone – 71 other people, 78% of the school population, voted that they wanted a democratic lunchroom, too. It was just that one girl asked the authority the hard question first, and encouraged others’ voices.

I also know I am not alone now. My portrait began long ago. I was not “raised by a village,” but I learned from living in a town with five of them. My portrait is not solely the work of Gill-Montague, but I am a portrait of their graduate, a portrait in blue and white.

I do not know how my portrait will develop. But with hope for my future, I can refer back to that lone third grader, and recall it ended up pretty good for her when she reminds me:

“You should stand up for what you believe, and give it a try.”

Dakota Smith-Porter is a former special education teacher at Turners Falls High School.

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CENTER from page A1

great deal of lifestyle stress, you need an advocate – someone to help you walk through it, to help get you the help or the service you need. All of our employees help anyone who walks through our door, and stay with them as long as they want.”

The Center can also connect residents with MCSM’s Basic Needs Program to help them access other things, including food, housing, and access to diapers, and feminine products. “We are an agency that is trying to fill the gap,” explains Sears.

“I’m in awe of my own staff and what we do every day,” says MCSM executive director Heather Wood. “The work that we do, and the way they talk about their participants, is the same way they talk about family.”

When the COVID-19 pandemic forced the Center to close down in person, the organization was challenged in a new way. “We knew we needed to maintain contact,” Wood says, “but such a large group of those we serve are marginalized – immigrants, English as a second language, those so far below the poverty line they don’t have technology.”

Unprecedented financial donations allowed the Center to continue to operate remotely, providing technology to staff and community members in order to stay connected online. Grants from the United Way and the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts that could go where money was most needed, in addition to the regular funding the Center usually receives, allowed MCSM to adapt to changing needs.

“It is so important to have programs like these in place,” says Mary Kociela, director of Domestic and Sexual Violence Projects with



A sign on a Third Street planter maintained by the Center’s gardening program.

the Northwestern District Attorney’s office. “When the pandemic first started, the [domestic violence] numbers were down, and we were concerned that victims were being further isolated due to the pandemic closing things down. We made a big effort to try and help victims know there were local resources they could go to.”

Kociela notes that while her team has seen cases increase over the course of the year, the cases being referred are also more likely to be categorized as “high risk” situations.

“The need is so important to have programs like this reopen in a physical way,” she says. “Some of the places individuals felt safe going were not physically open.”

As it reopens, the Center can restart consistent drop-in hours with access to computers, and in-person programming, including Mindful Creativity, gardening, and a popular sewing group which will resume in June. There are also plans to host events at Unity Park, where people

can meet at a safe distance.

While meals can not yet be provided at the Center due to COVID-19 precautions, Sears says she looks forward to when it is safe to begin providing lunch again on Thursdays. “Food is just such a great way to connect,” she says.

“We just know that it’s different to sit in a room together rather than to sit on the back side of the screen,” says Wood. “Specifically in the Women’s Center, women come quietly to sit together, and that might be the only social interaction they have that week. We’ve maintained community, but being able to share space brings us back into being a family.”

The Women’s Center is located at 41 Third Street in Turners Falls. Those looking to learn more about the current program offerings can visit www.mcsmcommunity.org. For more information, email WomensCenter@mcsmcommunity.org or call (413) 824-5387.

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would have burned about 1,200 tons of wood chips per day, emitting soot and other pollutants. Biomass opponents argue that the greenhouse gas emissions from these plants exceed that of coal-burning power plants, if the fuel they burn is made of trees that could otherwise continue to sequester carbon.

“Today’s decision... is welcome news and comes as a relief to thousands of nearby residents who would have been forced to live in the shadow of a billowing smokestack,” state senator Eric Lesser said in a statement on Friday. “Frankly, the revocation is long overdue and the plant should never have been considered for that location in the first place.”

Why the company waited so long to break ground isn’t clear. One reason could be that the project was challenged in court multiple times between 2008 and 2015, another could be that the project wasn’t economically viable without state renewable energy subsidies. Palmer Renewable Energy did not return a request for comment.

“For the last 12 years, Springfield residents said no, and at long last, Massachusetts officials listened and put public health before corporate profits,” said Community Action Works executive director Sylvia Broude. “We hope today’s decision marks a turning point in how regulations are enforced to protect communities and achieve environmental justice.”

After the project was first pro-

posed in 2008, organizations including Arise for Social Justice, Community Action Works, Neighbor to Neighbor, and Jobs with Justice formed the Springfield Climate Justice Coalition. The Springfield city council approved a special permit for the project in 2008, and revoked it in 2011. Since then the state Appeals Court, Land Court, and Supreme Judicial Court have all ruled in favor of the project.

“Communities of color are already disproportionately impacted. They already have underlying medical issues,” said Jaqueline Vélez, a racial justice organizer with Jobs With Justice. “To add a power plant, a biomass burning power plant that would exacerbate folks’ medical conditions, just emphasizes how communities of color and low-income communities are targeted for these projects.”

Vélez, whose son has allergies and respiratory issues, started advocating against the biomass project after she bought a home in Springfield two years ago.

“I didn’t know I was moving my children into the asthma capital of the country,” Vélez said. “In the last few months we basically went very hard getting the word out and getting folks to take action.”

Over the winter the Baker administration proposed an amendment to the state Renewable Portfolio Standard that would have lowered greenhouse gas efficiency requirements so large-scale biomass plants could qualify for millions of dollars in state renewable

energy credits.

“The amendment didn’t get voted on by the end of session. The [Department of Energy Resources] needed to submit those and they still haven’t,” Mireille Bejjani, the western Massachusetts organizer with Community Action Works, explained. “We think this is because of all the public opposition and the visibility we’ve been building.”

The proposed subsidy prompted a flurry of renewed activism around the Springfield plant this winter.

“We thought it was a done deal, then all of a sudden it came up again last year,” Govan said. “Unfortunately Governor Baker seems to be for it, and that’s kind of scary.”

Springfield city councilor Jesse Lederman started a petition against the new rule change, and over 100 organizations signed a letter circulated by the Springfield Climate Justice Coalition demanding state legislators “produce the science” explaining why biomass was considered a “non-carbon emitting” energy source. Community Action Works organized demonstrations outside Governor Baker’s office.

“The community has been so present and so strong throughout all this,” Bejjani said. “They have been paying attention to every step and fighting back in every way possible.”

Organizers say they plan to build on the momentum behind the anti-biomass movement to continue fighting for environmental, racial, economic and social justice.

“I think it’s just continuing to

MOSQUITO from page A1

Falls and Montague Center water districts be consulted.

The process required under the new law for towns to opt out may be difficult to implement by the middle of next month. Any municipality seeking to avoid statewide spraying will need to submit an “alternative mosquito management plan” for approval by the state.

In addition to requiring a well-documented public hearing on the alternative plan, the opt-out application requires towns to answer a formidable checklist of questions. These include who would be providing mosquito control services and what these services will be, and source reduction details, including water and ditch management as well as culvert cleaning and “stream flow improvement.” Numerous questions relate to methods of “larval control” and “adult mosquito surveillance and control.”

It is not entirely clear what criteria the state will use to evaluate local management proposals. At one point the checklist requests that localities “provide or list standard steps, criterion [sic], or protocols regarding the documentation of efficacy (pre- and post-data), and pesticide resistance testing (if any).”

Heidi Ricci, director of policy at Mass Audubon, told the Reporter that the only “clearly mandatory” section of the nine-page application is the requirement for public education.

“Since this is the first year for this program, it’s not clear whether the state will approve plans that only have that component, however,” she said.

The law also provides for a state-level entity called the “Mosquito Control For the 21st Century Task Force” to evaluate current mosquito control policies and make recommendations for the future. The Task Force includes relevant state-level department heads as well as environmentalists, local stakeholders, and academics. It was to hold its first meeting last August, and must issue a report on its findings by October 31, 2021. Ricci serves on that task force.

The task force was a product of changes in the original legislation proposed by the Governor.

“The bill sunsets after two years and by then we hopefully will have enacted new legislation that reflects the recommendations of the Task Force,” state senator Jo Comerford wrote to her constituents after the bill was signed last July.

“So the hard part comes next. Implementation of this legislation and the Task Force’s eventual recommendations will require careful monitoring and attention to the

build relationships,” Bejjani said. “That’s one of the things that’s been really special on this campaign, is that the movement has really grown and matured over time.”

The prevalence of children with asthma in Springfield led the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America to designate Springfield the “Asthma Capital” of the country, topping the list ahead of cities like Boston, Philadelphia, and Dayton, Ohio. Senators Ed Markey and Elizabeth Warren have both publicly opposed the biomass

actions of the action of the Mosquito Control Board, and active participation with the Task Force. This will set our course on this issue for the next decades.”

The new law is, in part, the product of the much publicized 2019 outbreak of eastern equine encephalitis (EEE), a rare but deadly brain infection carried by mosquitoes. That year Massachusetts is reported to have sprayed more than two million acres in 100 municipalities with a controversial pesticide called Anvil 10+10.

In December the *Boston Globe* reported that the pesticide was found to contain toxic compounds known as PFAS. The chemicals, which take decades to degrade, have been linked to a range of diseases, including cancer and low child birth weight. Clarke Mosquito Control, the company that produces Anvil, says that the pesticide does not contain PFAS but its presence may have been caused by its packaging.

“We’re taking this very seriously,” Dan Sieger, the state undersecretary for environmental affairs, is quoted by the *Globe* as saying. “When we figure out the source of contamination... we’ll make a decision.” In January, the company vowed to stop shipping the pesticide in plastic containers.

The mosquito population declined significantly during 2020, partly due to a drought, and no deaths from EEE were reported in the state.

The issue of mosquito control in Montague has been placed on the conservation commission agenda for this Thursday, April 8. Alessandra said she plans to attend the meeting, but town planner Walter Ramsey said that the state agency that implements mosquito control, the Mosquito Control and Reclamation Board, is exempt from state and local wetlands regulation, the main purview of the con com.

The selectboard will be waiting for advice from the town board of health, which does not meet until April 21. That leaves only a few weeks for the town to produce its own management plan and apply to the state for an exemption, with very unclear criteria.

Ramsey said local officials he has spoken to were not aware of the new law or the provisions for local opt-out. Montague public health director Daniel Wasiuk did not respond to requests for comment on the issue as of press time.

Alessandra said she was “very concerned” about the compressed timeline for developing a local mosquito management plan, but was encouraged by the selectboard’s attitude. “I thought they listened to me,” she told the Reporter.



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who learned firsthand how strong this community is, even when things get hard. Toward the end of school, we couldn't hold any of the normal service projects we usually would, such as clothing drives at the school, though as people started to figure out what worked best in their community, we began to hold these clothing and toiletry drives again.

Virtual workshops began to happen, where we started to learn from guest speakers during interviews and connect in small groups. I found that even with everything happening I could still participate with Project 351 – they never once thought about being one of the many things that would be taken from us with the closures.

I interviewed Carolyn Casey, the founder of Project 351. We talked about how things began, and how they have worked to adapt to everything changing.

Project 351 was founded in the fall of 2010. Carolyn said she had found that Massachusetts would be right for this project, because we are a big enough state to be bold and make a difference, but small enough to execute the idea of this organization, and make sure it would be successful. At the time, Governor Deval Patrick was looking to find something that would get the state's youth involved. They got in touch through a mutual friend, and began making Project 351 a reality.

The first year, in 2011, 8th graders from each of the 351 towns and cities in Massachusetts got together for a day of service on the weekend of MLK Day. Since then there have been 4,123 Project 351 Ambassadors across Massachusetts. This May will mark 1,000,000 neighbors served in our community.

During our conversation, we talked about how Project 351 is seen as an invitation to a lifetime of service. Many of the people who are Ambassadors in their 8th-grade year go on to continue their service to their community by creating non-profit organizations, starting clubs that help people who are struggling with different things, joining the mili-

tary, and continuing to help with other things that they are passionate about.

When the coronavirus began shutting things down, Project 351 made it their mission to stay open, no matter what it took and no matter what they would need to change to make it work. They were adamant about this because they had started hearing from Ambassadors and ALC who were losing school, along with their sports and clubs, that to them it felt like everything was being taken away. Carolyn said she couldn't let that happen.

New ideas started to come up as time went on, such as the Service Leadership Academy, where ambassadors and alumni are invited to learn from different people who work in service in their daily lives, and the Hope and Gratitude Walk, which encouraged people to walk, run, or ride bikes and log their miles to raise money, which went to three non-profits that ambassadors and alumni picked.

Keeping students active in their leadership and service helped keep them from losing hope, something that was a really big deal to Carolyn.

Although COVID caused a lot of challenges, it also made the organization find new ways of getting people involved. It brought in ideas that could include more people in western Mass, or those from Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket, since it has been so hard for those kids to host big drives in small areas, or get out to the Boston area to participate in some activities.

I also got the chance to interview Sasha Wilkinson, who was a part of the ambassador class of 2018 representing a town out in eastern Mass. She is now a part of the Alumni Mentoring Corps (AMC). Sasha was the AMC for my group last year, and now has a different group that she will help lead through their Ambassador year.

We began talking about what influenced her to become an AMC, because continuing after your Ambassador year isn't a requirement, and many people choose not to, or prefer to join other groups such as the Regional Unity Corps (RUC).



Project 351 ambassadors convened in 2019 at Faneuil Hall in Boston.

Sasha told me about how at first during her first year after being an Ambassador, she was a part of the RUC for the region her town is in. After that one year, she decided that applying to be AMC for a group in the Ambassador class would be something she was interested in. She thought it would especially be a good experience for her because she wants to become a teacher, so working on her leadership skills would be a good start to developing other skills she would need for that.

She said she is also very interested in how everyone has different experiences, and that working with a small group would help her get to know what things each person experiences differently, because of what part of the state they represent or the way things are different for people in one class compared to another.

As an AMC, Sasha also participates in spring and fall service projects, which include food and clothing drives for people who are in need in their local communities. Spring service is typically when clothing drives are done, although some people opt-

ed to do food drives instead because it was something people needed more at the time.

When COVID hit, it made planning these drives very hard, because many people weren't comfortable bringing food items to community drop-off sites. Sasha's solution to this problem was to offer to collect items from people at their houses in a safe and contact-free way, so that they didn't feel obligated to do something they weren't comfortable with.

Every year Project 351 continues to find the best ways to get young people involved in their communities, and this year, despite the numerous issues that everyone is facing, they are working just as hard as ever. With all the challenges that have been presented in the past year, the organization and its members have found better ways to lead in their towns – and more ways of getting people from other towns, especially smaller ones, more involved by offering online projects.

Charlotte Valle is a ninth grade student at Franklin County Technical School.



NOTES FROM THE WENDELL SELECTBOARD

Community Solar Project Unlikely; Joint Town Coordinator Sought

By JOSH HEINEMANN

Wendell's money managers' meeting blended almost seamlessly into the March 31 selectboard meeting, and finance committee chair Doug Tanner stayed connected through both. Many of the selectboard agenda items involved spending money.

Town coordinator Nancy Aldrich began the selectboard meeting with the topic of a "reverse-911" system for the town. She said Code Red of Greenfield gave an estimate of \$1,250 per year for their service. The Code Red website states it is "a new emergency notification service by which town officials can notify residents by phone, text, or email about time sensitive emergency situations or important community alerts."

Selectboard chair Dan Keller said he thought it was a good idea, but money is tight.

Tanner said that Wendell might be able to afford it by taking the money this year from the selectboard expense account, fire department account, or emergency manager's account. Monitoring its use would be a selectboard responsibility.

Wendell is nearing the end of mud season, but selectboard member Laurie DiDonato said it would be a good way to inform residents about the roads. Selectboard member Gillian Budine said she thought reverse-911 is essential these days.

Some households have no land-

line phone, and no listed phone number. Aldrich said that the school gets those phone numbers by sending messages home with students.

The selectboard is looking into melding reverse-911 into the next annual budget.

Town-Owned House

At the March 17 selectboard meeting, DiDonato had reported Greg Garrison of Northeast Solar thought the community solar project proposed for the town-owned property at 97 Wendell Depot road was very unlikely to proceed.

National Grid delayed connection to electric wires to allow time to upgrade their substation in Wendell Depot so it can accept new generating capacity. Incentives for solar projects are also going down. The combination of those factors may make the proposed project's finances unworkable.

That leaves the town owning a 12-acre parcel with an historic house which is almost directly underneath high voltage wires. The house is two centuries old, with 40-foot-long chestnut beams, and building inspector Phil Delorey said its condition is still sound.

DiDonato said planning board and energy committee member Nan Riebschlaeger says it should not be lived in. DiDonato added that current science shows no strong effect from exposure to high-voltage AC electromagnetic fields.

Keller and DiDonato suggested a request for proposals (RFP) for removing the building materials. Finance committee member Al McIntire, attending some pre-COVID selectboard meetings in person, had mentioned some inkling of people or organizations that might be interested, so one thought was to check with him.

Budine said the property would be tricky to sell, even as a house lot. Tanner offered that the town might build a solar array as an investment, but DiDonato said the construction expense would be too high, and the payback too low.

Aldrich added that the insurance on that house is \$1,200 a year, and that getting the property back on the tax rolls would be useful.

Town Personnel

At their March 22 meeting, the New Salem selectboard created an advertisement for attracting a new joint town coordinator. It looked good to Wendell's board members, and Keller said he would forward it back to New Salem. Advertising can be placed in the central register with no payment, and DiDonato said she would look at other job posting sites.

Aldrich said three other towns are also looking for replacement administrators. Tanner offered the possibility that someone might want a half-time job working only for Wendell.

Aldrich reported that one Wen-

dell highway worker gave two weeks' notice of leaving, then took two weeks of vacation. The finance committee reserve fund can pay to advertise for his replacement.

Memorial Renovation

Keller said that Harry Williston talked with Tanner about adding \$500 to the account established at the June 2020 town meeting for renovating the veterans' memorial. Weeds have grown in the memorial's gravel apron. Williston and Ted Lewis created a plan to get rid of those weeds and keep them away. The estimate is \$6,000 for the work.

At the 2020 annual town meeting an account was started with \$500 as a place holder. That \$500 is a separate line item, so it can be rolled over and built up over time.

Aldrich said the selectboard can authorize a donation account, and the board voted to do so, and to put another \$500 in at the June 12 annual town meeting.

The cemetery commission has been maintaining the memorial.

Other Business

Wendell's new animal control officer, Meghan Gallo, asked to use the old police station to store equipment. She needs an additional \$234 for plastic kennels, and was ready to take that money out of her stipend. Aldrich said that amount can be taken from the selectboard expense account.

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PERSONAL INJURY, WILLS & ESTATES, WORKER'S COMP

MONTAGUE from page A1

Ellis said that “essentially, there is no set of new mandates or requirements... nothing changes. This really is an indicator to allow a local community to take stock of its situation, and take whatever measures it deems appropriate.”

He said that due to the recent cases and the possibility of moving into the yellow zone, the local emergency management team had informed Council on Aging director Roberta Potter that it might not be “appropriate” to open the Gill Montague Senior Center for programming this week.

Ellis asked the boards for guidance were the town to move into the red zone. “Do you want me as we did in December to cease entry to town buildings temporarily?” he asked.

The boards did not take a formal vote, but decided to leave it to Ellis and Wasiuk to make a decision if a “large uptick” in cases is announced at the end of the week.

Park Activities

The boards approved a number of adult spring and summer sports programs being sponsored by the parks and rec department. The traditional coed softball league will be located at Unity Park from 6 to 8 p.m. on Mondays and Thursdays, between May 3 and “mid-August.” “Pick up soccer” will be held at Highland Park in Millers Falls on Wednesdays and Saturdays, tentatively scheduled for April 10 “through early November.” An adult yoga class will be held on Saturdays in the picnic area of Unity Park, with dates yet to be determined.

The proposal came with a long list of typical COVID protocols, including a prohibition on spectators. Parks director Jon Dobosz called the prohibition “very difficult in a park setting,” and warned that if park visitors tended to congregate at these events “we might have to cease and desist the season.”

The board also approved an application for a bicycle touring event called the “Ice Cream Ride,” sponsored by Speed and Sprocket Works of Northampton. The ride offers three routes of different lengths, beginning and ending at Unity Park. It was canceled last year due to the pandemic, but will “tentatively” be held this year on July 31, according to Sean Condon of Speed and Sprocket.

The board also approved a “Garden Clean-up Event” at the Unity Park Community Garden from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Sunday, April 25. The event, co-sponsored by the Great Falls Apple Corps, will include live music. Rachel Labrie and Annie Levine of the Apple Corps discussed social distancing and other pandemic protocols for the event.

Labrie said that the group had not yet “advertised” the event to avoid large attendance, and that there would be a “25-foot radius around the band, and ten feet of distance between band members.” Levine said there would be a signpost system for clean-up work to limit the number of people in the garden area at any one time.

In other news, Dobosz announced that the parks and rec commission had recently voted to name the Unity Park ball fields after long-time Montague resident, World War II veteran, and former Turners Falls High School teacher George Bush.

Dobosz said that Mr. Bush was the playground director at Unity Park for several decades. “It was a wide open program where kids

could come and go as they pleased, where he organized programs and events for well over 300 kids,” said Dobosz. “It is mind-boggling.”

The board did not take a vote on the issue, and Dobosz did not name a date for an upcoming event honoring Bush.

Vaccination

Wasiuk reviewed the latest news in the local vaccine rollout and state reopening guidance. On Monday, all residents 55 and over became eligible for the vaccine, and all adults over 16 will become eligible on April 19 if the state remains on its current timeline.

Ellis said he had been at a meeting of the COVID-19 “Franklin County Roundtable” earlier in the day, and that there will reportedly be a significant increase in the number of doses coming to Greenfield, which primarily administers vaccines at the John Zon Community Center, and to the rotating sites administered by the Franklin Regional Council of Governments.

Ellis indicated that some of these doses will be of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, which requires only one shot. He also said that some first shots for eligible residents will be available at the Franklin County Technical School, with appointments posted online on Tuesday morning at 9 a.m. Ellis said he was “optimistic,” although not certain, that the increase in doses to the county would continue over the next few weeks.

Montague emergency management director John Zellman said the Greenfield and FRCOG vaccination sites will merge, “at some point, to become one bigger site.”

Changing Climate

The select board voted to accept a \$237,287 federal “Pre-Disaster Mitigation” grant in order to address the perennial flooding on Montague City Road. The design for the project has already been completed, according to town planner Walter Ramsey. The town will still need to come up with a significant local “match,” which could be funded by state highway aid (Chapter 90), borrowing, or perhaps an additional state grant.

Ramsey reviewed the first-year costs of two electric auto charging stations in downtown Turners Falls. The town had hoped they would be revenue-neutral but in fact there was a “deficit” of approximately \$2,500 over the past year.

Rather than raise the per-unit cost for charging – one option presented by Ramsey – the board voted to lower the price, in hopes that stations would be more competitive with others in the region.

The board voted to accept Ramsey’s proposed application for a new round of state Green Communities funding. The \$112,128 in the application will fund new LED lighting at the water pollution control facility (WPCF) and two of its pump stations, as well as upgrades to the HVAC system and windows at the Millers Falls Library.

Public Works

WPCF superintendent Chelsey Little came before the board to request that it approve a contract awarded to the engineering firm Wright-Pierce for upgrades to the facility’s aeration blower.

The board also voted on four sewer fee abatement requests for the second half of the FY’21 billing cycle. The board endorsed two, and

rejected two at the request of Little.

Little reviewed two administrative orders from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) which listed recent violations of emissions standards by the WPCF and affirmed recent upgrades at the plant to remedy the problem. Little said the orders support the recent decision to purchase a new screw press to process solids, which no longer include materials from the closed Southworth Paper mill.

Public works superintendent Tom Bergeron announced that trash pickup for seven streets would change from Fridays to Wednesdays in order to reduce current service delays. Details are available on the town website.

He also announced that his staff had fixed the Sixth Street “Bailey Bridge” into the Patch, for an estimated cost savings of “upwards over \$40,000.” The bridge, however, will remain closed for several months while the EPA completes a hazardous materials cleanup at the former Railroad Salvage building.

Airport manager Brian Camden announced a \$13,000 Coronavirus Response Grant award to the facility, and Ellis informed the board that the town may receive up to \$2.4 million in lost revenue from the federal American Rescue Plan Act. He called the potential award “quite significant.”

The board executed a \$21,050 contract to LaRoche Construction, Inc. for the replacement of the Council on Aging roof.

Six-Town Regionalization

Mike Naughton updated the board on the work of the six-town school regionalization planning board, which is evaluating the pros and cons of consolidating the current Gill-Montague and Pioneer regional school districts. The Pioneer district includes the towns of Leyden, Northfield, Bernardston, and Warwick, which have representatives on the committee.

The committee is waiting on a new technical report from its consultants and, according to Naughton, “the hope is that we will have something to present sometime in the late summer or fall.”

Naughton also said the Gill-Montague school committee still needed to appoint a representative to the regional planning board. “The school committee takes a lot of time,” he said. “It’s not easy to find someone to step up and take on even more.”

Other Business

At Ellis’s request, the selectboard established an “ad hoc” committee to search for a new town building inspector to replace retiring Chris Rice. The committee, which includes department heads, the Turners Falls fire chief, and representatives from local building industries, is nearly identical to the one that appointed Rice three years ago.

Brian McHugh of the Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority asked the board to authorize an agreement with his agency to administer the FY’20 Community Development Block Grant. He said the grant was “eight months behind schedule.”

The board also authorized agreements with four social service agencies receiving funds under the grant.


During public participation time at the beginning of the meeting, Jane Alessandra urged the town to “opt out” of the new state law allowing aerial spraying to reduce mosquito habitat. [See article, page

A1.] Selectboard chair Rich Kulewicz recommended that the issue go before the board of health at its April 21 meeting and then back to the selectboard on April 26.

The board established a deadline of noon on April 20 for the submission of articles for the annual town meeting warrant, but did not set a date for the town meeting itself.

The next selectboard meeting will be on April 12.

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LOOKING BACK:

10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Here's the way it was on March 31 and April 7, 2011: News from the Montague Reporter's archive.

Census Shrinks Wendell

Wendell shrank dramatically in population according to the 2010 US Census data released last week – 14% – more than any other of the 26 towns in the county. Franklin County as a whole lost 0.2% of its population compared to the 2000 census. At the town level, Erving gained 22.7%, Leverett 11.3, New Salem 6.6, and Orange 4.3. Joining Wendell in the losing category were Shutesbury, -2.1%, and Montague, -0.6%.

In the last ten years Wendell went from 986 residents to 848, a loss of 138 people, data that took everyone by surprise. The street lists kept by town clerk Anna Hartjens show a much smaller drop from 883 residents in 2000 to 859 in 2010.

Hartjens, also postmaster of the Wendell Depot post office, noted the Census forms were distributed through the mail, and “Wendell people get mail from several different towns,” making it harder to “pinpoint where somebody’s living.” She had an “Aha!” moment when she realized the change might relate to the closing of Maple Valley School.

Choice Hits G-M Hard

The Gill-Montague Regional School District will lose \$1,083,945 in school choice sending tuition next fiscal year, according to superintendent Carl Ladd. 56% will be offset by students who choose in, bringing \$607,414 with them.

The anticipated school choice deficit for the district for FY’12 – \$476,531 – is the highest net loss since school choice began. When the net loss of \$371,578 in charter school sending tuition is added in, the district will lose a net total of \$848,109 in choice and charter.

The trend has been building since school choice began in 1998. Losses stayed below \$100,000 until FY’04, when the district laid off nearly two dozen teachers and staff during a budget crisis, and the net choice loss jumped to \$264,843. Losses have climbed – though not steadily – ever since.

This year, for the first time, Ladd decided to send out a survey to all parents of school choice students in Gill and Montague to find out why they were choosing not to educate their children in the district. Almost half (79) of the 160

surveys were returned, and the top reason (80%) cited for choosing to send students to schools outside the district was “concerns about academic standards.”

Developing a Vision for Future Growth

Two dozen representatives from the business, arts, planning, transportation, housing, and economic development sectors came together at the community room of the Greenfield Savings Bank in Turners Falls on Tuesday to plan for a more sustainable Franklin County.

The steering committee, called together by the Franklin Regional Council of Governments, under the auspices of one of 45 competitive Sustainable Communities regional planning grant programs nationwide, will hold public outreach sessions in three parts of the county this fall to gather community input on the future of growth and jobs in Franklin County.

Gathering data from these sessions, the steering committee will craft a regional vision for sustainable development – and a regional plan to guide that development over the next 25 years.

RiverCulture Previews Full Slate of Activity

RiverCulture director Lisa Davol presented the selectboard on Monday with an update on upcoming events for everyone to look forward to, beginning with the annual Crabapple Festival, May 1 to 15, including events at the Great Falls Discovery Center.

There will be a producers’ call for public art, and an opportunity for the public to make the decision on what work gets produced.

The Water under the Bridge Festival is on again for the weekend of June 10 and 11, with the goal of packing every venue in town with music, including a headliner band in Peskeompskut Park on June 11. Bridge workers and DPW employees will model hardhats creatively modified by local artists at the Hardhat Auction on June 25.

Work is underway to nail down the details of this year’s Turners Falls Block Party. Will the Montague Business Association play a larger role in the project, will it be similar to past events, or will it also have an ethnic festival aspect to it?

Davol also described the River-scaping project, funded by a grant for four towns along the Connecticut River, highlighting art and transformation along the river.



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HEALTH from page A1

“He’s dedicated a lot of his life to this town, he’s given a lot, and he’s done an outstanding job up until now,” said Zamojski, a Millers Falls resident who works as a nurse educator at Greenfield Community College and a public health nurse and contact tracer at the county Cooperative Public Health Services. “I just think it’s time for a change.”

“There’s a lot more involved in the health department than just nursing,” Boutwell warned, citing septic and restaurant inspections and housing court dates. “There’s so many aspects to it, it’s unbelievable.”

“I think we have a town that needs to focus on public health priorities, including disparity and equity issues,” Zamojski said. “I think there are things we can learn from what is going on here with this pandemic.”

Zamojski fell short of the mark in 2018, when she garnered 486 votes to Boutwell’s 702. “It was my first foray into public office, outside of town meeting,” she explained. “I gave it a couple years to think about what I wanted to do and how I wanted to run, and it just came up again against the same opponent.”

Zamojski said she supports expanded hours and responsibilities for the town nurse, public health education for the town’s large senior population, more cooperation with neighboring towns – short of joining the county Cooperative, which Montague has already decided not to do – and dealing with property issues.

“I know there’s some interest in more nursing activities, and that’s fine, and we’ve got a bit of a budget

set up for that for next year,” said Boutwell.

Zamojski plans to host online question-and-answer sessions before the election, and said she looks forward to “meeting more people out in the neighborhoods” during the campaign. She has put up a Facebook page, “Melanie Zamojski for Board of Health.” Boutwell reported that he is not yet sure of his campaign plans.

“I’m the longest-serving member on the board,” said Boutwell. “When there’s a question on something, I seem to have been the go-to person to try to come up with the answer to resolve the issue.... I got the [nomination] signatures I needed within a half an hour – I do have a lot of support around. But I can’t predict the outcome any more than anybody else can.”

According to town clerk Deb Bourbeau, most candidates are running unopposed: Rich Kuklewicz for selectboard; Chris Collins for moderator; Ann Cenzano for Assessor; and Barbara Kuklewicz for parks and rec.

The only other competitive race is for three-year seats on the Library Board of Trustees. Incumbents Patricia Perham and Gretchen Wetherby face off with Kathleen Berry and Elizabeth Swihart for three slots.

Bourbeau will be spending time after the election tracking down write-in nominees for a number of town meeting seats. After only four candidates returned papers, 16 seats on Montague’s highest democratic body remain wide open, spread across all six precincts.

The townwide election will be held June 22, having been pushed back to allow for a later town meeting this spring.



FACES & PLACES



KATIE NOLAN PHOTO & TEXT

Erving police officer Greg Moretti models the department’s new “load-bearing” vest that has equipment such as badge, taser, camera, cuffs, radio, and flashlight attached. Officer equipment may weigh up to 30 pounds, and attaching it to a belt is uncomfortable and a strain on the lower back. The vest has reflective lettering on the back identifying that the wearer is part of the Erving police department. Police chief Robert Holst said that outfitting six officers with the vests had cost \$3,348.

ERVING from page A1

At Monday’s selectboard meeting, chair Jacob Smith said the town needs “a very thorough discussion [of the bridge] with stakeholders and the town.... We’re awarding this, but we want to emphasize public participation.”

Selectboard member William Bembury agreed with him, saying the board needed to “get inputs into what the town needs, and where we want to go.”

Town administrator Bryan Smith said the town did not have to commit to the entire project, all the way through construction, and could “bump public participation earlier.”

The board asked him to communicate this to Weston & Sampson, schedule a public meeting once more information is available, and develop a mailing asking for resident input.

The engineering tasks listed in the proposal were: conceptual design;

public participation; an opinion of probable cost; finalizing plans; providing bid support; and administering construction services.

Erving’s Road Work

The board reviewed the response from Jack Goncalves & Sons to the town’s letter listing deficiencies with the road and sidewalk work at River, Warner, and Strachan streets.

During a rainstorm last October, highway superintendent Glenn McCrory and a Weston & Sampson engineer observed water sheeting across the road rather than flowing into the catch basins. At that time, Bryan Smith said the paving was installed to conform with the metal drainage and sewer structures already in place.

However, it turned out the structures had not been adjusted to allow for correct grading. When the roadway grades were checked, there

were 1 to 1½ inch variations from the engineering plans, indicating the roadway had not been completed as designed. The town has been discussing possible remedies with Goncalves since last fall.

McCrory said that Goncalves’ recent response agreed to “basically everything we asked for,” but with a different strategy than the one outlined in the town’s letter. He said Goncalves also wanted the final payment for the project before doing the repair work. McCrory recommended that the town require an onsite meeting with Goncalves, Weston & Sampson, and the road milling contractor to ensure everyone agrees on what needs to be done.

Both McCrory and Bryan Smith suggested a partial payment to Goncalves, with full payment after the repairs are completed. The board asked them to arrange the site meeting, and provide the infor-

mation from that meeting when the board meets next Monday.

Other Business

The board gave a first reading of two updated policies. Police chief Robert Holst said that the first, “Use of Force by Sworn Personnel,” was updated to conform to new state laws, and that the second, “Bias-Free Professional Policing,” was “more in depth” than the previous version.

The draft policies will be considered at two more meetings before the board votes whether to adopt them.

Holst also reported that Officer Greg Moretti will be attending the state police academy starting April 26.

The board began Monday’s meeting with an hour and 40-minute executive session, called to discuss strategy for negotiations regarding the chief of police and collective bargaining with the New England Police Benevolent Association.

The board approved spending \$17,560 for a solar-powered message board and \$13,050 for Tighe & Bond engineering services for decorative street lights.



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OF THE MONTAGUE REPORTER

APRIL 8, 2021

Above: Ripley Farm removes taps and collects sap buckets from their sugarbush, in an annual ritual marking the changing of the seasons on Chestnut Hill.



By LILITH G. WOLINSKY

MONTAGUE CITY – Today, as I write, it rains. It’s a cool spring day, and the birds who have just arrived from an unknown southern locale are quiet, as are the frogs. The sky is gray, the rivers are full, and water puddles at the low points on the street, shiny little mirrors on what was a dirt road twenty years back. The new-ish pavement emits a sea-salt and earth smell, and I think

of the treasures buried beneath it – coins, dolls, pottery, bricks, bones, marbles, and the detritus of the multiple railroads that once stretched across Montague City.

These are seen on old maps as trails of tiny stitches, and if one pays attention while ambling about, as splintering beams partially embedded in the thickets and marshland of the village. I think of the dirt and noise that so often accompanies industry, and imagine the clanking metal, railroad horns, hissing steam, and billowing black smoke adjacent to the calm and winding Connecticut River; deer and geese displaced by industrial progress.

The animals have returned, and it’s certainly quieter now, although we do have big trucks moving too quickly through a small space, with their attendant rumble and groan. It’s still dirty, too, in a contemporary and tired way – plastic bottles sent hither and yon by the winds whipping off of the curve in the river; metal soda cans; cigarette butts; colored bits of metallic wrappers; dirty blue face masks pressed into the dirt, almost never seen just one year ago; the occasional syringe; and see **RAMBLER** page B4

BOOK REVIEW

Trust the Process: Janice Beetle’s Journey to Being Okay

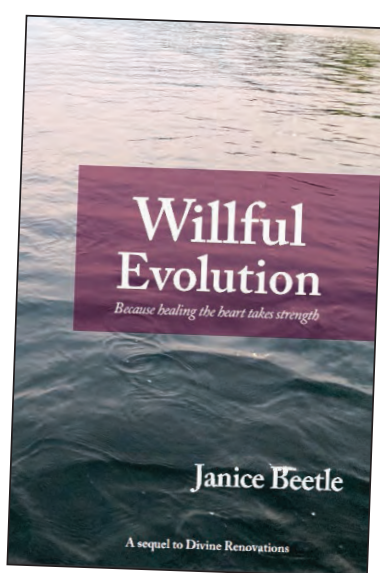
By RICHARD ANDERSEN

MONTAGUE CENTER – Easthampton author Janice Beetle’s latest memoir *Willful Evolution* reads like a compilation of selected journal entries. Unlike a diary, which is usually a record of daily events, journals are more reflective. They allow the writer to record her thoughts about the events taking place at or around the same time as she writes.

Most of the events contemplated in *Willful Evolution* are of the self-help variety and are grouped around four topics: Adventure, Business,

Family, and Romance. The great beauty of the way this memoir is constructed is that the contemplations are all self-contained. They can be read individually in any random order or from cover to cover. As the individual reflections pile up, a collage of word pictures starts to form in the reader’s imagination. By the time it is complete, we have a pretty good idea of who Beetle is and what we can learn from the experiences that got her there.

Adventure: Because Janice’s late husband Ed didn’t like to travel much, she never ventured far beyond the Pioneer Valley. This



changed when her daughter Molly signed a contract to teach first grade in a school on the Marshall Islands. Janice’s flight to visit her in Majuro was a first big leap out of what had see **REVIEW** page B5



By MICHEL IXCHEL

TURNERS FALLS – On this anniversary of lockdown, it’s impossible not to take a broad look back at this past year. And the more I think about it, the more I realize just how much quarantine did us a world of good. When I look back at this wild ride, challenging and frightful as it was, I can’t help but notice all the things we have been blessed with.

For starters, this is the first year

Lockdown Blessings

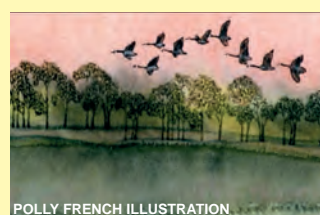
that I didn’t have to leave my kiddo for any extended period of time for work or travel. Since his birth, I’ve had to spend small chunks of time away from him – two weeks away every six to eight months or so – and even when I was home, the juggle was real. Running around, dropping him off at daycare, or to his dad’s... it felt like perpetual chaos. Slowing down and staying put never seemed like an option for us.

It’s wild to think about it, but since the birth of my son, I have not spent this much uninterrupted time with him. The thought saddens me, because it’s true what every parent says: it all goes by so fast.

Now look, I’m not romanticiz-

ing this past year. Having to wear 25 different hats – cook, cleaner, business owner, teacher, playmate, rule enforcer, dog trainer, the list goes on – has tested my patience, faith, and mental stability. Parenting while keeping a business alive alone has been nothing short of a miracle. Without the support of friends, family, sitters, school or daycare, at times all of this felt torturous.

Parenting is exhausting; early on in the pandemic, I realized that I can’t give him everything he needs (even if I tried). Yet the guilt set in nonetheless. Even now, as things are beginning to open back up, I still haven’t found the right balance see **INDIE MAMA** page B3



WEST ALONG THE RIVER
NEED A LITTLE SPRINGTIME

By DAVID BRULE

THE FLAT, ERVINGSIDE – The spring season comes slowly and teasingly. This March 23 morning is sweet nonetheless. The frost glistens and sparkles on bare ground, no sign of green grass yet. The snow has melted away revealing the bright orange playball that has been missing since January. Soon the owner Nick will be indicating he wants someone to kick it; it’s just asking to be chased.

The song sparrow trio sings sweetly, a white-throat whistles cleanly, seeming far away and lonesome. The mourning doves who have survived the hawk attacks all winter advance across the scattered patch of corn, plump and nodding, pecking like our bantam hen ghosts of thirty years ago. The doves coo, don’t cluck.

I’ve taken up my morning post, left hand still covered in wool mitten, holding book and writing board. Right hand bare but wrapped around my sturdy porcelain of Paris coffee cup, a reminder of a past life in the City of Light. The cup accomplishes its daily task keeping the contents fairly warm, depending on the temperature out here. Between sips, the right hand guides the pen across the page.

By March 25, there’s a light rain, light rain falling. The sound of those words is pleasingly rhythmic so it’s worth saying twice. More of a mist than a rain, it drifts over the landscape. All is a spring morning of bird song and freshness in the air.

The First Green is discernable, but just barely. Pointy tips of crocus pierce the partly frozen and cracked dirt. Beyond, it’s still mostly mud and dried grass instead of lawn. Further past the edge of the yard, the frog pond awaits. Maybe tonight there’ll be a frog chorus in the pond that needs even more rain. It’s

not at all close near to being filled to the brim in this particularly dry late winter. Maybe with more promised warm rain in the evening, there’ll be joyous coupling and spawning going on down there, as always every early spring.

On the Saturday eve before Easter, for once in this past week of evenings, the air is calm, even warm. March winds are a fading memory, having blown strong and cold right up to the end of the windy month. But now the sun is slanting golden from its sunset home in the southwest. Across the river, the awakening trees rise and crowd up to yonder valley rim. Faint maple buds are turning to a pink blush, brushing the hillside with a hint of *aquarelle* rosewater wash.

A day like this should be spent doing useful and practical things, nothing too demanding though, mostly left-over chores from November.

Leaves, left where they fell, still line the row of burning bushes. We are not very good leave-rakers. Those bushes were planted by my Irish grandmother when she was in charge of this house, more than seventy years ago. Back then it was not known how tenacious, rampant, and indestructible those bushes would become.

I leave the leaves to compost themselves under the septuagenarian invasives. By late summer they’ll have vanished, with little effort on our part.

Trying to find useful things to do, I hammered out nails protruding from a dozen two-by-sixes left over from the old porch when the Renaissance carpenters crafted a new deck for us last July. Those old boards will go into a neat pile, waiting for some project or another when the inspiration arises.

Then I got around to cleaning see **WEST ALONG** page B2



Tree swallow, Tachycineta bicolor.

Pet of the Week



CARMODY COLLAGE

“CHOCOLATE”

Hmm, feels like it might rain! Oh, hi – I bet you didn't know that we mice use our whiskers to feel surfaces and detect changes in weather! We can also communicate with each other using ultrasonic sounds the human ear can't detect.

As well as being super interesting, we're also super adorable. We like to tuck ourselves into small places. Give us a box to hide in and

we'll fluff up our bedding into a soft nest.

Interested in adopting? Animals at Dakin are available only in Springfield currently. Contact adoption staff at springfield@dakinhumane.org and include your name and phone number.

For more information, call (413) 781-4000 or visit www.dakinhumane.org.

Senior Center Activities

APRIL 12 THROUGH 16

GILL and MONTAGUE

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

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

for their COVID vaccine. We are here to help make a difference." Paula can be reached at (413) 423-3649 or paula-bettters@erving-ma.gov.

LEVERETT

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

ERVING

Senior Center director Paula Bettters writes:

"Erving Senior Center is still closed to the public. We are here daily taking calls and doing outreach work for seniors and their families. Call with any questions or concerns, need help with SHINE, SNAP. We are also taking calls to help seniors sign up

WENDELL

Wendell Senior Center is open for a foot care clinic the first-Wednesday of each month. Call Katie Nolan at (978) 544-2306 for information or appointments. Otherwise, there are no activities. The Senior Health Rides 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, 2020; hours and accommodations are still changing.

Big Y: Senior hours from 7 to 8 a.m. (413) 772-0435

Foster's: Senior hours from 7 to 8 a.m. (413) 773-1100

Green Fields Market: 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

McCusker's Market: Curbside pickup only 10 to 11 a.m. Order between 12 and 1 p.m. for pickup the following day. Email pickup@franklincommunity.coop (413) 625-2548

Stop and Shop: Senior hours from 6 to 8 a.m. (413) 774-6096

WEST ALONG from page B1

off the phoebe nesting shelf on the front porch high up near the ceiling. Those darling New England flycatchers are back in the neighborhood, arriving on time with the first warming days of April. They hunt insects along the sheltered shore of the river, but they'll make their way back home to nest here on the porch by the end of the month, as always.

Recently Sita and I compared notes on nests, especially those that contain fur that our dogs had shed. She once found a hair-lined nest, but I've only observed chickadees and an occasional titmouse carrying off tufts of Nicky's winter coat.

We always hang a basket full of loose fur up in the rafter of the back woodshed for those wee birds looking for soft nesting material. A chickadee usually stuffs his bill with whitish hairs, looking not un-

like a furtive, winged and disguised burglar wearing a fake beard.

Then I got around to fixing old fencing, and replacing wildlife sanctuary signs that those harsh March winds had toyed with then time to cut some kindling, stack wood for next winter, and put off everything else for some other time. No sense in being too ambitious.

Now there's nothing left to do but lay around, with the sun going down. Maybe take a walk down the path to the edge of the river, to catch the early silver bells of the spring peepers. Then there's the twilight dancing of the courting woodcock, or the evening flight of wood ducks rising up from the pond and heading down river. The first tree swallows kite by high up and overhead, heading north.

Dusk will bring out the deer, and quite possibly Brother Black Bear.

By now, he has woken from his winter sleep up on Mineral Mountain that looks down over the Flat. I know he spent time scratching and yawning, thought about his empty stomach, then sniffed the air, catching a whiff of grilling hamburgers down here somewhere in the neighborhood, maybe the yummy salmon slow-cooking on the campfire.

Our neighbors across the Flat, Moonlight and Morning Star, have already been visited by a hungry bear who trashed a couple of bird feeders in the past week. With that news in mind, maybe I'll just head back up the trail, and resume my Saturday night musings on the back porch, with my feet up, waiting for the first bats to appear.

That way, dog and human will be able to skedaddle through the back door of the kitchen, just in case!



PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Spring Bulky Waste Day Canceled

FRANKLIN COUNTY – Franklin County Solid Waste District's "Clean Sweep" Bulky Waste Recycling Day will not take place this spring. The fall event is tentatively scheduled for Saturday, October 23.

Residents can take most items that are collected at Clean Sweep to the Greenfield Transfer Station, which is open to non-residents for a \$5 fee per load, plus specific disposal fees per item. For hours and pricing, see: tinyurl.com/GreenfieldTS.

Residents are encouraged to recycle computer equipment and televisions at their own town's transfer

station, if an electronic waste collection program is available there, or at Greenfield Transfer Station. Residents can go to the District's website (www.franklincountywaste-district.org) to find town-specific information on the 17 transfer stations in the District, which remain open for proper disposal of many items.

Staples stores accept computer equipment (no TVs) free of charge; call your local store for details. Various charities and non-profits accept donations of working electronics, including local Salvation Army and Goodwill stores. Always call ahead

to ask if they can accept your item.

Additional questions about proper disposal of trash, bulky waste, recyclables, hazardous wastes, yard waste, or food waste can be directed to the Franklin County Solid Waste District at (413) 772-2438 – leave a message with your phone number and town of residence – or email info@franklincountywastedistrict.org.

MA Relay for the hearing impaired: 711 or 1-800-439-2370 (TTY/TDD). The District is an equal opportunity provider.

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Walk for River Justice

ERVING – An Earth Week "Walk for River Justice" is being organized for Saturday, April 24 between 10:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. along the Connecticut River at the French King gorge. The walk is to protest and raise awareness about Canadian-owned FirstLight Power's pumped storage generation station in Northfield, which is up for river use relicensing.

The river discovery walk will include river experts, community leaders, and energy activists presenting a history of the Northfield power storage facility which environmental journalist Karl Meyer has called an "energy-consuming, anti-gravity machine that kills tens of millions of fish and aquatic animals annually." The walk along the river will proceed up to the giant intake tunnels for Northfield Mountain, the site where river water is sucked up to be stored in a giant reservoir.

Kids, signs, and bicycles welcome. Bring water, a snack, and bug repellent, but leave pets at home. You should wear your mask.

Meet for this three-mile round-trip walk – approximately 1.5 miles, or 35 minutes, each way – on Dorsey Road, beneath the French King Bridge. From Erving going west on Route 2, Dorsey is a marked left turn. Once you pass the bowling alley, look left.

Coming from Greenfield on Route 2 east, it is on the right before the Millers Falls exit.

The walk will be along River

Road to the Ferry and Pine Meadow Road intersection, which is both dirt and paved and part of the Franklin County Bikeway. Due to dirt and potential mud, this part may not be

suitably wheelchair accessible.

If you have questions about this nonviolent, educational action, or wish to offer support for it, please contact anna.gyorgy@crocker.com.

KARL MEYER PHOTOS



Above: See the magnificent French King Gorge, on this "unnatural" history trek to Northfield's intake tunnels, where suction kills tens of millions of fish annually.

Below: FirstLight's intake tunnels upstream of the French King Bridge.

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INDIE MAMA from page B1
of work and parenting. Some weeks are stellar; others I can feel exhaustion in every pore. So no, I'm not idealizing parenting during the pandemic at all. I am, however, grateful for all the extra time we have had to spend together, tiresome as it was, because our bond has only strengthened.

And as exhausting as it's been, something tells me that we're never gonna get to be together this much again. School will start in the fall. The kid will keep growing. Life will keep moving. One day, this past year of quarantine will be something we'll reminisce about with a hint of nostalgia.

Staying put in one place was especially healing for me. As a child and as an adult, I have moved around constantly, and the concept of having a home felt foreign to me. Home has felt ephemeral for so long – unattainable, even. Fate has thrown me from one place to another, and having a home to comfortably be in this past year, without having to move, was also a gift.

Setting up daily routines was

also a marvel, and I can see how badly my kiddo needed this as well. Continuity, congruity, flow. Our space is tiny, but within these walls, we have felt safe, and most importantly, homey.

As we come out of hibernation into a world that was put on temporary pause, it's impossible not to see things with new eyes. This pandemic stripped things away from us, and while I for one am excited to claim many of these back, I know that the practices and routines we cultivated, and the feeling of being grounded and having a home, is something I will continue to carry with me. The time for expansion is approaching, and as we (hopefully) near the end of this pandemic, I look forward to savoring the intimate moments I've shared with my little family.

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



Artist Profile: Kamil Peters

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

GREENFIELD – I pick what artist I do a profile on based on the look of their art. In this case, I liked a metal preying mantis. It was one of two sculptures I saw an image of in an article the *Montague Reporter* had featuring it a while back (October 29, 2020: ArtBeat, "Art in a Field for No Reason").

Of course, I asked the sculptor, Kamil Peters, about it. "It's four and a half years old," he said. I learned it took him "roughly 200 hours" to make this sculpture.

Beside that preying mantis sculpture, named "Wink," Peters has made an elephant head, a giraffe head, and some things that haven't been seen yet, which include "a portrait of James Weldon Johnson." Johnson wrote "Lift Every Voice and Sing," a song that is considered

to be the African-American National Anthem.

In connection with that mantis being at the art space in Montague Center, "I put the preying mantis there a few years earlier," he said, "and recently I collaborated with the owner of the property to bring a few more artists there," one being Lindsey Molyneux.

Peters doesn't just make metal sculptures. He does wood, general, commercial, and residential work.

"I have been doing a lot of masks lately," he said at the time of our interview. "Most of them are people I know of and read about." Peters has been making sculptures for 15 years, and says he believes his sculptures are a little more sought after than the masks he makes.

I asked how well he does with all of this. "I currently live off

my business, and provide for my family," he answered. He said he likes making what he does in metal because of this: "I like documenting the times." That is an interesting way to describe making art in metal.

Other venues where his art is displayed, include an orchard in Florence, various restaurants including the Avalon Lounge in Holyoke, a hair salon called The Plan, and the Mill District in North Amherst.

I discovered his elephant head, his giraffe, and those masks from looking on his website, *kamilpeters.com*. I personally also found some of the art I saw on this website to be quite cool! If the diversity of his art is any sign of how he might do, then I think he will be wildly successful in bringing more art to the Montague Center space, as he says he will.



REPORTER FILE PHOTO BY TRISH GRAPPO

Holyoke sculptor Kamil Peters' insect piece, "Wink," has been on display in a Center Street lawn in Montague.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Male With Ponytail; Annoying Morning Calls; Shortcut; Leaf Blowing During Quiet Hours; Emergency Landing

Monday, 3/29

1:08 p.m. Caller reporting abandoned large flat screen TV in a shopping cart on Avenue A sidewalk by Karma Salon. Concerned the wind will push into the road.

3:06 p.m. Meadow Road caller reporting aggressive pit bull on March 20. The dog charged multiple times, but the caller was able to fend him off and was not injured.

4:54 p.m. Caller on Oakman Street reporting male with ponytail going door-to-door claiming to be working for Eversource. Officers advised him of solicitation bylaws.

6:49 p.m. Bridge Street, Millers Falls walk-in reporting suspicious activity in his apartment involving ex-girlfriend, going back to 2018.

6:53 p.m. Caller at Canal and Third Street parking lot reporting the front of her car was the victim of a hit and run by a

black truck.

10:12 p.m. Caller from Montague City Road requesting an officer due to an overly loud upstairs neighbor. No answer on call back.

Tuesday, 3/30

6:05 a.m. First of daily annoying calls from a caller making political comments and playing what appears to be recorded news feed.

9:24 a.m. Multiple calls received asking "Do you know what a border crisis is?"

1:37 p.m. Pedestrian reports telling a speeder on School Street to slow down, but the driver was not receptive. Caller requested additional speed limit signs.

6:19 p.m. Report of friendly, lost dog found on Bartlett Road in the Montague Plains. Caller will take the dog home and call the Town Hall to ID the owner in the morning. Neighbors recognized the dog and led them to the owner's home in Lake Pleasant.

9:05 p.m. Multiple 911 calls from Fourth Street address involving intoxicated, violent male party destroying things in the apartment. He calmed down after speaking to officers, no injuries reported, peace restored.

9:37 p.m. Abandoned 911 call; on callback woman was screaming for help and male party was yelling in the background. Verbal argument only; officer calmed everyone down and peace restored.

Wednesday, 3/31

5:47 a.m. Ongoing issue with annoying calls: this time commenting about living in fear and that it's the Turners Falls Police and not the Montague Police.

6:39 a.m. Caller complaining the DPW is outside her house leaf blowing and she would like them to stop, as it is too early.

7:53 a.m. Employee reporting female sleeping in the hallway of Crocker building. Female arrested on outstanding warrants.

11:53 a.m. Federal Street caller reporting people looking around his yard and possibly in his garage. Officer found it was not as reported; possible mental health issues.

12:42 p.m. Report of suspicious male party wearing backpack running from Charter NEX, through Tech School property, and then onto Turners Falls Airport runway. Turned out to be a tech school student taking a shortcut back to school.

3:23 p.m. Fourth Street caller requesting TF Fire Department to fix an error with smoke alarm system that is making all alarms in

the building chirp.

5:56 p.m. North Leverett Road caller reporting ongoing issue with illegal dumping on her property. Advised to contact the DPW.

9:25 p.m. Millers Falls East Main Street resident believes he just witnessed a drug deal and reported vehicle heading over the Papermill bridge into Erving. Vehicle not found.

Thursday, 4/1

6:45 a.m. Federal Street caller reported fire in upstairs bathroom, all residents are out of the building. Fire extinguished before officers arrived.

1:11 p.m. Caller reported a small gray-haired dog with no collar running around near the skatepark. ACO was notified. Second caller says he picked the dog up and will bring it home because it is at risk of being struck by a car.

1:48 p.m. ACO called in to report he was going to Montague Avenue in Lake Pleasant due to complaint of loose dog attacking other dogs.

2:54 p.m. Turners Falls postmaster reported a customer found a bag of powder outside the post office and left it on the counter. Officer retrieved the item.

3:34 p.m. Montague City Road caller reported a black male riding an unregistered black scooter on the southbound sidewalk. At the same time, a patrol officer was flagged by a pedestrian about the same person and advised to check out the Patch. Subject was not found.

3:52 p.m. Federal Street caller reporting suspicious person from a day earlier running across their property. Caller sent video footage for review. Advised by an officer of options.

Friday, 4/2

8 a.m. Harassing calls to Montague Police Department.

8:02 a.m. Call from Turners Falls Airport reporting a potential emergency landing by a single-engine Cessna 172. Second call reporting successful landing.

8:14 a.m. Canal Street caller reported a cigarette found in the cap of his gas tank.

10:57 a.m. Greenfield PD requested assistance contacting a Randall Road resident regarding illegal dumping of trash from her vehicle. Message relayed to the accused party who said the trash was discarded at her place of work. Information was passed on to Greenfield PD.

11:09 a.m. Ongoing issue with nuisance calls to Montague PD.

2:35 p.m. Walk-in reported rocks stolen on Masonic Avenue by a group

of females on March 30, and pallets stolen by a man on April 1. Surveillance images shared.

3:07 p.m. Officer requested to arrest a Bridge Street landlord who put something in caller's mailbox. Advised of options.

3:21 p.m. Caller reporting a gray truck cutting the line and running a red light at high speed to cross the General Pierce Bridge. Units notified.

7:02 p.m. K9 officer requested at routine traffic stop. Arrest made for driving with suspended license and possession of Class A and Class B substances.

Saturday, 4/3

6:34 a.m. Ongoing issue with multiple annoying calls. This time the person was yelling, "Hey lady, do you believe in God?"

7:44 a.m. Report of CO detector on East Chestnut Hill Road. Reported to TF Fire Department, caller advised to evacuate.

12 noon. Caller from Hillside Road reporting neighbor's two dogs came to her property and chased her. Officer advised owner of incident and caller of her options.

1:56 p.m. Park Street caller reporting skunk with injured back leg. Advised to let nature take its course.

6:27 p.m. Report of woman ripping up vegetation on the riverbank across from Unity Park. Referred to another agency.

6:56 p.m. Fourth Street resident heard a loud bang and came out to find heavy damage to the car port. He believes it was struck by a vehicle. No witnesses found by investigating officer.

10:07 p.m. Report of erratic, speeding driver on Sunderland Road north bound. Person not found.

Sunday, 4/4

5:41 a.m. Multiple harassing calls to business line and 911 line using inappropriate language and calling dispatcher vulgar names.

12:22 p.m. Multiple gunshots reported on West Mineral Road and hay bales set up for what appears to be target practice. Officer checked the area but did not see or hear anything.

8:20 p.m. Grove Street caller concerned that neighbor's backyard fire is too large, and too close to another neighbor's house. Reported to the fire department.

8:54 p.m. Caller reported man on peninsula at Cabot Camp, possibly fishing. When the caller walked that way the man was gone, but fishing pole and iPhone were found on the rocks. Officer spoke to a couple in parking lot in their car, but no one else was found in the area.

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RAMBLER from page B1

alongside the canal, piles of dog poop big and small left behind by owners presumably too world-weary to care about this corner.

Other dog-lovers prefer poop-bags, which I've learned come in bright colors, and thus the trail entrance and trail itself are dotted with red, green, blue, and yellow pouches left behind by those with seemingly confused good intentions, or perhaps a belief in a Divine Mother who whisks away stinking messes.

In other spring news, the expectations of a return to normalcy are slipping and sliding like a loose bike chain seeking purchase. I feel moody and unsettled, and find respite in the burgeoning green of my yard, buried under the still-present decaying and sun-bleached leaves of last autumn. The hellebore, with its petal cups of deep purple, pushed through the dark in February, and my witch hazel bloomed yellow ribbons the second week of March. The lilac, pruned hard last spring for

the first time in years, has responded with abundant buds.

And, while I will plant my own mini orchard, two semi-dwarf apple trees and a crab – Ashmead Kernel, Wickson Cider, and a Dolgo – my focus this year will be on soil regeneration. A friend says she thinks of developing the soil as gardening itself, and my soil is particularly depleted after decades of dumping, and stomping and taking. Cardboard, compost, amendments, and worms – these are interspersed with worries, as I wait each night for sleep.

Lastly, because of the poop, the drab and the drear, and the general feeling of neglect in this sweet, almost-peninsula chunk of land, a Montague City Improvement and Beautification Association is being formed. If you live in or love Montague City and have ideas and energy you would like to contribute to such an endeavor, please reach out to MontagueCity-Improvement@gmail.com.



Montague Community Television News

We'll Edit Your Videos!

By HANNAH BROOKMAN

TURNERS FALLS – The first episode of *Free Afternoon*, the newest MCTV talk show, is now up on Vimeo and will be airing on Channel 17. This episode features Nina Rossi, as host Beverly Ketch interviews her about the closing of the beloved Nina's Nook. The Montague finance committee, Montague selectboard, and Montague police equity and use of force committees have all posted this past week's meetings to the MCTV Vimeo page.

All MCTV videos are available on the MCTV Vimeo page, which can be found linked to the MCTV website, montaguetelevision.org, under the tab "Videos." All community members are welcome to submit their vid-

eos to be aired on Channel 17, as well as featured on Vimeo. MCTV is always available to assist in local video production as well. Cameras, tripods, and lighting equipment are available for checkout, and filming and editing assistance can be provided.

The MCTV board is looking for new board members, specifically someone interested in filling the role of treasurer. The station is also looking to hire a producer to make Spanish-language content. Please email infomontaguetelevision@gmail.com with a resume to schedule an interview!

Something going on you think others would like to see? If you get in touch, we can show you how easy it is to use a camera and capture the moment. Contact us at (413) 863-9200 or infomontaguetelevision@gmail.com.

MONTV / MUSIK / MOUNTAIN



Episode 33: Dennis Tyfus

Interview by JOSH BURKETT

TURNERS FALLS – Dennis Tyfus is known for many reasons: as an artist, for his record label Ultra Eczema, and for organizing festivals and venues in Belgium. He has done hundreds of releases, and lots of insane music events – and art that can be seen as a street sign, sewn into clothing, and even on tattoos!

MMM: Hi Dennis! What are some of your earliest music memories?

DT: There's a few. My mom cannot stand music, so most of the time music was either off or on at a pretty low volume. I vividly remember my father playing Stevie Wonder's "I Just Call." I lip synced that song with huge sunglasses on as a toddler.

When I was 6, the Beastie Boys "Fight For Your Right" was a gigantic hit here. It blew my mind, my folks had to calm me down as I was going to destroy the livingroom and was jumping on the couch, etc. I just got my first skateboard, a Rob Roskopp model, and noticed skateboards and skate-fashion in this Beastie Boys video as well, which made me realize there was a whole world related to this weird toy!

A few years later I learned about punk through my best friend's older brother, and shit hit the fan.

MMM: Do you have a favorite band or musician of all time?

DT: It still changes daily, and it always is true! Somehow I want to say Robert Wyatt, but that only covers 1% of what I love about music.

MMM: What is the weirdest record you have released so far?

DT: Probably Luc Tuymans and Miroslaw Balka's *Crazy Horses LP*. I was asked to take part in a group-exhibition on a farm in a village in Belgium. When I told the farmer and curator that I wanted to record myself imitating a cow and have the recording play continuously behind the door of a cow stall during the exhibit, this assistant told me there's a recording of Luc Tuymans imitating horses. I immediately told him I needed to put that out.

I truly wonder if any art collector that bought this because these art giants are on it ever listened to it. I wish I was a fly in the room where this record gets played for the first time.

MMM: What is the most insane?

DT: Probably *The Ramone LP*. It is the entire first Ramones LP played on one recorder.

There was a time when Antwerp folks would gather in this bar called Witzli Poetzli, where the first record of the Ramones would always be played and turned the place into a madhouse! On one of these nights this silly idea for the LP arose. When I got home drunk I posted on social media that I was looking for a recorder player. Clara Lissens, who now plays in De Batteries, reacted to it. Oddly she did not know the Ramones, which gives the feeling of the record an even stranger touch!

MMM: How about music or art project? Biggest/weirdest?

DT: The biggest is definitely

De Nor. When I was asked to do a solo exhibition at Middelheim Museum in Antwerp, which is an open air sculpture park, I proposed to create a venue that is also a sculpture. There's seats, a bar, and a stage. It's gated but inside of the museum. We made a contract that I can do what I want there but that I have to keep it clean basically. It limits organizing gigs to just three months in summer.

Another work I get some questions about, is a street sign that took the focus on the label's catalog number fetish to another level. It's basically a street sign that states "Ultra Eczema #100." It's on a street in Antwerp, it's a public sculpture and it blends entirely in with what's common on the streets here, and if you're not looking to drive 100 kilometers to "Ultra Eczema" it should not harm anyone either.

MMM: If money and time wasn't an issue, what music or art project would you do?

DT: I'd probably mess more with the public space, and I would love to be able to get the time on TV that is now filled with commercials and garbage to fill it with "surprising out of nowhere madness" no choice television! The mainstream was definitely better in the past.

MMM: And what is your fave rap band?

DT: Due to living together with somebody that was blasting the worst Dutch and Flemish hip hop I got allergic to the genre for about eight years. I simply could not hear an extra beat anymore, though I gained back my love for the older stuff like Boogie Down Productions, Kool Keith, GZA/Genius, and also to our man Frank Hurricane of course!

MMM: So you are doing a Beatles event now, right? Who is your favorite member?

DT: Paul, because he managed to be dead and alive at the same time, something that did not work for Andy Kaufman, sadly. In 1964, when Paul passed on, my father won a Paul McCartney lookalike contest in the first Belgian beat magazine. Maybe they were switched then, my dad and Paul, fake Paul.

MMM: So... Dylan or Donovan?

DT: I can't stand Dylan's voice, so the answer, my friend, is Donovan in the wind, preferably a really loud wind so I can hardly hear him.

For 20 years Radio Centraal, the station that I also do a weekly show on, has a weekly Dylan radio show! Plays Dylan, nothing else,

and he looks like Dylan too somehow. At one point I noticed that the same Dylan CD kept playing, with no usual interruptions. We looked in and the host was asleep, snoring insanely loud. We put his microphone on air so the rest of the show was just loud snoring, and Dylan in the background.

MMM: What's your fave [legendary West Mass noise musician] Noise Nomads album?

DT: Probably the one he did with Paul Flaherty!

The first time I saw Noise Nomads was on the night I arrived in Providence in 2003 or 2004. It was at AS220, and there was a microphone on a stand facing an amp feedbacking loudly. After five minutes a huge real Christmas tree walks into the venue. Jeff Hartford was dressed as a real huge Christmas tree. I remember the gig being short but I really liked it. We spoke shortly afterwards and a few days later I got a package from him, full of his zines, tapes, etc. We became pals.

One of my favorite Noise Nomads gigs was a day he played in a school in Western Mass with Paul Flaherty, there was hardly anybody there as there was a blizzard going on outside. Thurston Moore and Bill Nace played a guitar duo that night as well in an empty classroom.

MMM: I know you are a fan of the Mystery Train label, Mystra... what do you think of the Twisted Village label?

DT: My favorite Twisted Village release is probably that first Vermonster LP! I either traded that Vermonster LP with you or at Twisted Village when it was still a physical store.

The first time I was at Twisted Village I think we played there. I believe Hendrik Hegray played as well and sprayed shaving cream all over the store during his gig. When Angela Sawyer worked there she was probably also the second person ever that bought Ultra Eczema releases for her store. The first one ever was Chris Corsano – he bought five copies of Ultra Eczema 3 when it was still a zine to sell at the Yod space!

MMM: What's your fave Load Records release?

DT: *Ride The Skies* by Lightning Bolt! I did not hear it until about 15 years after probably, but that record and their live gigs were so fantastic. Also Ben of Load, Mat Brinkman, Xander Marro and the folks of Dirt Palace, and that whole Providence art and music scene blew me away, and was a gateway to many small

labels and noise magicians I never heard of before Load!

MMM: How about your events... What was the wildest one you ever planned?

DT: An often made meal here is called "balletjes in tomatensaus," which translates as "little meatballs in tomato sauce," but "balletjes" could also sound like ballet. I was asked to propose something for a festival at this big venue called De Singel. I proposed "balletjes in tomatensaus," which would have been a huge bath of tomato sauce and a class of 7-year-old ballet school dancers in it, doing ballet moves in the bath with tomato sauce... in their white costumes.

Although I did find a ballet class and the curator of the festival was enthusiastic... it never happened. A funny detail though: years later the curator that was enthusiastic about this idea, Sara Weyns, became the director at Middelheim Museum and ok'ed the De Nor idea.

MMM: Oh cool! How about comedy? Any fave comedy LPs? Any new jokes?

DT: I thought comedians were something really difficult for a very long time, aside from Andy Kaufman and Joshua Burkett, as I guess you're expected to laugh at things. I don't think getting cornered into laughing is my idea of fun. I guess I loosened up.

Chris Corsano got me into Bill Hicks, I love his New Kids On the Block jokes, and generally I enjoy music referencing in anything. I do very much also like Tim & Eric. At some point I just got a DVD of all the Tim & Eric seasons right before I went on tour with Hair Police in Europe. Everyone was speaking in Tim & Eric lingo after... and on multiple occasions we put "Spaghett" on the guest list. In Switzerland the person that worked the door came over to me and asked when our friend Spaghett was coming.

MMM: So what's next for you then? Any new releases or shows at your venue?

DT: This summer so we made a compilation LP with lots of acts that were gonna play at De Nor: exclusive tracks by Lucrecia Dalt & Aaron Dilloway, Justine Grillet, Agnes Hvizdalek, Miaux, Thruston Moore, C.O.P., etc. Ultra Eczema is also putting out records by Gaute Granli, Hiele, Ogon Batto, Kraus, Brorlab, Elko B. and Zyklome A!

Probably no gigs or festivals for a while. I'm hoping this summer De Nor can re-open.

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NatureCulture: The Science Page

WARREN ONDRAS PHOTO

Contributions to NatureCulture are welcome. What are you interested in? Would you like to write about birds, weather, science of any kind? We need your input. Send articles for consideration to: science@montaguerreporter.org. Thank you!
- Lisa McLoughlin, editor

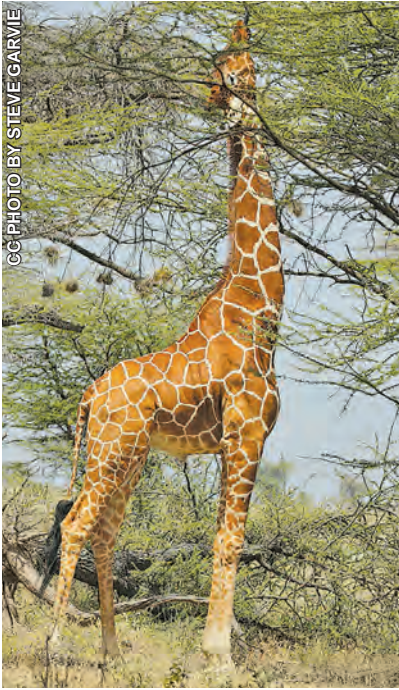
Short Giraffes? Yup!

By LISA McLOUGHLIN

NORTHFIELD – Dwarf giraffes have been found in Uganda and Namibia, both diagnosed with a genetic disorder, skeletal dysplasia. This rare condition affects their leg length, but their necks are still as long as unaffected giraffes. They are 2.6 and 2.8 meters tall, whereas most giraffes are about twice that height.

In humans this condition is treated with physical therapy and growth hormone. Dwarfism in captive animals can be caused by inbreeding. Scientists think the dwarf giraffes may be more vulnerable because they'd have difficulty running, kicking, and mating.

Since all the short giraffe photos are copyrighted, an average height giraffe is depicted with this article.



A photo of a more average-height giraffe.

BOOK REVIEW

Richard D. Little, *Exploring Franklin County* (EarthView, November 2020)

By LISA McLOUGHLIN

NORTHFIELD – Beloved local professor Richard Little has written another fun and educational book about the world-class stones to be found in Montague and surrounding towns. He says we are in the best place in the world to study geology.

I am bringing this book into my car, and it will be a way to explore new and time-tested places to walk in our area. It's basically a series of self-guided field trips, complete with directions and photos showing what to look for, that will educate the reader all about geology.



Montague is especially featured, with the Turners Falls geological walking tour included as a downloadable appendix, along with an invitation to explore the Montague Plains with Google Earth.

Other popular areas featured include Bear's Den in New Salem, Tully Mountain in Orange, the Greenfield Community College rock park, and High Ledges in Shelburne Falls.

Reading this book is like having Professor Little with you on the trip, and will help anyone learn something new about something old – our rocks rock!

Order the book directly from the author at www.earthview.rocks.

Don't Just Listen to Yourself...

by LISA McLOUGHLIN

NORTHFIELD – Ethan Kross, an experimental psychologist and neuroscientist, founded and runs Michigan University's Emotion and Self Control Lab, which is a cross-disciplinary lab where he studies voices in other people's heads. He wants to know how people make meaning out of painful experiences, and if wisdom can be enhanced. On the road there, he's finding out why some of us benefit from our inner voice, while others are negatively affected. He has written a new book: *Chatter: The Voice in Our Head, Why it Matters, and How to Harness It*.

Apparently, we are quite chatty to ourselves, speaking inwardly at 4,000 words per minute (which would take about a half hour to say out loud). The messages we give ourselves matter a lot. Since our inward voices trump the outward goings-on, we can ruin any real experience, even a positive one, for ourselves. The upside is we can also make ourselves feel better about bad situations if we know how.

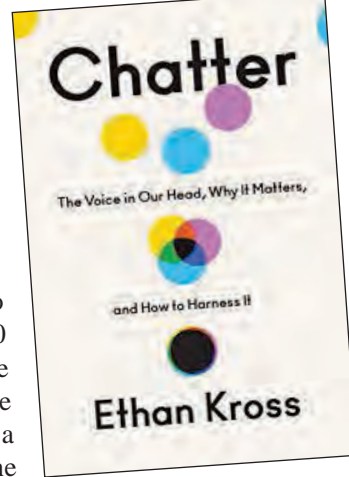
MRI shows that being in distress has a physical component as well as a mental one. When we feel bad about something, we do more harm if we turn inward. We create a negative cycle of introspection to turn and turn under the pain of stress.

Instead, Kross suggests we "zoom out" and get some perspective. This doesn't mean avoiding our feelings, but rather than turning inward, we should be backing off a bit to avoid getting overwhelmed. He says people who can quiet their inner voices often feel relief and are healthier, as do those who can reason with themselves, even going so far as to call themselves out in the third person. "Cognitive reappraisal" is the process of replacing negative thoughts with more true and positive ones, and is a suggested practice.

Venting out loud may seem like a good solution, but actually, Kross doesn't want to hear it, and he says neither do most of our friends. He says that venting to friends pushes them away and/or sinks us deeper into our problems, while venting on social media is even worse.

Instead he suggests less public forms of venting: journaling, going out in nature, hugging a friend rather than talking to them. Awe-inducing activities, such as hiking to a beautiful view or using your imagination to picture yourself in the future once you've overcome your problem, can give that sense of perspective.

For the more pragmatic of us, if you feel trapped at home and need a micro-level fix, neatening your external surroundings can make you feel more in control internally, as can engaging in personal ritual.



Critically Endangered Living Fossil Trees

By LISA McLOUGHLIN

NORTHFIELD – There is only one known natural stand of Wollemi Pine trees (*Wollemia nobilis*) in the world, and it exists in the Blue Mountains of New South Wales. The largest of these trees were saved during the epic brush fires of 2019-20, and because so many younger ones died and are yet to re-sprout, they have been awarded special protected status as important to future generations.

This category marking them as "an asset of intergenerational significance" is new, and they are the first to be protected this way. Wollemi Pines have existed on earth for up to 200 million years, since dinosaurs roamed. They are the last of this genus, which was thought to be extinct until this stand of 80 mature trees and about 300 seedlings was found in a gorge in the 1990s.

The new declaration will require a plan be put into place for monitoring and to protect them from future fires; from *Phytophthora cinnamomi*, a fungus thought to be introduced by unauthorized visitors that causes root rot; and from other threats linked to global warming and human activities.

Humans are growing these trees as garden specimens to bolster their numbers, but they are so rare that many botanical gardens feel compelled to keep them in cages.



Wollemi Pine tree at Mount Tomab Botanic Garden.

Teeth Give Away Your Drug Habits – Forever

By LISA McLOUGHLIN

NORTHFIELD – Even after a million years, tartar on teeth gives away who used psychoactive drugs. Archaeological research from Bjorn Peare Bartholdy at Leiden University, combined with dental research from Dorthe Bindslev of Aarhus University in Denmark, shows that Dutch inhabitants of a 19th-century village had been self-medicating.

The dental researchers mixed drugs with tartar-forming minerals,

testing how they are stored on teeth. They then tested their findings on cadavers' teeth, and compared the results with blood tests. The tartar tests were slightly more effective, and represent a longer-term record, at least for these known drugs.

It is unknown what drugs the test might miss, including local medicinal plants, but they will keep testing teeth, especially of ancient people known to live near monasteries and other places where medieval drugs were dispensed.



Tartar buildup on teeth.

April 2021 Moon Calendar

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| Last Quarter Sunday, April 4 |  | New Moon Monday, April 11 |
| First Quarter Tuesday, April 20 | | Lyrid Meteor Shower Thursday, April 22 |
| Full Moon Monday, April 26 | | |

Artist Peter Rubín depicts the 140-mile-wide asteroid Psyche, a mineral rich asteroid located between Mars and Jupiter. Visit photojournal.jpl.nasa.gov/catalog/PIA23876 for further information on Psyche.

NASA / JPL-CALTECH/ASU PHOTO

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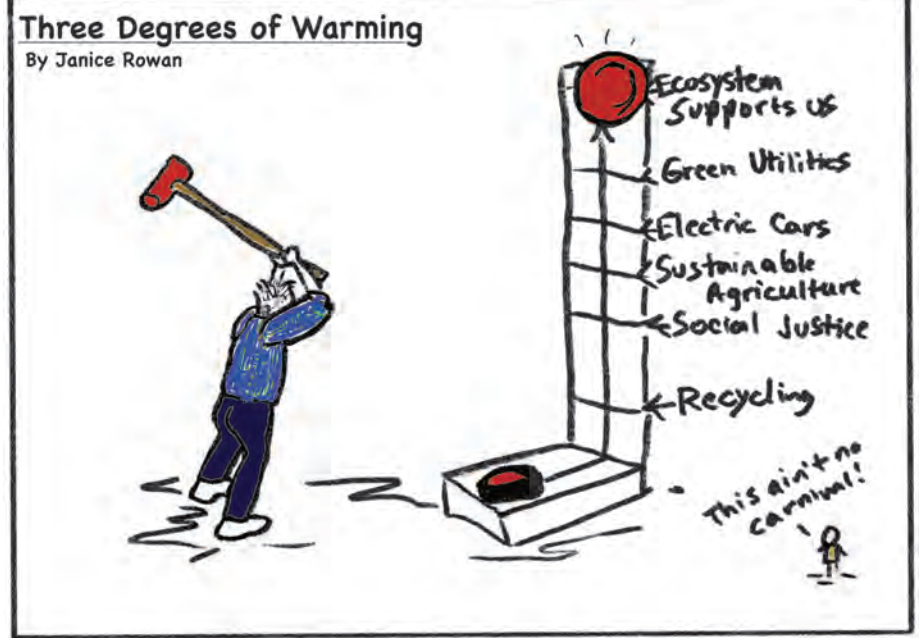
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THE AUTHORS' CORNER: FAMILY EDITION

By **IZZY VACHULA-CURTIS**

TURNERS FALLS – Happy April! In today's article, I am going to be interviewing some of my favorite people about their favorite books! It's been a little difficult having an interview for each article, so I thought I would do something a little different, and I will hopefully have an author's interview for my next issue. Enjoy!

I thought this article would be super fun because I always talk about my favorite books – the *Fablehaven* and *Dragonwatch* series, *Love & Gelato*, *Anna and the French Kiss*, *Lola and the Boy Next Door*, etc. So I thought it would be really fun to learn about some other favorites.

First I interviewed my Grammy, Laura Vachula, who was once a second grade teacher at Bridge Street School!

"I have a lot of books that I really like," she said, "but I would say my favorite is *Eat, Pray, Love*, by Elizabeth Gilbert. I like this book because, first of all, it takes place in Italy, and shows the different foods they eat there, and I just love the atmosphere of Italy, and reading the language! It also partly takes place in Bali, which is a beautiful place, right on the ocean. This book would be good for people who like to travel, and to read about women being strong and independent."



PHOTO COURTESY IZZY V-C

Our correspondent, with her new book recommendations on deck!

This book sounds amazing! If anyone read my article where I reviewed *Love & Gelato* and interviewed Jenna Evans Welch, I talked a whole bunch about how much I love reading about Italy, too.

Second, I interviewed my Auntie Ray, Rachel Vachula, who is the administrative assistant in the GMRSD pupil services office.

She described, "At the Book Expo one year, a book event in New York City, I picked up an advance copy of this wonderful book, *Daughter of Smoke and Bone* by Laini Taylor. It is the first book in a trilogy about a blue-haired girl named Karou, who lives in Prague. Her background story is a mystery,

even to her, and it involves other worlds, angels, chimera, etc. Along with mystery, it has romance and a bunch of fantastic dialogue! I would recommend this book to anyone who loves fantasy novels, romance, European travels, and beautiful writing."

I haven't read this book yet, but it seems similar to *Fablehaven* which I absolutely love!

I also interviewed my Auntie Em, Emily George, who is a sixth-grade English teacher in New York. She explained, "My favorite book is *Crave* by Tracy Wolff! I like the characters and the quick-moving plot. I would recommend it to anyone who loves fantasy books, and is looking to get sucked into a great series!"

I'm planning on reading *Crave* super soon. It is about a girl who goes to a boarding school in Alaska which vampires attend, and she falls in love! I don't want to describe the book *too* much, but I will be reviewing it very, very soon, and I will hopefully have an interview with Tracy Wolff.

Thank you so much to all my amazing family for letting me interview you about your favorite books! I hope everyone enjoyed today's article even though it was a little bit different, and I will be reviewing novels again in my next column. Happy reading!

MONTAGUE REPORTER



KAREN COPELAND PHOTO

ON THE ROAD

Elliot Tarry and a new friend check out the Reporter at the Wakodabatchee Wetlands Bird Sanctuary in Delray Beach, Florida.

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