The Montague Reporter

YEAR 20 – NO. 25

EDITOR@MONTAGUEREPORTER.ORG

also serving Erving, Gill, Leverett and Wendell

THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

MAY 5, 2022

RITES, AND RIGHTS



Protestors at the Franklin County Justice Center on Tuesday afternoon, after the leak of a draft US Supreme Court decision to allow state abortion bans.



After a two-year hiatus due to COVID and the death of organizer David Kaynor, May Day returned to the green in Montague Center on Sunday with music, Morris dancers, and a May pole ceremony to "wake up" the earth after the long winter, a tradition derived from Celtic, British, and other European cultures.



Montague town planner Walter Ramsey (at right) reads an Arbor Day proclamation following the planting of a Japanese tree lilac in front of Carroll's Market in Millers Falls last Saturday. The town tree committee organized the planting of nine trees this weekend throughout the town's villages, a new tradition.

Town Meeting: Concerns Over North Leverett Development

By JEFF SINGLETON

LEVERETT – Leverett's spring town meeting, held outdoors on April 30 next to the town's elementary school at the recommendation of the local board of health, began at nine in the morning and was moving rapidly to a close by midday. A quorum of just over 80 local voters had approved a town budget of nearly \$7 million, amended the regional school district assessment method for the upcoming year, funded Leverett's first hybrid police cruiser, and purchased a new medium-size dump trunk, among other special articles.

The meeting also paid tribute to Julie Shively, who was retiring from the selectboard after 13 years, and unanimously elected Patricia Duffy to replace her, in addition to filling a number of other vacancies on elected town boards.

But then came Article 21, which at first appeared innocent enough. That article, presented by Danielle Barshak, proposed to spend \$30,000 of community preservation money for an assessment of the condition of the "Field Building," a historic former library owned by the town at 1 Shutesbury Road.

Barshak is the chair of the town's community preservation commission, which allocates funds drawn from a property surtax of 3% that

see ${\bf LEVERETT}$ page A8

WENDELL SELECTBOARD

State's Clock Is Ticking For Well Fix At Swift River

By JOSH HEINEMANN

In the time between their April 14 and April 27 meetings, members of the Wendell selectboard signed an administrative consent order showing their intent to correct the contamination of the Swift River School's water, and returned it to the state Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP). Selectboard chair Dan Keller said he did not know whether the New Salem selectboard had signed theirs yet.

The towns have been given 60 days to develop a plan, which is not enough time to locate and drill a new well, the Wendell selectboard's preferred solution, and the school property does not have space for one. The fallback plan is a filtration system, which the New Salem selectboard proposed when the issue first came to light.

Wendell finance committee chair Doug Tanner has spoken against that choice, saying he considered it not a real cure and too expensive – \$40,000 for the system and \$5,000 to

see **WENDELL** page A6

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Sandy Lane Favored for Sludge Composting Site

By JEFF SINGLETON

At its weekly meeting on Monday, the Montague selectboard was presented the results of a study evaluating the potential for composting the sludge produced by the town's wastewater treatment plant, as well as by other towns in the region. The study focused where a composting facility would be sited, odor control, the relative merits of an openair or enclosed facility, and projected costs to Montague. The presentation was extremely complex and detailed, particularly in dealing with odor control data.

The study, presented by Charlie Alix of the engineering firm Stantec, is a response to the spiraling cost of sludge disposal and the difficulty in finding places to send it. Indeed, the two are related, with high costs caused by transporting



Stantec's feasibility report seemed to favor a site "at the end of Sandy Lane," south of the town transfer station and a planned FRTA bus maintenance facility.

the sludge long distances.

Town administrator Steve Ellis said the cost of sludge disposal is projected to be \$323,000 in next year's water pollution control facility (WPCF) budget, and pointed out that the town's current disposal

see MONTAGUE page A7

Groundwater Contamination Still Under Investigation

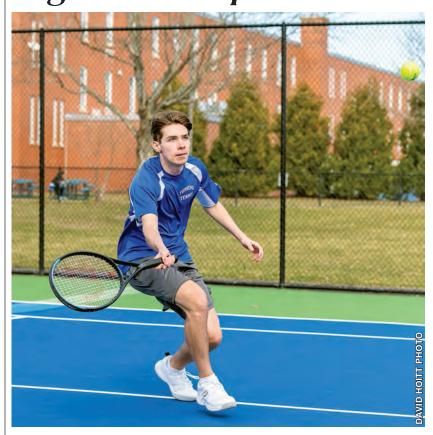
By SARAH ROBERTSON

LEVERETT – Local and state authorities continue to investigate the source of a harmful chemical contaminant found in a number of drinking water wells in North Leverett. High levels of perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl chemicals, or PFAS, have been detected since last fall in at least eight Leverett wells through a well-testing initiative funded by the state, which has provided filtration systems to some of the worst-hit homes.

"These are all in North Leverett, contaminated from an unknown source," board of health member Nick Venti told the *Reporter*. "Leverett's Board of Health is taking the PFAS contamination issue seriously

see **WATER** page A5

High School Sports Week



Mike Boyle, shown here during last month's season opener against Hampden Charter School, is the #1 singles player on the Turners Falls co-op tennis team. The team was only able to field three players last week, forcing forfeits on the doubles courts.

By MATT ROBINSON

The Turners Falls Softball Thunder struggled this week against both Taconic and Hampshire and then eked out single-run wins against Wahconah and Athol.

According to coach Gary Mullins, pitcher Madison Liimatainen has had some trouble hitting the

mitt lately. But when she's on, she's on, as evidenced by her performances against Wachusett last week and Wahconah this week.

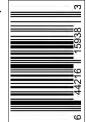
The other softball team in town, the Franklin Tech Eagles, seem to be hitting their stride. Since losing to Turners on April 18, Tech has gone 7 and 0, and this week they

see **SPORTS** page A5

Some Weeks, The Edition Publishes You

Letters to the Editors	A2, A3
Local Briefs	A3
Ainsworth At Large: Northfield ATM	A4
Ten Years Ago This Week	A7
The Reporter Goes to Mexico	A8
West Along: More Than Words	B1
Montague City Rambler: In the Garden	B1
Gill Artist Becomes Collectible	

Important Middle-School Questions	B2 B3 B4 B4 B5 B6 B6 B7
Montague Police Log	В3
Surviving Cancer: Mindless Relief	B4
Montague Cryptojam	B4
Ten Gallons of Family Fun	B5
Monthly Science Page: Mutation	В6
Music Calendar & Four Comics	В7
Book Review: Creepy Folk	



The Montague Reporter

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The Hard Way

print, in a newspaper endeavoring to serve and charm the broadest possible local readership, about the Supreme Court this week. The other shoe of the Court's capture is dropping, and it will shape our country for a generation.

When the Court first convened in 1790, the baby US government ruled just under 4 million people, of whom 700,000 were enslaved, 1.6 million may have been white but were women, and 800,000 were white and male but were children.

The Court, and the judiciary as a whole, have since served as a tremendous stabilizing force through generations of social upheaval and transformation. This cloistered professional caste has woven and rewoven a vast, self-referential library of text around the often bluntly brutal application of law – which always, somewhere, involves real hard edges, leg-irons or truncheons, tasers, the teeth of dogs.

It is the work of the Justices to continually inscribe this mayhem as text, to numb it down in lines on paper, to parse and haggle scripture in the grand tradition of any clerical body – and even, from time to time, to watch closely and smell the air and know the tides out there are turning, and to devise a rationale for the government to grow and adapt before the people slip out of its grasp.

In moments like these the Court, a bottleneck of power, can appear as aperture out of which great change flows. But what it is doing is absorbing and redirecting changes in society, putting a quiet thumb on the scale here and there.

And this is why, over the last two generations, the game of court appointment has become more and more transparent. No one believes anymore that these people serve

There is not too much to say, in the texts and their logic; if they did, Ginni and Clarence Thomas's recent antics would have meant a show-stopping scandal and a public crisis of faith. We know that whatever precedents Justices may cite, whatever principles they may purport to weigh, they are always intervening when they rule on behalf of one real group over and against the power of another.

Much can and has already been said about Alito's draft opinion. At the end of the day it supports the power of state governments to intervene directly in reproduction; to surveil sex; to outlaw a range of medical choices; to sow fear; to enforce physical and emotional agonies; to capture a new class of criminals; to even request their extradition; to punish them.

To those readers of this paper who believe abortion is murder, and want it to not happen:

Is this really the way you want to see that goal attempted? Enough money in politics for long enough that an opinion held by a minority of Americans can be pushed through by a partisan bloc in the Court, making state lines into lifeand-death borders? Do you want fights over extradition this country hasn't seen since the days of fugitive slave law? Do you want governments to pry into bedrooms, into families, into personal crises?

Because if you think this will produce a world in the vision of your moral order, you are mistaken. This abandonment of the pretense of government by consent will be a lesson for many people, particularly young people, that the day is only won by a leverage of force.

And if some of them think that poverty is murder, or that eviction is murder, or that knowingly destroying livable habitat is murder?

It's going to be a problem.





Mitch Gaslin, Emily Monosson, and Julie Kumble of Drawdown Montague shut the door of one of two eight-by-six-foot containers full of styrofoam packaging they collected at the transfer station in Turners Falls. Town officials in Montague and Northfield, as well the Franklin County Solid Waste District, assisted in the effort. If you would like to volunteer for future Hold the Foam efforts, contact Julie (juliekumble@gmail.com) or Annie Chappell (chappell56@verizon.net).



Montague Housing Coalition **Endorses Overlay District**

Montague Town Meeting Members: Please vote in favor of the 40R Smart Growth Overlay District at the May 7 town meeting.

As residents of Montague and part of a newly-formed Montague Housing Coalition, we support the creation of a 40R "Smart Growth Overlay District" in town, and we encourage town meeting members to vote in favor of this zoning proposal at the town meeting on May 7.

Why do we support this proposal? 1. It can help the town encourage the development of more housing that is affordable to local residents while maintaining local control over the character and quality of that housing.

2. The local town economy is likely to benefit from this zoning:

a. The town would receive in-

centive payments from the state for implementing this zoning

b. There are tax benefits from newly-developed property. c. New residents will become

patrons and employees, helping to sustain the local economy

3. Montague would be a leader in the region – the first town in Franklin County to adopt this zoning.

4. The proposed parcels are ideal locations for housing - close to downtown, the bike path, and parks.

You can learn more about the details of this proposal at www.tinyurl. com/MontagueOverlay.

On behalf of the Montague Housing Coalition,

Janel Nockleby, Turners Falls Lilith Wolinksy, Montague City Jackie Stein, Lake Pleasant

Henry: Write In Henry!

On average, less than 10% of registered voters have kept every incumbent on this ballot in office for their last three elections. It is hard for me to accept that the Town Clerk, being probably the most important elected position in town, is only elected by less than 10% of registered voters.

Being Town Clerk is my dream job, but it is clear Deb has the majority of support for that role made especially clear in the April 7 Montague Reporter article about the Democratic Caucus: "The results are in,' announced Wisnewski shortly after Tuesday's voting closed. 'Deb Bourbeau won every single position."

I do want to do something this election cycle, especially after taking a term off from Town Meeting - my term only ended in 2020, but that feels like forever ago!

For Precinct 2, I'm asking my neighbors to write me in for Town Meeting Member.

Town wide, I'm asking for your Write-In vote as Selectboard, for a perspective outside the 01351.

We can discuss my goals and what I want to accomplish, as well as what you want, when I see you when I'm out canvassing.

Let's shake things up, or keep the status quo - either way, please get out and vote on May 17. Your voice matters, Montague Matters.

> **Michael Henry Millers Falls**

A Call to Grandparents

Grandparents, Nonni:

Join hands, take to the streets! Wheelchairs, canes, crutches or skateboards - do not let our daughters and our sons have fewer freedoms than we have fought for.

Remember – if you are unborn, you have value from the "moral right," but you're fucked once you're born. We, the people, live under the beliefs and practices separating church from state. How dare they, a minority, push their beliefs on the rest of us?

We elders worked and suffered for a better world for our children. Now the cold-hearted minori-

ty will make our children live with fewer choices and even less opportunity. How. Dare. They.

Sisters, Brothers, Grandmas, Grandpas, love your children! Let's join with our families to demonstrate our pride and love of true freedom for all.

We, the elders must make noise wherever and however we can. Make your noise. Do not be quiet.

Domenica Djaafar, lifelong activist, organizer, refugee camp

nurse, retired labor and delivery RN, and stubborn grandmother, **Turners Falls**

Published weekly on Thursdays.

Every other week in July and August. No paper fourth week of November, or the Thursday closest to 12/25.

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Compiled by NINA ROSSI

Village Neighbors, which helps residents over 60 in Leverett, Wendell, Shutesbury, and New Salem stay connected and age in place, is holding a volunteer appreciation day at the Leverett Village Coop this Saturday, May 7. Members and volunteers should be there at 12:30 p.m. to enjoy a free meal and live music from Sawzapalooza, and pick up volunteer t-shirts.

Help with the event is also needed, so if you can volunteer, email pr@villageneighbors.org. If you are a member or volunteer who would like to get up on stage as an opening act, contact them as well. The rain date is May 15.

LifePath is holding their **30th** annual Walkathon this Saturday, May 7, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. starting at their offices at 101 Munson Street in Greenfield. Teams and sponsors are always welcome, but if you can't get it together in time, support their work by arranging a donation at giving@lifepathma.org. LifePath aims to help elders and persons with disabilities maintain independence and quality of life at home and in the community.

The LAVA Center in Greenfield presents a performance of Most Dangerous Women on Saturday May 7 at 1 p.m. and Saturday May 14 at 1 and 7 p.m. Written and directed by Jan Mahar, the play tells the story of the founding of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Watch online or in person; tickets at thelavacenter.eventbrite.com.

Great Falls Books Through Bars is also holding a fundraiser book sale this Saturday, May 7, on the lawn of the Unitarian Church in Northampton. Books are paywhat-you-want, and the funds go towards offsetting the expense of mailing books to incarcerated people across the US.

The Turners Falls Water Department's semi-annual water bills were mailed April 29. Payment is due by June 1 to avoid a \$20 late charge. Payments can be made in person, by mail, online at www. turnersfallswater.com or placed in the drop box located to the left of the front door at 226 Millers Falls Road.

Youth and young adults ages 14 to 24, many of whom are under the voting age, who live in Franklin and Hampshire counties or the North Quabbin have a chance to be heard by legislators next Tuesday, May 10 between 4 and 6 p.m. in the YELO (Youth Engaging Legislators and Officials) Forum.

The forum will be held by Zoom; register to attend at tinyurl.com/ yelo-forum. Last year the event was attended by 86 people, including 56 youth. Participants will earn \$30 for attending the event. For more information, email kscotto@ dialself.net.

The Pioneer Valley Symphony announces a "Pasts & Presences" concert this Saturday, May 7 at 7 p.m. at the Greenfield High School. Music director Tianhui Ng will lead the orchestra in the world premiere of Boston-area composer Elena Ruehr's Unquiet Earth and feature the PVS Chorus and soloists Carami "Mimi" Hilaire and David Kravitz in a performance of Brahms's A German Requiem. Resident musicologist David Schneider will give a pre-concert talk at 6 p.m.

Althea Keaton will hold an **Open** Art Studio for all children and adults in the first floor art room at Artspace in Greenfield. Drop in on Sunday, May 8 from 4 to 6 p.m. and Tuesdays, May 10, 17, and 24 from 4 to 7 p.m.

Each week Keaton will have a creative project to make, or, choose to work with any of the art materials provided. There will be colored pencils and crayons, oil and chalk pastels, watercolor and tempera paint, charcoal and pencils, materials for collaging and other papercraft, printmaking, and more. The Open Art Studio is free and open to the public.

MassHire and YouthWorks will host a virtual Youth Job Fair next Wednesday, May 11 from 3 to 5 p.m. Youth ages 14 to 24 are invited to register at tinyurl.com/hire-youth.

Art Deviation will present an evening of provocative art, political outrage, and gender exploration at the LAVA Center in Greenfield next Thursday, May 12 from 5 to 8 p.m. JJ White's alter ego Josie Bender will host the event and perform some of their genderfluid, spoken-word poems on social justice themes. There will be sculpture, video, art, and cards to see as well. This pop-up exhibit and performance is recommended for mature viewers only.

Joe Dulude will be giving a final performance at the Shea on Friday and Saturday, May 13 and 14 at 7:30 p.m. The show is called Dragspringa, and features Dulude's famous Mr. Drag character bidding a fond farewell during a martini-soaked evening with the Drag Sisters. Dulude will be moving out of the area, but will no doubt make a few return appearances.

Nova Motorcycles is looking for creatives to participate in the Unity Festival, scheduled for June 11 at Unity Park in Turners Falls. The second annual festival seeks local makers of useful art items to swap, sell, demonstrate, and learn.

The free, day-long outdoor event is aimed at "gear-heads, woodworkers, inventors, and tinkerers; people who find joy in repurposing, recycling, rebuilding, and reimaging," according to their press release. There will also be music, food trucks, skateboarding and activities for families. Fill out the form at tinyurl.com/makers-fair to apply, or email unityparkfest@novamotorcycles.com for further information.

RiverCulture will release its Montague summer events calendar on Thursday, May 26. Printed calendars will be circulated in this paper, and available at locations throughout the five villages. The same information will be shared on RiverCulture social media platforms, and at www.riverculture.org.

To have your cultural event listed in the calendar, submit the event name, date, time, cost, and a basic description to riverculture@montague-ma.gov by Thursday, May 19. Call director Suzanne LoManto with any questions at (413) 863-3200 x115.

Learn how to make healthy tasty dishes at Just Roots' Kitchen Intuition monthly online workshops. Ingredients are provided for pickup at the farm in Greenfield for registered participants. Delivery may be possible if you live within five miles of downtown Greenfield. Learn more at *justroots.org*.

Assets for Artists announces another round of Zoom workshops for creatives about marketing, pricing, and professional development starting in May. Topics include how to negotiate pay as a musician, maximizing Instagram, and financial strategies for artists. The workshops are sponsored by MASS MoCA, and are free for Massachusetts residents. Register at www.assetsforartists.org.

Mass Mentoring Partnership is recruiting AmeriCorps mentoring advocates for the August 2022 through June 2023 service year. Americorps mentor advocates are needed in host sites across the state to recruit and train mentors, strengthen community partnerships, and other support services. Contact Rosie Mc-Mahan at rmcmahan@massmentors. org for more information.

> Send your local briefs to editor@montaguereporter.org.



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Another Letter to the Editors

Feedback on Last Week's Travel Column

I am writing to express the concern I experienced while reading Max Hartshorne's column "Jackson, MS: Blues, History and a Good Time," which was printed in the April 28 edition of the MR.

I was offended by Mr. Hartshorne's attitude reflected in his somewhat offhand remarks regarding Jackson's "significant problems," which he describes as high crime rates and a "persistent issue with the clay soil that cracks pipes."

Despite the fact that he writes that Jackson has the highest murder rate per capita in the US, he dismisses possible concern about this fact, stating that "most crime here consists of criminals shooting other criminals... not something that has an impact on most visitors."

But what about the residents of Jackson? How are they affected by that amount of violent crime? Are we to be concerned only for our

own safety and turn a blind eye to the suffering of the people who live in the city we're visiting?

His mention of problems with water and sewage pipes minimizes the crisis in Jackson that exists with regard to lack of potable drinking water. The situation in Jackson is similar to that in Flint, Michigan, where water is tainted with unacceptable levels of lead. A little over a year ago, a winter storm shut down Jackson's entire water system for a month, and problems with water quality are ongoing.

(For more information on the situation, see the April 19, 2022 CNN article, "Water is a human right': City of Jackson still in dire need of infrastructure help to fight water crisis".)

In this city, which has a population that is 82% Black, some believe that this water crisis is an example of environmental racism.

Many residents are forced to use bottled water, which is expensive and hard to obtain by many in this city, where the poverty rate is 25% compared to a national poverty rate of 11%. Mr. Hartshorne does giving a passing reference to the poverty that is visible in Black neighborhoods, but does not seem particularly concerned about it.

Mr. Hartshorne is enthusiastic about the many museums in Jackson that showcase the region's history, including the history of slavery and the civil rights movement. He seems to believe, however, that these issues exist solely in the past. The issues confronting many of the Black residents of Jackson, Mississippi, including poverty, violent crime, and lack of access to basic services such as clean water seem to me to be evidence of the ongoing legacy of racism, clear indicators that racism and its insidious effects are alive and well in Jackson.

I think it's important not to gloss over these issues. Even if it feels like there is not much that travelers and readers can do to help, I believe that it is important for those of us with relative wealth and privilege to see clearly the ongoing traumatic effects of our country's racist history. Things will not improve for all of us until many more of us are willing to be made uncomfortable by looking at these issues - and their effect on the human beings involved – squarely in the eye.

In addition, I'd like to suggest that the Reporter consider capitalizing the word Black whenever it appears, as many large publications have begun doing in the past few years.

> Kate O'Kane **Montague Center**

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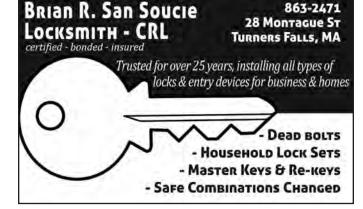


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AT LARGE

Northfield Approves New Water District

By CHIP AINSWORTH

NORTHFIELD - On Monday inside the dimly lit Pioneer Valley High School auditorium, Northfield town meeting was a love fest the likes of which no one had seen since Woodstock – that was, until the peace and love became five hours of bloviating tedium.

Articles ran the gamut from settling an unpaid office supply bill for \$187.45 to approving \$21,000 to buy a new trash compactor, \$60,000 for next year's 350th anniversary bash, and \$30,000 for a new sign outside Town Hall, preferably neon to give it that Vegas look.

The only glitch was not enough copies of the town meeting warrant to go around. "I pay \$12,000 a year in taxes, and can't get a copy of the warrant?" asked Brian Bordner. "And please don't tell me to go on the internet."

When it was over, the town of less than 3,000 – split in half by a river, and with a population that endured a 5.5% population decline in the last decade according to the latest US Census, 3,033 to 2,866 was okay with the proposed \$12 million budget. According to in2013dollars.com, in 2010 that amount equaled about \$16 million in purchasing power.

A reliable source told me the spending is expected to jack up property taxes by over one dollar per \$1,000 of valuation in the coming year.

Raises

Planning board chairman Steve Seredynski wanted a \$1,500 raise, to \$3,000, for his hard work getting a solar industrial field approved on the green acreage between the Connecticut River and Pine Meadow Road. The co-stars, several hundred sheep, are already grazing above the proposed site, ready for their new digs between the stanchions so it can qualify as a dual-use agricultural operation.

One resident got to the microphone and shed tears for Seredynski. Town clerk Dan Campbell spoke

of how he's in town hall almost every day. Selectboard member Alex Meisner spoke of what a great guy he is. Planning board vice chair Meg Riordan and her colleague Tammy Pelletier made impassioned pleas on his behalf.

Fellow member Joe Graveline dared to be the lone dissenting voice. "I consider this job a labor of love," said Graveline, who once managed to keep a Dunkin Donuts off the town's historic main street. "The 'No' vote you hear will be mine."

The town's finance committee didn't recommend the pay raise that Serendynski wanted to give himself, but at town meetings, nearly everything passes. Put a ham sandwich on the warrant the only debate would be mayo or mustard, and Seredynski got his raise.

The expected rise in property taxes will also help pay for town administrator Andrea Llamas's \$7,000 raise to \$107,000 in the next fiscal year.

Water and Power

Patricia Kinsella, who's in her final days as the interim school superintendent, had volunteered to make extra warrant copies for Bordner and others like Patrick Ford of Thomas Aguinas College. There still weren't enough to go around so I gave Ford my copy and introduced him to some townsfolk who might help him navigate through the labyrinth of town politics.

The California-based college is still learning the ropes about this town 3,000 miles from its flagship campus in Ventura County. It needs water, and the Northfield Mount Hermon School is offering up the East Northfield Water Company, which it's owned since the days when the campus was the Northfield School for Girls and then became NMH.

Two decades ago the school looked in the rearview and said so long to Northfield and the Dwight Moody homestead. It logged the woods on the mountain near the reservoir and caused damaging runoff, let the golf course deteriorate until it was rescued by Snow & Sons Landscaping, and sold all its faculty homes to the college.

Article 24 was long and convoluted, and no one could've read it in its entirety during the town meeting. "An act authorizing the Town of Northfield to Establish the Grandin Water District" is named for the reservoir itself.

High-Speed Express

The week before town meeting, residents received 8-by-10 postcards asking voters to approve it. The sales pitch had vague promises about low water rates and letting "fellow citizens take control." It was mailed from the post office in Brattleboro, not Northfield, to residents who had no skin in the game - but could vote at Town Meeting just the same.

A public input forum had been held on April 6, and about 50 residents turned out to hear the proposal. Town administrator Llamas's presentation was such a seamless sell that toward the end of the twohour meeting, selectboard member Mary Sullivan-Bowen asked, "What are the cons?"

Llamas was stumped, but others had answers. Resident David Kaczenski said filter systems, payroll costs, and "inherent non-compliance issues" would send costs skyrocketing beyond the "pro forma" speculation. "Your rates are going to go up," he said.

A resident who sat next to him concurred, saying a public water district would require a Grade III operator: "There's not many in the state, not many that will come to Northfield."

Creating a water district requires state legislative approval, and Llamas wanted the article on the town warrant so it could be approved and move forward.

"If we don't get this done in May we'll need to wait another year,"

She got her wish, and though she appears to have micro-managed it down to the last detail, her detractors said the financials simply won't meet the actual cost of managing a viable water district.

Indeed, the East Northfield Water Company is a patchwork of old and rusting pipes, and town crews are constantly ripping up Highland Avenue to repair it.

Selectboard member Bea Jacque said grant money would be available to cover the cost, but others believe the town will only get a fraction of what they expect to receive. "The town's too wealthy to qualify for these grants," said one insider. "It'll only get 15 or 20 percent of what it needs. They need to calm down, figure what it's really going to cost, and work from there."

On April 6, Kaczenski appealed to Llamas and others to use common sense. "This is the first public meeting, right?" he asked. "And you want to put it on a warrant next month, and assume this massive debt? You want us to run fast here, I don't get it."

Neither did a lot of townsfolk that night, but Llamas and other supporters lobbied hard and got their way, putting the people in East Northfield on the high-speed express to higher water rates.

Where's Elon Musk when you need him?

Election

Twelve hours after the town meeting folded its tent, 108 citizens voted in the annual town election. Nary a race was contested, and everyone on the ballot was re-elected - but no one garnered a vote from everyone. The two who came closest were Francis Leo Froment and Raymond J. Zukowski, who received 96 and 95 votes respectively for seats on the Board of Trustees of Veterans Memorials.

The two anchor candidates were Phil Baker, who received 81 of 108 possible votes for board of health, and Margaret Ann "Meg" Riordan, who received 85 votes to keep her planning board seat. There were four write-ins and 19 blanks.

Chip Ainsworth writes sports for the Recorder and news and opinion for the Reporter. He lives in Northfield.

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Spring "Clean Sweep" Bulky Waste Recycling Day

By AMY DONOVAN

FRANKLIN COUNTY - Franklin County Solid Waste Management District is holding its Spring "Clean Sweep" Bulky Waste Recycling Day next Saturday, May 14, from 9 a.m. to noon. The three drop-off sites are Mohawk Trail Regional School at 26 Ashfield Road, Buckland; the Northfield Highway Garage at 49 Caldwell Road, Northfield; and the Whately Transfer Station at 73 Christian Lane, Whately.

Residents from any of the District's 21 member towns may bring bulky items such as tires, appliances, scrap metal, furniture, mattresses, carpeting, construction debris, computers, televisions, and propane gas tanks. Materials will be recycled whenever possible.

There are charges for most items. Disposal fees, cash only, will be collected during checkin at each site. A complete list of prices for the most common items is at franklincountywastedistrict.org. The price list has also been provided to participating town halls and transfer stations. Residents and businesses do not need to pre-register for the collection.

Electronics will be accepted at the event, but

equipment and televisions at their town's transfer station, or at the Greenfield Transfer Station.

Staples stores accept computer equipment, but not TVs, free of charge; call your local store for details. Various charities and non-profits, including local Salvation Army and Goodwill stores, accept donations of working electronics. Always call ahead to ask if they can accept your item.

Clean, dry textiles and books will be accepted for free at next Saturday's collection. Textiles must be contained inside a sturdy plastic bag. 95% of all textiles can be recycled or reused; clothing or linens that are torn, stained, or with missing buttons or broken zippers can be recycled into insulation. Acceptable items include clean and dry clothing, shoes, accessories, curtains, sheets, towels, and stuffed animals in any condition, except moldy or wet.

Books can be in any condition except moldy or wet, and can be hardcover or paperback. No encyclopedias, please.

Bulky rigid plastics will be collected for a special recycling program, at \$5 per load. Plastic items larger than 2.5 gallons are too bulky to be processed with regular household recycling,

residents are also encouraged to recycle computer but some can be collected separately and recycled. Acceptable items for this special bulky rigid plastic recycling program are limited to these items *only*: 5-gallon pails, plastic lawn furniture, plastic trash barrels, recycling bins, laundry baskets, storage totes, and milk crates.

> Anything else is unacceptable for this recycling program and would have to go in bulky waste, i.e. trash. Bulky rigid plastic items must be empty and free of batteries, soil, rocks, and liquids before being recycled.

> District residents are from the towns of Bernardston, Buckland, Charlemont, Colrain, Conway, Deerfield, Erving, Gill, Hawley, Heath, Leverett, Montague, New Salem, Northfield, Orange, Rowe, Shelburne, Sunderland, Warwick, Wendell, and Whately.

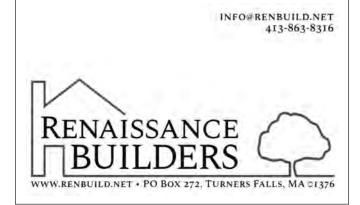
> For more information, contact the District office at info@franklincountywastedistrict.org or (413) 772-2438. MA Relay for the hearing impaired: 711 or 1-800-439-2370 (TTY/TDD). The District is an equal opportunity provider.

> > Amy Donovan is the program director at the Franklin County Solid Waste Management District.

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cell 413.834.2201





WATER from page A1

and working closely with the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) to swiftly determine the extent of the problem and to rectify the situation, starting with the parties most severely affected."

PFAS is a general term used to refer to thousands of manmade chemicals used in a wide range of products from food packaging to makeup, firefighting foam, waterproof clothes, and nonstick pans. According to the US Centers for Disease Control, PFAS do not easily break down and tend to accumulate in living tissue, causing a range of health issues including cancer, reproductive problems, liver damage, and increased risk of asthma and thyroid disease.

In October 2020, Massachusetts established a safety threshold of 20 parts per trillion (ppt) for longterm exposure to PFAS through drinking water. The federal Environmental Protection Agency recommends a "health advisory" limit of 70 ppt, but no enforceable nationwide standard exists.

Under a free program, Mass-DEP and research partners at UMass Amherst have been testing private wells in select communities for six of the most common PFAS compounds. The investigation into the North Leverett plume began in September 2021, when two wells tested above the state's "imminent hazard" level of 90 ppt.

"MassDEP is notified by the UMass team if results of PFAS exceeds the Maximum Contamination Level, at which time MassDEP will review the data and commence a site discovery investigation," Catherine Skiba, a deputy regional director for MassDEP's western office, told the Reporter. "We have been conducting such an investigation in Leverett and it is currently ongoing."

A Single Source?

The wells with the highest PFAS levels are all located near the intersection of North Leverett and Chestnut Hill roads, according to MassDEP documents. The highest concentration measured was 430 parts per trillion (ppt), with other wells measuring 426 ppt, 411 ppt, 396 ppt, 160 ppt, and 110 ppt.

These are among the highest PFAS levels in private wells recorded in the state.

"MassDEP has been working with these affected homeowners to provide treatment systems that remove the offending PFAS compounds through filtration in the plumbing before it reaches the tap," Venti said. "MassDEP is also resampling the filtered water for quality assurance."

At least 55 wells in Leverett have been tested for PFAS so far, Venti said, 42 of which detected nothing. However, follow-up testing in March showed a dramatic increase of contamination in one of the wells, prompting another round of testing throughout the neighborhood.

"The retesting of the Phase 1 properties was initiated due to an observed increase PFAS detection from a confirmatory sample that reported an over 100 ppt increase," a MassDEP official wrote on a Bureau of Waste Site Cleanup release form.

The department is now beginning a second round of testing to better understand the scope of the contamination. In April it sent letters to at least 17 homes on Hemenway, North Leverett, Dickinson, and Cave Hill roads, as well as Laurel Hill Drive, requesting permission to test wells.



This map of the North Leverett PFAS cluster was assembled using MassDEP filings and other sources. Green markers indicate properties with no detectable levels of the chemicals; yellow, detectable levels under 20 ppt, and red, levels above 20 ppt.

Separate from the state-run program, about 30 Leverett residents interested in determining the extent of the plume have joined an independent well-testing effort, paid for by the participants. Results are either still pending or have not been made public, and organizers declined to comment for this article.

"The tight spatial distribution of these highest concentrations in North Leverett would be consistent with the idea that PFAS is derived by a single source there," Venti said of the results thus far. "MassDEP has performed detailed analysis for specific PFAS compounds in the area in order to further examine a single-point-source model."

Locating the origin of PFAS contamination may determine an entity responsible for remediation costs, another MassDEP spokesperson previously told the Reporter.

Of the six PFAS compounds the state tests for, perfluorooctanoic acid, or PFOA, was the most prominent among all the North Leverett wells, accounting for more than half the contamination measured. The area where the contamination is highest was used as farmland prior to the early 2000s, when it was developed for housing, said Venti. The Leverett fire department has reported that no firefighting foam, a common source of PFAS, is believed to have been used on the property.

Filtration Fix

To address the worst contamination, MassDEP is installing carbon filtration systems at the six North Leverett properties that tested over 90 ppt, the level Massachusetts deems an "imminent hazard."

In a letter sent to property owners, the department said it will

assume financial responsibility for the upkeep of these filtration systems for three to five years, at which time it will pay for the first replacement filters. After that, it will become the homeowners' responsibility to maintain the systems and test regularly.

"Presently, MassDEP is estimating potential costs for labor, quarterly sampling, system maintenance, laboratory fees, filter changes, and lamp cleaning ranging conservatively from \$4,000 to \$10,000," read a letter sent to a Hannabrooke Drive homeowner in December. "Due to COVID-19 and other variables affecting supply and demand or frequency of sampling and maintenance work however, associated costs may vary from this conservatively estimated range."

At least four wells tested in the area contained PFAS above zero, but below "imminent hazard" levels. Two tested at 78.6 and 54.1 ppt, and the other two fell below the state safety threshold of 20 ppt.

"As far as I am aware, MassDEP is not able to procure funding for filtration treatment in these cases," Venti said of the latter pair, "though I cannot say that no treatment has occurred for these two wells."

The North Leverett neighborhood is not the only area of town in which the program detected PFAS. A number of wells in the Teawaddle Hill area, near the former East Leverett landfill, contained levels at or near the state safety threshold.

Those homes were already known to have other contaminants related to a plume from that landfill, and residents there had been treating their water, or using bottled water, for several years. This year, they were connect-

ed to Amherst's municipal water supply.



SPORTS from page A1

outscored Athol and Smith Academy by a combined score of 29-5.

In baseball, Tech reversed an earlier loss to Turners by beating them 11-4 on Tuesday. The Thunder still boasts a 7 - 3 record after that loss, but they also have three junior-high players on varsity, and some of those younger players might be suiting up in Tech's Navy Blue next year when they reach high school.

The two Franklin Tech/Turners Falls coop teams, boys' tennis and boys' track, were also in action this week. The track team lost to Frontier on Friday, and the tennis team only fielded three players this week against St. Mary's, forcing them to forfeit both doubles matches.

Baseball

TFHS 9 – Lee 8 FCTS 11 – TFHS 4

The Lee Wildcats came to town on Monday, and were edged out by the Boys' Thunder, 9-8.

Blue spotted the Wildcats three runs in the top of the first inning, but the lead did not last. Alex Quezzad, Levin Prondecki, Derek Wiseman, Cam Burnett, and Joey Mosca all crossed the plate in the bottom of the first to put Powertown up 5-3.

Starting pitcher Prondecki kept Lee from scoring in the second inning, and Blue added two more runs in the home half courtesy of another Prondecki base hit and a Wiseman home run, making it 7-3 after two complete.

While Turners added another run in the fourth, the Cats answered in the fifth to make it 8-4, then narrowed the gap to 8-5 in the sixth. Powertown scored one more run in the bottom of the sixth for a 9-5 lead, and though Lee made a last-ditch rally in the seventh, Turners held on to win by a run.

The following day, the Franklin Tech Baseball Eagles came to Turners Falls High School and defeated the Thunder 11-4.

Neither team could score in the first two and a half innings, but in the bottom of the third, Turners' Lincoln Coleman hit a Texas-leaguer into shallow center field. He proceeded to steal second. With two outs, Prondecki hit a ground-rule double to send Coleman home and to give Turners a 1-0 lead.

The lead would be brief. In the top of the fifth, Tech's Dylan Shinall walked, Chris Ryan singled and advanced on an error, and Jake Whitney was hit by a pitch; they were batted in by Ryan Demers, who hit a single, and Sam Knight and Cayden Lehtomaki, who hit sac flies.

That put the Eagles on top 3-1, but Turners wrestled it back to 4-3 in the bottom of the inning, as Kainen Stevens took a walk, Quezzad was hit by a pitch, Prondecki doubled them in, and Wiseman hit a sac fly to center field to score Prondecki.

After that, though, it was all Eagles. Ty Sadoski, Alex Sulda, Whitney, Demers, Knight, and Lehtomaki all scored in the sixth. Tech put the cherry on the sundae in the seventh as Sadoski and Shinall crossed the plate to give them an 11-4 victory.

St. Mary's 5 – TFHS 0

Only three Turners players traveled down to the municipal courts in Westfield last Friday for the tennis match against St. Mary's, forcing Blue to forfeit both doubles matches.

Mike Boyle dropped first singles 6-0, 6-2. In second singles Alex Sabin lost 6-1, 6-0, and on the third singles court, Jake Reich was beaten 6-0, 6-0.

Track

Frontier 116 – FCTS 28

Last Friday, April 29, the Franklin Tech coop boys' track team lost to Frontier, 116-28.

Brody Williams earned nine points in the meet, finishing first in the shot put, second in the javelin, and third in the discus. Brayden McCord placed second in triple jump and third in the 100m dash.

Greyson Rollins (discus), Josiah Little (long jump), Owen LaValley (pole vault), and Grayson Bowse (100m hurdles) all took second place for 3 points each, while Gabriel Mc-Cassie (shot put) and Travis Eastman (100m hurdles) took bronzes home for 1 apiece.

Softball

TFHS 15 – Frontier 2 Taconic 12 – TFHS 5 Hampshire 19 – TFHS 3 TFHS 2 – Wahconah 1 TFHS 8 – Athol 7

Last Wednesday, April 27, the Thunder defeated the Frontier Red Hawks 15-2. Big Blue scored five runs in each of the first, third, and fourth innings.

Turners won this game with the long ball, as Morgan Dobias had two home runs, Liimatainen had a homer, a triple, and a double, Emily Young had a home run and a triple, Mia Marigliano had a homer and a single, and Cady Wozniak had a double.

In the circle, Liimatainen had nine strikeouts, two walks, and let up no earned runs.

Then on Thursday, Powertown hosted the Taconic Green Braves. Turners scored first, but the Braves went on a hit parade, and heading into the bottom of the sixth Blue was down 12-2. They scored three runs in the home sixth, but dropped the game 15-5.

In the loss, Dobias and Young both had doubles and Liimatainen an RBI.

On Saturday the Blue train headed down to Westhampton, where they were derailed by the Hampshire Raiders. Blue scored all three runs off homers, but it wasn't enough, as the Raiders buried Turners with 19 runs.

Powertown got back to their winning ways on Monday, beating the previously undefeated Wahconah Warriors 5-1 out in Dalton. The Thunder Ladies won this game without scoring an earned run, and their extra-base hits were limited to a double by Liimatainen.

Turners scored their first run in the third inning on a two-base error. The Warriors tied it up in the sixth off back-to-back doubles, but Turners scored four runs in the seventh as the Wahconah pitcher threw three walks, several wild pitches, and hit a batter.

Finally, Turners traveled to Athol on Tuesday to complete a game begun back in April. The April match was called with the score tied 7-7. Blue scored the winning run in the ninth inning, and the Bears could not answer. giving Blue the delayed victory.

FCTS 16 – Athol 4

FCTS 13 – Smith Academy 1

On the other side of Millers Falls Road, the Tech Softball Eagles seem to be rolling over everybody. They beat Athol 16-4 last Thursday, and then traveled down to Hatfield and crushed Smith Academy 13-1.

I asked coach Joe Gamache what is working for his team. "The girls have been hitting really well the past few games, and we have also been getting some solid pitching and defense," he told me.

Lauren Ross had five RBIs in the Athol game, and Cordelia Guerin clocked a home run.

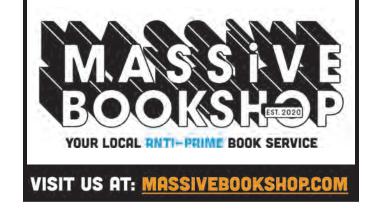
In the circle, Ross gave one walk and struck out 11 batters.

The Lady Birds' decimation of the Smith Academy Purple Falcons on Monday was a total team effort, as eight different Eagles had RBIs. Lillian Ross and Hannah Gilbert had doubles and Kylee Gamache hit two triples to improve Tech's sea-

son record to 10 - 1.



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WENDELL from page A1

dispose of each used filter canister. Wendell facilities engineer Jim Slavas said evidence points to infiltration into the well casing, or at the joint between the casing and bedrock, as the source of PFAS. Finding and sealing a flaw in the casing could eliminate the need for a filter, and there was a proposal to lower a camera into the casing to look for leaks.

New Salem took the lead, and hired engineer Chris Stoddard to oversee the process. He has since asked to back away in favor of an engineer with experience working with MassDEP, and Tighe & Bond was called in.

The two boards held a meeting at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, May 4, an hour before Wendell's regularly scheduled meeting, to continue the discussion. Wendell officials reiterated their doubts about the use of filters as a long-term solution.

Swift River School custodian Eric Shufelt reported that the school does not use or store cleaning materials containing PFAS, and that the well is currently being tested by WhiteWater Water & Wastewater Solutions, Inc. of Charlton.

New Salem health agent Tim Newton agreed to contact Tighe & Bond with a scope of work that includes putting the camera job out to bid, looking into the well and seeing if the casing can be repaired, and if not, helping find a place for a new well.

Tanner said that MassDEP has agreed in principle to give the goahead for the school to use a well on a neighbor's property. An unnamed neighbor has reportedly offered the school an easement on their property.

According to Keller, MassDEP will be satisfied as long as the towns are making good-faith progress.

Positions

Town election, with no contested positions, was held Monday May 2, and following that Dan Keller's term as chair ended. The first order of business on May 4 was electing a chair. Laurie DiDonato was elected chair.

With no one having shown interest in the assessors' seat being vacated by Anna Seeger, or some other positions, write-ins may fill positions. Mary Thomas and Seal LaMadeleine allowed a write-in campaign for positions on the planning board.

At the April 27 meeting, selectboard member Gillian Budine said she was willing to park herself somewhere in town to recruit citizens for the open positions. Town clerk Anna Wetherby said she has a sandwich board on which she can list open positions.

With only one remaining town assessor, Martha Senn, Wendell does not have a local "board of assessors." To assure continuing assessing possibilities, DiDonato suggested that the selectboard invite Kelly Szocik from the town's outside assessing firm, Regional Resource Group (RRG), to the next meeting to discuss having RRG be responsible for the entire assessing process.

Wetherby is still filling in as selectboard clerk. DiDonato said her son Liam, a former selectboard clerk, might be coerced into filling in temporarily and home for the summer. Keller said he was working on the problem.

Personnel

The highway department recently rehired a man who had worked long enough to earn 305 hours of sick leave before he left, and returned to work for the Wendell road crew after one year. The selectboard agreed to skip the normal probationary pay period and allow his health benefits to start from his first day of work.

This staff member needs surgery, which will require 20 days for recovery. Highway commission chair Phil Delorey asked if he could be allowed 200 hours of the sick time he accrued and left unused.

Board members, with treasurer Carolyn Manley's consent, voted to restore his full 305 hours, and welcomed him back.

DiDonato reported that the

kitchen supervisor resigned, and the kitchen committee hired one of its members, Sarah Wilson, for the position. She will have to drop her committee membership.

Procurement

Manley also told board members her reservations about usage of a shared town debit card. She said she thought they should be used only for goods, not services, and only after other options have failed. She will need invoices for any purchases, and purchasers must provide the town with their names and dates of birth.

Manley said she was especially concerned with recurring automatic charges that sneak onto cards, and that she is not happy about card use, but that it "is a responsibility of [her] position."

Pandemic

The state is allowing Zoom meetings to continue until July 15, but there is some interest in returning to in-person meetings before then.

Board of health chair Barbara Craddock said the COVID situation in town seems pretty quiet, but cautioned that people taking home tests may test positive but remain unreported. There is conflicting information - cases have gone up since schools ended mask mandates.

The board did not set a date to start meeting in person, but when they do they want windows open and people should be spaced out. For the May 2 election masking was recommended, but unmasked people were not turned away.

Town coordinator Glenn Johnson-Mussad suggested revisiting in-person meetings at the next meeting, but Budine suggested putting a decision off until late May.

Pests

Massachusetts is prepared to spray aerially for mosquito control to avoid an outbreak of West Nile disease or eastern equine encephalitis. A town may be approved to opt out by providing an acceptable alternate plan. In 2021 Wendell's proposed plan, distributing repel-

And The Winners Are...

By REPORTER STAFF

WENDELL - "Our initial results indicate that the following elected officials have won their seats," town clerk Anna Wetherby wrote Monday night after the votes were tabulated. "There were several vacancies on the ballot, and writein candidates will be contacted."

There were no contested races on the ballot. Wetherby confirmed the following, but vacancies remain:

lant and educational outreach to citizens, was rejected by the state.

At the April 27 meeting Budine called this year's application "another chance to fail." It might be possible to work from, but not copy exactly, another town's plan that was accepted last year. The plan is due May 27.

Shufelt, who also serves as the town custodian, asked for some pest control help in the town buildings. He has found ants, and the usual unwelcome evidence of mice.

Budine said there is a Wendell company that uses more natural methods, and Keller asked her to reach out to them. While he was speaking, Budine found two names: Zero Tolerance Pest Control and Minute Man.

Keller and Johnson-Mussad agreed to show a potential contractor around the town's buildings. "Mousetraps go a long way," said Keller. Shufelt said he thought treatments should happen twice a year.

It was noted that Swift River School has strict rules about pesticides.

PILOT

Mass Audubon, a non-profit organization that pays no property tax as such, continues to offer Wendell children scholarships to their Wildwood camp as a form of payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT). Johnson-Mussad said both Orange and New Salem have Audubon land within their borders, and have asked to be included in the scholarSelectboard: Gillian Budine

Town Moderator: Kathleen Nolan

Cemetery Commissioner: Sylvia Wetherby Town Constable: Anne Diemand-

Bucci Road Commissioner: Patrick

Taylor

School Committee: Beth Erviti Library Trustee: Phyllis

Lawrence Tree Warden: Clifford Dornbusch

ship consideration.

The scholarships are generous for the families that get them, but are no help to town finances, and cost Audubon far less than the taxes would. The organization's holdings in Wendell are much larger than those in Orange or New Salem. Budine suggested that those towns negotiate their own deals.

Another part of the Audubon PILOT arrangement was to send educators into Swift River School classrooms to provide insight on natural history and environmental concerns. There have been some difficulties coordinating that with regular classroom work, and the program was replaced by a field trip to an Audubon sanctuary, which Budine said she felt was more beneficial for students.

Budine brought up the topic of a second public forum on policing in Wendell by the Leverett police department. The agreements between Wendell and Leverett for policing, and for the use of the former Wendell police station, are now signed and in place.

DiDonato said some people might prefer to make comments without Leverett chief Scott Minckler being there, and Keller suggested having him available on call to answer any questions. They proposed holding the forum at 6 p.m. on June 29, before the regularly scheduled se-

lectboard meeting.

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Brick House Sound Scholars

TURNERS FALLS - A new six week STEAM Academy program for youth 12 and up starts Monday, May 9 from 3 to 4:30 p.m. at the Brick House. With Sound Scholars, facilitated by Joel Veena, youth can explore sound engineering, microphone techniques, multitracking, and vocals.

To register for this free program, email Brick House Youth Programs director Megan Richardson at mrichardson@brickhousecrc.org.

Other ongoing programs at the Brick House include Momentum Arts, youth-led by Shelby Terounzo, Wednesdays at 4:30 p.m.; QT Bling+, a safe and supportive space for LGBTQ+ youth to discuss topics relative to their lives, Wednesdays at 3 p.m.; Skateboard Culture: The Science, Technology, and Engineering of Skateboarding, facilitated by Jeremy Latch, Thursdays at 3:30 p.m.; and ongoing academic support, goal-setting, and life readiness services Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m.

The Brick House is located at 24 Third Street in Turners Falls.

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MONTAGUE from page A1

contract contains an "escalator clause" in case of higher-than-expected fuel costs.

The study was funded by a 2019 town meeting appropriation and "technical assistance" from the Franklin Regional Council of Governments, which is interested in exploring building a regional sludge-composting facility.

Alix began by exploring the "regulatory framework," focusing on standards set by the federal Environmental Protection Agency and the state Department of Environmental Protection. He said the current targets were "easily met" by composting, but future regulations - particularly of PFAS chemicals – is producing a good deal of uncertainty.

He discussed what he called "third-party disposals," which in layman's terms refers to currently available methods of disposing sludge. A list of incinerators in New England showed there were few, increasingly far from Montague and accepting little or no sludge. Lists of landfills and available composting facilities appeared even more dismal, the "most promising" being a landfill near Seneca Falls in upstate New York.

After reviewing the composting process - which involves mixing waste sludge with wood waste – and presenting a complex explanation of technologies and measurement techniques to address odor control, Alix evaluated two potential locations. Both are on town-owned land, with the first adjacent to the treatment plant on Greenfield Road and the second property near the transfer station on Sandy Lane.

In terms of size, Montague's options include a smaller facility which would compost four "dry tons" of sludge per week and a larger version that could process ten. A larger facility would serve other cities and towns in the region, and potentially generate revenue.

Alix also essentially ruled out the Greenfield Road location, saying it was too small to locate a regional facility, too near the Connecticut River, and too near a well-populated neighborhood which already has concerns about odor from the treatment plant itself.

Finally, he presented a cost analysis of the two options, including potential revenues from a regional facility. The smaller option for Montague alone produced an annual cost of \$504,000, without any revenue from outside sources. The larger facility factored out higher, with an annualized cost of \$585,000 despite revenue from outside.

However, much of the added cost was a product of the initial capital expense of constructing a larger facility. The estimated operation and maintenance cost of the larger option was \$194,000 per year over

a 20-year period – lower than that of the smaller facility, and also well below the estimate for hauling sludge in Ellis's estimate of next year's WPCF budget.

Ellis told the *Reporter* that there could be "significant, if not total, avoidance of capital costs" in building a regional facility that attracts state funding. He said the town is considering applying for another planning grant from the state's Community One Stop for Growth portal, which combines a number of grant opportunities in one application.

Ellis added that more research and public input would be needed with regard to siting and odor control, potentially including visits to existing sludge-composting facilities.

Jan Ameen, director of the regional Solid Waste Management District, said that her organization supports pursuing a regional sludge-disposal option, but that "any solution must work for the town of Montague, which is a key member of our district."

Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) executive director Linda Dunlavy expressed similar support for a regional solution, saying she believes it could generate state support, but "has to be a good deal for the host town."

Uncountable Infections

For the second week in a row, public health director Daniel Wasiuk appeared before the board to read the latest town COVID metrics. He was accompanied by health board member Melanie Zamojski and by Robin Neipp, a public health nurse hired as part of a regional effort to implement contact tracing, the labor-intensive process of reaching out to individuals who have a tested positive encouraging them to alert those they have been on contact with to be tested.

Wasiuk said there has been an "uptick" in the weekly case count, up from 14 the previous week to 24. However, it emerged during the discussion that this may be a serious undercount of the number of cases because it includes only PCR tests, which have declined due to the closing of test sites, and not rapid antigen or "home" tests which have become popular.

Neipp said that for every person she has contacted through the state recording system MAVEN, which is based on PCR tests, "there were reviewed the status of projects curtwo, and maybe four... who had tested positive through home tests not recorded."

Zamojski said she had recently met with the epidemiologist hired under the same regional collaboration, and that "we will soon have a cohesive report for all the towns."

There was a lengthy discussion of the data on hospitalizations, which Zamojski said she had "no confidence in." Ellis pointed out the need

to distinguish between those hospitalized for COVID and those who tested positive for the virus after being hospitalized for other reasons.

Planning Intensifies

The board endorsed a grant request to the state to fund the creation of a Turners Falls Master Plan as part of a "municipal vulnerability" program to address climate change. Town planner Walter Ramsey said the grant includes consultation with FRCOG, as well as stipends and childcare coverage to encourage public participation.

Ellis said that although state funding for the master planning grant appeared to be competing with the proposed composing study, the former would in fact "clarify the fund path for the latter." Later in the meeting, though, he suggested that the Master Plan and composting study grants might be competing proposals, and that the selectboard may need to make a choice between the two.

Selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz said the issue needed be resolved in an upcoming agenda.

Ramsey also updated the board on plans to create a downtown Turners Falls parking study, which will also involve workshops and "interactive sessions," and the progress of the Canal District Plan being implemented by Dietz and Company Architects.

Other Business

Brian McHugh of the Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority came before the board to request payment to the firm Berkshire Design for work on the Avenue A Streetscape Project and the Hillcrest Elementary School playground project, which are funded by community development block grants.

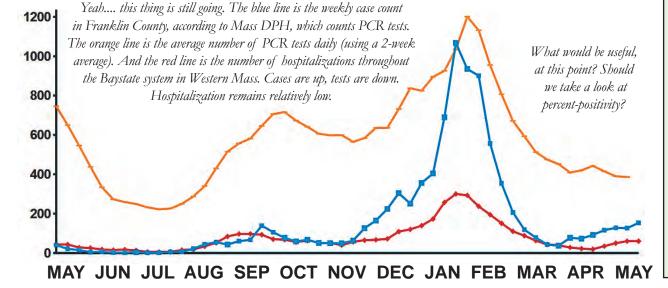
The board approved both requests, and authorized contracts with four social-service agencies for programs financed by the same funding source.

The board voted to grant permission to the treasurer-collector to execute a \$9,155.28 contract for a two-year lease on a postage machine, and to raise the deductible for town insurance, with the proviso that the town would reimburse the airport and WPCF for any excess losses they might incur.

The meeting adjourned after Ellis rently on the state bridge list, including the South Street Bridge in Montage Center, the North Leverett Road bridge, and the Sixth Street bridge over the canal in Turners Falls. He said the town may be working for more funding for Montague City Road flooding mitigation and a culvert replacement on Ferry Road.

The next scheduled selectboard meeting will be held Monday, May 9.





MONTAGUE CONSERVATION COMMISSION PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

In accordance with the Mass. Wetlands Protection Act, MGL Ch. 131, §40, the Montague Conservation Commission will hold a public hearing at 6:45 p.m. on Thursday, May 12, 2022 to consider Notice of Intent #2022-02 filed by Lindsey Gorman for Chestnut Loop Realty, LLC to restore an established farm/fire pond. The work will occur at 82 Chestnut Hill Loop (Assessors parcel ID 53-043). The hearing will be held in the upstairs meeting room at Montague Town Hall, One Avenue A. Alternatively, the public can participate via ZOOM. Meeting login

information and filing is available for review at www.montague-ma.gov/calendar.

Montague Planning Department Request for Community Feedback

Two surveys open to anyone who lives, works, or visits Turners Falls. (Under 10 minutes)

Downtown Turners Falls Parking Survey

Your input will be used to improve the current parking system in Turners Falls.



https://tinyurl.com/TurnersFallsParking

Canal District Master Plan Survey

Your input will be used to develop a vision for 16+ acres of former industrial land along the river in downtown Turners Falls.

https://qrco.de/bcxjs7



LOOKING BACK:

10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Here's the way it was on May 3, 2012: News from the Montague Reporter's archive.

Leverett Approves \$3.6 Million Municipal Fiber Optic Network

On Saturday, April 28, the Leverett annual town meeting approved borrowing \$3.6 million to wire every property in Leverett into a fiber-optic network for highspeed internet access. A townwide debt exclusion vote to ratify the spending is scheduled for June 2.

Selectboard member and broadband committee chair Peter d'Errico presented the case for the town to pay for construction of a "fiber to the home" network. The Mass Broadband Institute is currently constructing the "middle mile" network to Leverett, and d'Errico said it would be better from an engineering standpoint to run fiber to homes and businesses at the same time that backbone is being built.

A 2011 survey of Leverett households showed 94% had internet service by dial-up, satellite, wireless, or DSL. "Internet-wise," he said, "Leverett is in the Stone Ages." Verizon and Comcast had passed on the idea of wiring the town as unprofitable. The Federal Communications Commission considers municipal broadband a "best practice" for expanding access in underserved communities.

Even at \$3.6 million, which d'Errico contended was a conservative estimate, the average increase in property taxes would be offset by lower monthly charges, so that "virtually everyone will pay less for phone and computer service," and property values would rise. D'Errico ended his presentation to fervent applause and a standing ovation from many in the gym.

Garbiel Buys the Glen

Turners Falls resident Charles (Chuck) Garbiel became the new owner of the Shady Glen on Tuesday, and plans to keep the Glen a diner where you can get breakfast at 7:30 p.m. if you like.

Garbiel, who mastered pizza-making while working for 15 years at the Turners Falls Pizza House, said he is delighted to be the new owner of the Glen and to continue a beloved local institution.

Many features of the diner will remain the same including the current wait staff, back cooks, and the menu itself. Over the next year, Garbiel would like to incorporate a few of the suggestions customers have made: for example serving real, local maple syrup with pancakes, and re-opening the ice cream and takeout window.

The Glen has a prominent place in Turners history. It was former Turners fire chief Fran Togneri who first recognized the potential of the location at First and Avenue A, when he opened up a Tastee Freez there in the early 1950s. Richard and Shirley Broderick added booths and counter service a few years later, giving the place a traditional diner feel, and John and Linda Carey operated the establishment for 40 years, starting in 1964.









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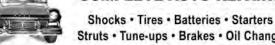




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LEVERETT from page A1

are matched by the state to finance open space, affordable housing, and historic preservation. The meeting had just allocated \$11,000 to each of those purposes, in addition to allocating \$77,000 to a "reserve" for future use.

After Article 21 was read, Ken Kahn, chair of the planning board, rose to propose that the motion be tabled until the meeting had "resolved" Article 22, which would empower the selectboard to sell the Field building to a "private non-profit educational and historical organization." His motion to table passed nearly unanimously, so the meeting moved on to discuss Article 22.

Ann Ferguson, a resident of North Leverett, said she believed the private non-profit that would have the inside track on the purchase of the building would be a group that has been attempting to renovate the sawmill on North Leverett Road.

Ferguson was also critical of the Leverett Historical Society, which has applied for a \$1.28 million federal earmark at the request of the sawmill Friends' group, and what she described as a lack of transparency in that process. The application for the earmark bundles together the Leverett Road Sawmill, the Field building, and the historic schoolhouse at Moore's Corner.

Ferguson then moved that Article 22 also be tabled, indefinitely or to a future meeting, pending more discussion of the earmark – or "grant," as it was frequently being called.

Another meeting member, Tom Wolff, was also critical of the earmark application for "gentrifying our history" by proposing to focus on economic development, especially in North Leverett.

On the other side, Sam Black of the Friends of the North Leverett Sawmill, the group attempting to preserve the historic site, said he wanted to know if town residents supported moving forward with the earmark. He pointed out that it would only be for the renovation or stabilization of three buildings, and would not fund any other economic development projects.

Later Black suggested a town meeting vote to gauge support for the earmark, which was ruled out of order as it was not on the agenda.

Selectboard member Tom Hankinson said the earmark pro-

Friends of the Sawmill had not yet been approved for non-profit status, was approved by the board on short notice along with another grant proposal to the National Endowment for the Humanities because it needed to be submitted to US Representative Jim McGovern's office "the next day."

Hankinson said that that the discussion and vote to approve had taken place at a public meeting on April 12, although a review of the agenda and minutes for that meeting suggest that the public may have not been aware of the subject matter, which was posted under the heading "Appointments."

'Without Changing Things'

Much of the opposition to the Article 22 appeared to be a reaction to the way the congressional earmark application was framed as an effort to promote economic development, as opposed to a simple restoration project.

The application obtained by the Reporter describes the purpose of the earmark as using "historic assets as an economic anchor," and argues that "restoring our three historic buildings will allow space for co-working, provide tourism to the museums... and rent out part of the facilities to small businesses... all of which will increase economic revenue without changing things that are loved by those living in this rural part of Massachusetts."

The economic development goals of this earmark came in for a good deal of criticism on the town listserv the day before town meeting. The proposal was also criticized for "negating the value" of the village coop by suggesting that there was no café in North Leverett.

A guide to "Member Directed Community Funding Projects" sent to the Reporter by Representative McGovern's office suggests that virtually all potential earmark proposals for rural areas focused either on education, infrastucture improvements, or economic development. No category was listed for historic preservation alone.

The guide does not call potential projects either "grants" or" earmarks," but rather "community funding projects." A source in Mc-Govern's office stated that the term "earmark" is now avoided, perhaps due to negative press coverage of



Peg Bridges of Montague Center (at center) visited family in San Diego, California last month, and took a trip with them from there to Riviera Maya, Mexico. She was sure to bring along her hometown paper!

Going somewhere? Take us with you! Send photos to editor@montaguereporter.org.

campaign. The guide, with an introductory letter from McGovern, is dated April 1 with a submission deadline of April 15.

In the end, Ferguson's motion to delay the proposal to sell the Field building to a private non-profit passed with a strong majority.

High School Compromise

Other highlights of the meeting include the election of Patricia Duffy to the selectboard, Cat Ford to the board of assessors, Barbara Kline-Seaman to the board of health; Tom Masterson as town constable; Phil Carter and Bethany Segar for the finance committee; Jya Plavin and Tilman Wolf to the Leverett school committee; and Seth Seeger and Judith Davidov as library trustees.

An article addressing a perennial controversy, the formula for the calculating assessment for the Amherst-Pelham Regional School district, was passed by the meeting without dissent. The issue has pitthe Historical Society because the an issue in the 2008 presidential od" that emphasizes local wealth, lowing article targeted \$14,000 to around 12:30 p.m.

against Leverett, which has supported keeping an "alternative method" more sensitive to enrollment.

The proposal adopted by the meeting, after an introduction by superintendent Michael Morris and finance director Doug Slaughter, provided that, for the coming fiscal year only, assessments would be based on the five-year average of minimum contributions, which emphasize wealth, with the remainder of the regional budget and debt funded on the basis of relative enrollment.

The proposal also contained a "guard rail," in Morris's words, that the assessment increase or decrease from the previous year be limited to 4%. "We were able to resolve things peacefully," Morris said.

Millionaires & Billionaires

Two warrant articles addressed funding for a solution to contaminated drinking water at homes in the Teawaddle Road neighborhood that sit atop a plume emanating from a capped landfill. Article 16 allocated a proposed "Bridge to Nowhere" ted Shutesbury, which has support- \$14,263 from free cash to pay for posal, initially submitted through project in Alaska which became ed using a state "statutory meth- "deep well research," and the fol-

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design and bid advertising for a connection to the Amherst water system.

Both motions, which required 4/5 votes because they funded bills from a previous year, passed unanimously.

The meeting allocated \$66,000 from free cash to match a Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness grant to restore a culvert on Shutesbury Road, approved \$41,000 transfer from free cash into the stabilization account to fund the future capital projects, and set aside \$5,000 for "completing mosquito control activities," either by policies required to opt out of state-mandated aerial spring or by joining a mosquito control district.

At the end of the meeting, a resolution in support of a "Fair Share Amendment" to the state constitution to tax millionaires in order to fund education, transportation and infrastructure in the state was unanimously approved without debate. The proposal would create a surtax of all 4% on annual income over \$1,000,000.

The meeting adjourned



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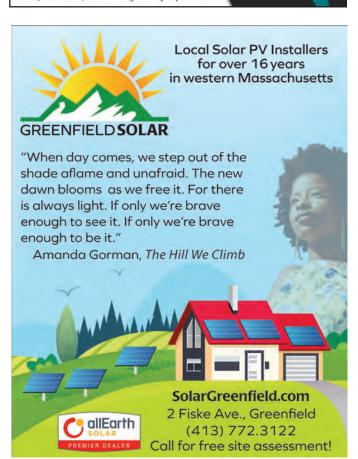
Market (

109 Avenue A









Above: May Day on the Montague Center common.

LINENS AND THINGS

"With Accurate Eye and Studious Insight"



GILL - The Gill historic commission is sponsoring a talk about Gill folk artist Robert Darr Wert (1915 to 1966) and his Country Prints Studio on Saturday, May 21, from 1 to 3 p.m. at the town hall. The business was active from 1948 to 1970, and functioned as Wert's design studio and a commercial outlet selling his products.

By JERI MORAN

Robert Darr Wert originally came from a small agricultural town in central Ohio. He attended the Cleveland School of Art and served in World War II, after which he and his wife moved to Massachusetts to establish a business first in Northfield, and then in Gill, where he bought an abandoned 150-acre farm on River Road.

He had learned silk-screening while in the service, and he developed a "naive folk art style" in print-making and textile designing, silk-screening simple country motifs like chickens, weathervanes, and herbal bouquets on linen wall hangings, table runners, aprons, and other home decor. He also produced painted ceramic tiles.

These items often incorporated homely words of wisdom as part of the design.

Wert described the work process as "the studio where the informal air of quiet handwork prevails. We travel the early way between skilled handwork and simple mechanical aid." He employed many

Left, from top: one of Wert's designs; Wert, at right, outside his Country Prints Studio in Gill; a linen printed with a typical Wert design.

Right: A detail from another linen, printed with nostalgic rural items.

Below: A philosophical statement from Country Prints Studio.

local people in his studio, and it is likely that many people in Franklin County own pieces of Wert's work, which are now highly collectible.

Wert died tragically at age 50, collapsing from a heart attack triggered by a large fire on his farm. The studio continued for a few years under his wife's management, but then closed.

The talk will be presented by Peter Mars, a noted design historian from Providence, Rhode Island who comments that Wert's "joyful, optimistic art pieces celebrated rural life." Mars collects Wert's work, and is writing a book on him as well.

The historic commission says that Mars will talk about "Wert's life, his artistic influences, and deep ties to the Gill community." Examples of Wert's Country Prints products that he owns will be on display.

The Gill historic commission is in the process of revitalizing their museum at the Riverside municipal building. They hope to have it open for limited hours by fall of this year, or by appointment, and to have many of Wert's pieces on display there as well.

The May 21 presentation will beld on the second floor of the Gill Town Hall at 325 Main Road. The program is supported in part by a grant from the Gill Cultural Council, a local agency supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council. For more information, please contact the historic commission at ghc@gillmass.org.



By DAVID BRULE

PESKEOMPSKUT - Pronouncing a land acknowledgement is becoming increasingly accepted protocol for many local organizations, before school events, and even in opening meetings in some towns. These acknowledgement statements usually include some form of phrasing that indicates a realization that we are occupying Indigenous land. Many go something like this:

"We want to acknowledge that we are standing on, and benefiting from land that has been seized, expropriated, and taken from Indigenous peoples, often through deceit, falsified deeds, or violence. For thousands of years this has been Pocumtuck land.

"These are still the homelands of the Pocumtuck, Norwottock, Woronoco, Agawam, Nipmuck, Abenaki. These Native peoples and their descendants are still living here among us. They have not gone. Every time we gather here we must acknowledge and respect that fact."

I have been called upon to make

many of these acknowledgements, but over time I've added another dimension, as others have done

West Along the River

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT,

ACKNOWLEDGE THE LAND

across North America. Simply acknowledging that we are occupying and benefiting from Indian land is not enough. Land acknowledgement and acknowledging the land, this Earth, is not an oxymoron. Many of us, both in Indigenous communities and in environmentally conscious organizations, endeavor to remind all to place the Earth itself into the acknowledgement declarations.

We remind our fellow human beings that for Indigenous peoples, the land is alive and populated with extended kinship relations among all those inhabiting it. Native peoples maintain intimate relationships with the land, with the stones, mountains, waters, and woodlands, and we are constantly renewing those relationships with the landscape.

Native values and beliefs place human beings as existing in a system of continual negotiation with our environment, and with the

see **WEST ALONG** page B3

The Montague City Rambler





MONTAGUE CITY – Usually, this time of year, every spare minute of daylight is spent in my yard: hands and feet in the dirt, arms and legs inevitably scratched by bramble as I prune, with my kitties attentively watching the reappearance of robins and my perambulation from the windows.

While I was drawn to the earth as a child, the uncertainties of renting, single-parenthood, and poverty precluded long-term garden planning. I planted simple gardens at each home - things that required packets of seeds, a summer of time, and not much else – and thrilled to watch them grow.

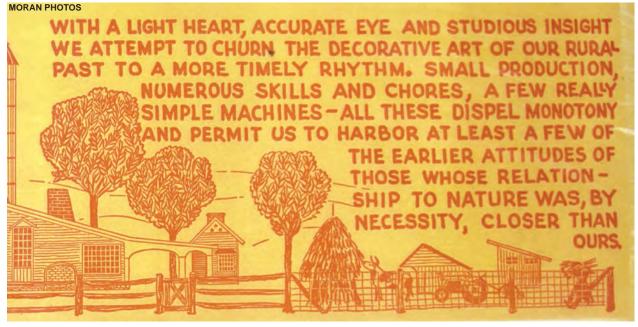
When I purchased my Montague City home - my first - with its little postage-sized but sunny plot of land, I could barely wait to plant things which take multiple seasons to come into fruition: a front yard orchard of heirloom fruit trees; asparagus topped with a breezy cloud of green; climbing jasmine to attract the tiniest birds and scent the evening air; berries for both avian and human consumption; peonies, because who can afford them otherwise; long-petalled clematis to grace the porch; and roses for my mother, who requests them every time.

The location of more than a century of industry, I became aware shortly after my labors began in

see RAMBLER page B4







Pet of the Week New Creative Pathways for Artists



"BABY BILLY"

Baby Billy is quite the looker! He's a grey and white 3-year-old who has captivating green eyes. Baby Billy could honestly spend all day sleeping in his comfy bed. He's a friendly boy who loves receiving pets and will immediately start purring!

If the pet you are inquiring about has already been adopted when we call you for your adoption counseling phone call, we'll be happy to take a look at our other adoptables, and see if someone else may be a perfect match for you.

Interested in adopting? Billy's adoption fee is \$299. 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 MAY 9 THROUGH 13

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. Senior Health Rides are now available. Contact Jonathan von Ranson at (978) 544-3758 to set up a ride.

LEVERETT

Chair Yoga classes are held on Zoom on Wednesdays. Foot Care Clinic is held monthly. For more information, contact the Leverett COA at (413) 548-1022 x 2, or coa@leverett.ma.us.

GILL and MONTAGUE

The Gill Montague Senior Center, 62 Fifth Street, Turners Falls, is open Mondays through Fridays from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Council on Aging Director is Roberta Potter. For more information please call 863-9357.

Monday 5/9

10:15 a.m. Aerobics 11 a.m. Chair Exercise 12 p.m. Potluck 1 p.m. Knitting &

Needlecrafts Circle

Tuesday 5/10

10 a.m. Tuesday Morning Knitters 1 p.m. Chair Yoga

2 p.m. COA Meeting 3 p.m. Tai Chi

Wednesday 5/11

Foot Clinic (by appointment)

4 p.m. Mat Yoga Thursday 5/12

1 p.m. Cards & Games 3 p.m. Mindfulness Meditation

(pre-register)

Friday 5/13

10:15 a.m. Aerobics 11 a.m. Chair Exercise

ERVING

Erving Senior Center is open 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., Mondays through Fridays. Open for cards, coffee, and snacks daily. Exercise classes will be limited to 15 people per class.

We will continue with Brown Bag lunch the first Thursday of each month. Foot Clinic is on the second Monday of each month and the first Wednesday of each month we will hold Veterans Services. For any questions or concerns, please call Paula Betters at (413) 423-3649.

Monday 5/9

9 a.m. Re-Store & Re-Emerge 10 a.m. New class coming soon Tuesday 5/10

9 a.m. Good for YOU

10 a.m. Line Dancing Wednesday 5/11

9 a.m. Strength & Conditioning 10 a.m. New Chair Yoga 12:30 p.m. Bingo

Thursday 5/12

9 a.m. Re-Store & Re-Emerge 10 a.m. Stretch & Balance

Friday 5/13 9 a.m. Open Sew Quilting

TURNERS FALLS - Calling artists from all creative realms: join Terry Jenoure composer, violinist, vocalist, and her sextet The Portal to collaborate, improvise, and create a new piece of art together.

The ensemble will lead workshops for local artists at the Shea Theater in Turners Falls from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Monday, June 6 and Tuesday, June 7. If you are yearning for inspiration, collaboration, a fresh way of experiencing your art, this is for you.

Artists from all disciplines are invited to come and collaborate with these veteran musicians. Experience possibilities for blending improvised music with your own creations. All artforms are welcome – bring poetry, drama, paintings, dance, instruments, voice, or other works and be part of this workshop.

Poets, playwrights, composers, painters, visual artists, sound artists, sculptors, vocalists, or artists of any art form imaginable are invited to come to the Shea to open up new creative possibilities with these worldclass musical improvisers to create a new piece of art.

Collaborating onstage with Jenoure are Angelica Sanchez, piano; Wayne Smith, cello; Avery Sharpe, bass; Joe Fonda, bass; and Reggie Nicholson, drums. Twenty artists will be chosen to participate.

If you are interested, send one sample of your work no later than May 1 to jenoure@admin.umass.edu and fill out this short form: tinyurl.com/CreativePathways . All entries will be juried and final decisions made by May 15. To learn more about Jenoure's work, visit www.terryjenoure.



Sex Matters

a sex-positive health column

by STEPHANIE BAIRD

GRANBY – If you read this column regularly, you may remember that I help facilitate "Our Whole Lives" sex education classes at the Unitarian Society of Northampton and Florence. Each year we alternate between teaching a middle or high school cohort, spending about four to five hours one Saturday a month giving these 20 students "booster shots" of information and skill building for positive future sex lives and trying to "inoculate" them against problematic sexual issues consequences, such as STIs and unwanted teen pregnancy.

At the end of each Saturday workshop we pass around a question box where they may anonymously submit to us any sex-related question. We take the intervening weeks to research the questions and provide the answers at the following session.

As we wrap up this year's junior high session, I thought it would be fun to share some of the current middle schoolers' thoughtful questions and our answers.

Q: I heard in a movie about a crooked penis. What is this?

It is commonplace for the penis to curve a little when erect. This has become a media trope, with a curved penis symbolizing something "extra." The reality is that whether an erect penis is curved or straight matters little when it comes to sexual satisfaction.

A significant bend in the penis, enough to cause pain or difficulty having sex, can be addressed medically. Symptoms could indicate Peyronie's disease, which affects approximately 6 to 10% of males, typically between the ages of 40 to 80. Remember, there is a huge range in the appearance of genitals.

Q: Is semen randomly coming out, without an erection, a problem?

Occasional semen leakage is usually not a reason to worry. But if the leakage is frequent or the amount of leakage is concerning or causing distress, then see your doctor. This is especially true if you have other symptoms such as blood in your semen or urine, foul-smelling semen, or pain when urinating or ejaculating. These can all be signs of an underlying medical condition.

Q: How do I stop discharge? For adolescent penises, it is com-

mon to have "wet dreams" when there is seminal discharge during your sleep. It is often triggered by sexual images in a dream. You may wake up or just sleep through it. You cannot stop it, but it rarely happens once you get older.

For vulvas, vaginal discharge is also normal. It serves the purpose of cleaning out dead cells and other material. It may also be lubrication discharging, also normal. You might become concerned about your discharge if there is an increase in quantity or change in color or smell or if you are feeling uncomfortable (itchy or painful). If that is the case, check with your doctor.

Some simple tips for overall vulva health include: wearing cotton underpants and avoiding too tight pants for too long; wiping from front to back; not douching or shaving your pubic hair.

Q: How can I tell if I am in a good and safe relationship?

This is a big question!

Relationships vary tremendously, but core hallmarks of healthy ones include: good communication - being able to share without fear of judgment or criticism, and listen with understanding and compassion; trust – being able to count on one another to follow through and honor agreements; and feeling safe being your authentic self – knowing they want what's best for you.

Good relationships often include qualities of curiosity, play, and teamwork. A good relationship will have healthy boundaries; partners are able to spend time with others and are able to handle conflict, which is a natural part of being in a relationship.

On the flip side, if you feel unheard, if your boundaries aren't respected, if you're consistently holding back what you are thinking and feeling, if one of you is trying to control or change the other, and if the dynamic feels unequal, then your relationship probably needs work.

Q: Why does it feel good to

be sexual? Just being physically close with

another human being is known to increase levels of oxytocin - the "cuddle hormone" - in the brain, making you feel happy and safe. Other "pleasure hormones" are released as well by the brain. That is why many people think of the brain

as the primary sex organ.

Q: How do you tell the difference between platonic, romantic, and sexual attraction?

Relationships can vary at different times or may change as you get to know someone better. There might also be crossover between these types of attraction.

Generally, with a platonic relationship you enjoy spending time with the person and might have a lot in common, viewing the relationship as a friendship. A romantic attraction might mean that you want to spend time with the person and share many aspects of yourself, along with romantic actions like flirting.

Sexual and romantic attraction can happen together, although they do not have to. Sexual attraction, as it sounds, is when you desire to have sexual contact with the person.

It is important to check in with yourself and pay attention to your feelings as they might change and develop. Communicate clearly with the other person to make sure that you are on the same page.

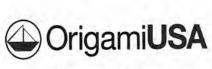
Q: How can you support your friends that are going through struggles?

Being present and non-judgmental is important. Listen closely. Check in with them and see what it is they ask for. Finding activities you can do together can be helpful as well. Let them know that you care about them and you are there for them. If you are worried about them and they don't seem to have other support, you could brainstorm with them about how to seek help. The internet has many resources about how to respond to a suicidal friend and lists of resources for people struggling with addiction or suicidality.

In conclusion, when we take a moment to consider the array of sexual behavior, any one of us could come up with a million questions. Feel free to email me at sexmatters@montaguereporter.org if you have a concern you haven't been able to get answered anywhere else.

Stephanie Baird, LMHC is an OWL Facilitator, EMDR Consultant and Psychotherapist, certified in Advancing Clinical Excellence in Sexuality (ACES,) and encourages her clients towards thriving sexual health.

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WEST ALONG from page B1 non-human beings that are part of that environment.

We have been taught by Indigenous elders like Mohawk spiritual leader and elder Tom Porter, who spoke to us at Peskeompskut on the banks of the Connecticut River recently. He spoke of the Mohawk tradition that calls on us to put our minds together to remember and reflect on our relationship and responsibilities to the Earth that provides, and to express our thankfulness for what we have been given.

These two strands together – that is, acknowledging that we are occupying Indigenous land, as well as acknowledging that we have responsibilities to that land – lead us to a new place.

Indeed, acknowledging that we occupy land that was taken forcibly from those who had lived in balance with it for more than 13,000 years is a first step in trying to heal the injustice. Yet how do we move forward from such an admission of guilt embodied in a simple acknowledgement?

The pain is great. The injury has not healed, the multi-generational trauma continues, passed on from father and mother to son and daughter over the ages. Healing is elusive, and may well never be complete.

How to help a reconciliation process that may well never bring real justice? How do we create or seize the opportunities knowing that injustices and repression that began more than 400 years ago will never be forgotten, undone or erased? How could Indigenous people ever erase the sight of current devastation the colonizers and colonizing process are still bringing upon this land?

In Native eyes, these lands should never have been parceled out in allotments of private property. Ever since the forced transfer of the Indigenous landscape during the past 400 years, the relationship has been out of balance and ruled by greed, dominated by the strongest, either individual or corporate. How can there be reconciliation or healing?

Healing is elusive, and may well never be complete - but we need to start somewhere, and a land acknowledgement is an important first step. By the same token, seeking to remind ourselves to try to relearn Indigenous values, to listen to Indigenous voices, to work to restore the balance in our relationship with the earth, these must be further steps among many in taking action.

There are many ways individuals can seek a separate peace, in some small way to help a reconciliation process. We can begin our day with expressing gratitude and thankfulness for all that we have been given:

We give thanks to the sun every morning We give thanks to the four directions

To all living creatures, they are our kinfolk and our teachers To our woodlands and the rivers

that sustain us: the Pocomegon (Green) the Pocumpetuk (Deerfield) the Roanasiatok (Fall) the Paguag (Millers)

the mighty, long river Quonektakut We give thanks to the hills and plains who are a part of us as we are of them

To the last seven generations and the next seven generations To our ancestors who have guided us over the generations and who are here with us now.

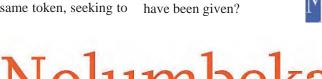
We do not have to ask for anything. All this have been given to us

So, in acknowledging that we are occupying and benefiting from the land of the first people, and that this land has been taken from them, that is a good first step, but it's not enough.

Some may wish to take the affirmation further, in which case actionable steps include supporting the educational efforts and events offered by The Nolumbeka Project, Inc. (full disclosure: I am the president of the Nolumbeka Project board of directors) and the Ohketeau Center. You could all support the drive to change the Massachusetts state flag and support the Massachusetts Indigenous Legislation efforts.

Acknowledgement and thankfulness are the first steps in a long pro-

cess of self-education. We are all in this together. What will we do with what we





HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Suspicious Neighbors; Little Stuck Boat; Dog Bite; Tractor-Trailer Rampage; Juvenile Returned; Dandelions

Monday, 4/25

11:03 a.m. Walk-in reporting that a deer ran into his truck last night on Dry Hill Road. Report taken. 12:28 a.m. Animal confrom a Park Street address earlier this morning.

3:38 p.m. Caller from Fourth Street reports seeing a fancy white car, and people are now gone. Referred to an officer.

3:49 p.m. Caller from harassment by a neighbor; unwanted filming/photographing of caller and her kids. Advised of options. 4:18 p.m. Caller from Fourth Street reporting the gold Jeep is back again; people are talking to the driver and some items were exchanged; could not see what the items were.

4:39 p.m. Caller from thing in her pocket from left for ACO. the fancy white vehicle. Referred to an officer.

Referred to an officer.

station re: getting his medication from his apartment. 10:52 p.m. Caller report- key in the I Street area. to take them or speak with an officer. Caller was becoming combative on the cious destruction of prop- to get to her dog, who Saturday, 4/30 five or six more times, then tempt to commit a crime. called 911 for the same sitand refusing to speak to an DPW notified.

an assault that happened near the Farren two weeks ago. Referred to an officer. 7 p.m. Caller reporting two male parties inside of Suzee's Third Street Laundoor. There was no dam- for DPW. not to do that anymore.

river who has been trying Unable to locate.

stuck for approximately an a green truck that con- 8:22 p.m. 911 caller report-Caller called back stating ferred to an officer. Control advised.

Tuesday, 4/26

responding.

start. Report taken.

advises that the victim is will be taking the deer. injured but refusing trans- Thursday, 4/28

5:13 p.m. Caller contacting arrested on a straight ing at this hour. warrant.

Wednesday, 4/27

10:53 a.m. Caller reports a lice provided.

damage. Accident caused by a mechanical issue.

and jeans and kicking the a trash bag on the side of

Both are currently calm. side and the car won't on the side of the road just tague Machine on Rastal- ficer advises that the deer for DPW. lis Street reporting that a was hit by a car, but not Friday, 4/29

Summons issued for mali- yard every night and tries of system as missing.

tion has been mediated. age, and they were advised 4:20 p.m. Off-duty officer 5:12 p.m. State police ad-

advising that a vehicle and vised that an off-duty 7:25 p.m. Caller from Gill an unregistered dirt bike trooper advised them of reporting a male party were speeding and driving two vehicles off the road stuck on the sandbar in the erratically on Dell Street. on West Main Street. Injuries unknown. Tow reto get his little boat un- 6:27 p.m. Caller reporting quested for one vehicle.

hour. During the call, the stantly speeds on Turners ing that a tractor-trailer party was able to get free Falls Road and does not truck drove through Clark and was moving along. stop at the stop signs. Re- Avenue and Marston's Alley and caused damage to the male party is stuck on 8:41 p.m. Caller request- some property then kept trol officer advising that the sandbar again and ap- ing officers to assist with going onto Montague he picked up a dead skunk pears to be lost. Shelburne her grandson, who is out City Road. Officers checkof control and being dis- ing area. Officer advises respectful. Officer advises that there was a branch in 10:10 a.m. Shelburne Con- that he spoke to the mother the road by Cumberland trol advising of a motor and the juvenile and they Farms that was causing a vehicle on fire on Bridge agreed to stay away from hazard. The branch was suspects drug activity. The Street in Millers Falls. PD each other for the evening. moved by the officer and a couple of bystanders. Of-12:13 p.m. Caller from Av- 9:16 p.m. Caller reporting ficer advises that damage enue A states that some a vehicle in the middle of was done to a Clark Ave-Fourth Street reporting people ransacked her vehi- Federal Street with haz- nue residence and a propcle while she was cleaning ards on; appears that no erty on Greenfield Road; out a nearby apartment. one is in or around it. Sec- in addition, the signs on Now there is damage in- ond call reporting a deer the island for the intersection of Greenfield and south of Gunn Road that Montague City Roads are 4:01 p.m. Caller from Mon- appeared to be injured. Of- lying down. Message left

male party was bitten by a the car that is in the road. 11:04 p.m. Walk-in reports neighbor's dog and needs Deer dispatched. Party that his son has been gone medical attention. Officer standing by with vehicle since 1 p.m. today; requesting to fill out a missing persons report. Officers Fourth Street stating that port; he is driving himself 2:08 a.m. Caller from Third checking possible locations she saw a female put some- to the hospital. Message Street states that a male in of involved juvenile. Juvea wheelchair is yelling to nile entered into system 6:11 p.m. A 42-year-old the party on the third floor. as missing. Greenfield PD Turners Falls man was Male advised not to be yell- advises they located the juvenile in their town and 8:16 a.m. Report of a tur- will be bringing the juvenile to the station. Father Provided caller with op- ing vandalism and at- 1:13 p.m. Caller from contacted and advised of tions, but he did not want tempted theft at Suzee's Grand Avenue reports situation. Juvenile reunited Third Street Laundry. that a bear comes into her with father and taken out

phone. Caller called station erty under \$1200 and at- stays in her camper. He 10:24 a.m. Caller reporthas tipped over the trash ing that her husband and cans and made a mess in three-year-old daughter uation, remaining combat- 9:18 a.m. Loose manhole her yard. She is looking for were outside picking danive toward the dispatcher cover on Central Street. ideas to deter him. Num- delions in the yard and ber for Environmental Po- her neighbor came outside screaming and swearing 6:34 p.m. Caller reporting red truck struck something 4:02 p.m. Caller reporting and threatened to have on the side of Federal two male parties scream- someone come over to beat Street. Male standing out- ing at each other outside the caller's husband up; side the vehicle appears to of the Gun Rack; parties also accused caller's husbe uninjured. No property then moved to Fourth band of entering her home Street. Second caller re- on numerous occasions. porting a bunch of peo- Officer advised caller of dry wearing dark hoodies 3:22 p.m. Caller reporting ple yelling about drugs on options; they will call back Fourth Street. Officer ad- if anything else happens. door repeatedly. Officer Mormon Hollow Road vises that this was a verbal 1:48 p.m. Caller reporting spoke to male parties, who that appears to have feces argument over a residen- a loud party and people admitted to kicking the inside of it. Message left tial living situation. Situa- screaming and being loud at the Montague Retreat. They have already spoken to the town and were advised to call in noise complaints. Officer advises there is a very small gathering at the Retreat and a small gathering at a nearby residence. No music or loud noise can be heard from the road at all.

Sunday, 5/1 12:06 p.m. Newton Street

property owner into station to report that people are regularly trespassing on her property. They are leaving trash and old furniture there, and people have stolen property from her. Requesting extra patrols in the evening.

7:14 p.m. Caller reporting a female party walking on the road near the airport; might be hitchhiking. Second call regarding same party. Officers out with female party. Courtesy transport provided.

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

"Immigrant Voices" Returns to the Shea

TURNERS FALLS – "Immigrant Voices: A Celebration of Arts," which highlights the diversity of artistic traditions represented by immigrants in Western Massachusetts, returns to the Shea Theater in Turners Falls on Sunday, May 22, at 7 p.m. This year's performers include dancers from Nepal, Mexico, Colombia, and El Salvador, singers from El Salvador and Chile, a poet from Spain, fashion show participants from Kenya, and more.

After two years of sharing their performances online, the event organizers, performers, and early ticket buyers are looking forward to returning to the theater. "It's very emotional for me to be part of this event," remarked Teresa Cordoba, a longtime immigrant advocate and dancer.

Blanca Osorio-Castillo, a dancer with Grupo

Folklórico Tradiciones, a dance troupe composed of educators from the Amherst public schools, also expressed enthusiasm: "We are very excited to participate again in this wonderful event."

The Shea Theater's tech team, headed by Connor Roberge, who has supported this event since its inception seven years ago, and Northampton Open Media are collaborating to ensure that the event will also be livestreamed. Shea president Christopher "Monte" Belmonte emphasizes that the theater's mission is to serve as a community performance space.

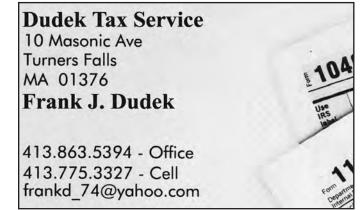
The Center for New Americans has been welcoming and serving immigrants in Western Massachusetts for 30 years by teaching English, computer skills, literacy, and career pathways. All classes are

free, and they offer citizenship and immigration legal services at their program sites in Amherst, Greenfield, and Northampton, as well as occasional classes at the Brick House in Turners Falls.

Center for New Americans appreciates the opportunity to help fulfill the Shea's community mission each year. The audience typically represents a broad cross-section of family and friends of the performers, staff and volunteers of Center for New Americans, and community members.

Tickets are priced at \$10, and can be purchased in advance through www.cnam.org. Buyers have an opportunity to make a donation when they purchase tickets in order to create a bank of tickets so Center for New Americans' students can attend the event.

PLACE YOUR BUSINESS CARD HERE (12 WEEK MINIMUM) CALL 863-8666!

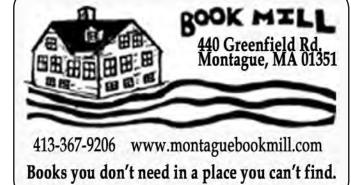




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RAMBLER from page B1

earnest that I'd chosen a challenging plot to homestead. Six inches down, I dug up chunk after chunk of black asphalt, and the soil was laden with pottery and glass – odd-shaped bits of rustic 18th-century homeware, dull brown on the outside and shiny within; blue and white china with idyllic rural scenes; pale green milk glass; and thick sharp shards of windshields scattered freely about, popping up each year anew, like jagged dandelions.

The rocks were also generously present – multiple six-inch slabs, two feet long and wider still, which took hours of digging and a forklift to remove; hundreds of rocks requiring two hands to carry, prison-labor size; and small rocks filling bucketsful, tossed up as if by a garden gnome, each time the land was cleared.

Rusty carburetors, door handles, mysterious shapes in steel and chrome, and remnants of other industry, too: six-inch screws and elegant, tapered square nails; railroad ties; hand-shaped bricks buried all together near the former ell; a worn file and a big bone (deer, I'm told); an 1860s Lincoln toy soldier, sans arms but with a hat; and marbles, including a large clear one encased in a threaded screwing device. No coins have been found yet, but the odds would seem to be in my favor.

As I've worked, my hypothesis has been that under all of the industrial detritus there is inherently rich Connecticut River valley soil, flooded over millennia and waiting to flourish again. I have cleared, tested, planted, mulched, composted, watered, and loved in anticipation of this resurgent Eden.

This season, in part due to my

own best efforts, I am now digging up shovels-full of writhing, dark red jumping worms, whole families of invasive amynthas devouring the few nutrients left, or brought here, in this latest encroachment of my besieged corner.

My predominant pandemic coping mechanism now has its own pandemic to contend with: a rapidly reproducing, easily transmittable, and potentially deadly species about which little is known in its current habitat.

My gardening plans for the season have changed: I will plant seeds only, no more compost or mulch will be brought in (although I am contemplating horse manure from a remote farm), and I have moved chickens up the ladder of priorities, although an open question is whether they have acquired a taste for these particular wrigglers, and I am still without fence and coop. Loathe as I am to put it on the weekend agenda, diatomaceous earth and biochar are headed my way for mass amynthascide, a garden party with first-degree murder.

There's a parable of modernity here, I am sure, some pithy tale of wisdom. One deceased bush and one baby tree down, I find myself challenged to engage with my soil in an open-hearted way. Seeking health and balance in an interconnected world where so many factors are askew and beyond my control makes it hard to even conceptualize what balance might look like given the circumstances.

Still, I am nothing if not persistent, and although my heart breaks a bit each time a beloved plant succumbs to a strange infestation, I shall continue to keep a watchful eye and nurture

my own battered hopes.



Surviving Breast Cancer By Julie Cunningham

Part 23: I'm a Reality TV Junkie

AMHERST – I must confess, reality TV is my favorite go-to take my mind off of my problems. I love a good trashy reality TV show. I'm not a fan of the Real Housewives shows because I feel like all the women do is fight, but I am a fan of really bad dating shows and MTV reality shows.

There's something about those programs that really sucks me in. I'm invested in whether or not Juliette Porter ends up with Sam Logan. Those are characters on Siesta Key, one of my favorite shows. I'm a big fan of both, I can't help it. Juliette is the "it girl" we all want to be; she founded what I think is a pretty amazing bathing suit line, JMP The Label. Sam Logan is the sweet billionaire we all want to date, but sadly, he only dates models. I don't know about any of y'all, but I'm not a model.

I used to hide these parts of me that I felt were more unfortunate. Two years ago I never would have thought to confess my love for reality TV publicly, but now I feel like these little things are what make us all human and alive. I've changed my mind a bit and I think embracing our imperfections is a beautiful and wonderful thing, because imperfections are brave.

For me, I have to be braver more frequently now. I recently had a dermatologist appointment where they looked at every single one of my moles all over my body. The doctor came in with a little device, and I was basically naked. She looked from head to toe and even checked my ears. It reminded me a little of the PET scan where they looked at my entire insides. Any time a doctor takes a close look at me, I feel PTSD from the PET scan.

The reason the PET scan was so hard was there was no baseline to start with. I didn't know what they were going to find. If I had a baseline, which would have been a previous PET scan, it may have been a little less scary. During a PET scan, they inject you with a radioactive dye that turns your insides a bright blue color, so they can see any abnormalities. When I had my PET scan they found a spot on my liver, and I had the worst two weeks of my life worrying about what it was.

The liver biopsy process I went through was invasive, and I don't know if everyone goes through it. I had two pathologists, two or three nurses, and a doctor. One nurse was in charge of the other nurses, and was second in command next to the doctor. He gave me the pain medication and made sure I was doing OK. Another nurse was there to assist the doctor. Another was there just to hold my hand. The pathologists were there to look at the samples, and make sure we got a good sample to take to the lab.

Then the doctor literally put two holes in my stomach, and took pieces out of my liver where the abnormality was. I had taken pain medication and I have a high pain tolerance, so I didn't feel anything. I remember waiting on pins and needles until I got the lab results – thankfully, it wasn't cancer.

This experience really got to me, and now when I have something like the full body mole check, I just need to zone out. That's where Siesta Key comes in.

I don't think the people on Siesta Key realize the entertainment value of these shows can really help someone like me, who just needs to forget. We laugh at the characters, we get invested in the story line, and we forget our own problems for a minute. I had a full-on Siesta Key binge marathon before my dermatology appointment, and it cheered me up watching and wondering whether Sam and Juliette would make it as a couple.

My biggest challenge now is accepting myself the way I am, healing from my cancer treatment. I'm slowly starting to recognize myself from what I used to be. My hair is a little different – it's not as curly and it's less frizzy, but believe it or not that takes a bit to get used to. I'm used to curly, frizzy hair. I finally got the chemo haze out of my skin and nails, and every day I have more energy than the last. It's amazing how the body heals itself.

EXHIBITS

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: Cast of Swans. Works on paper by printmaker and painter Karen Axtell. Through June 1. Reception Saturday, May 28 at 1 p.m.

Looky Here, Greenfield: Desi Lowit, INteRotiNE. Drawings and paintings. Through May.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: Tom Swetland. Collage, assemblage, mixed media, and junk sculpture of assembled found objects by selftaught artist and former Federal Street Bookstore owner Swetland.

Hawks & Reed Ballroom, Greenfield: Submerged, an oceanic art odyssey by mother and son artists Nina Rossi and Jon Bander. Mixed media, soft sculpture, paintings, welded metal sculpture, and ceramic works. Through June 15.

Leverett Crafts & Arts, Leverett: Quilts. Improvisational quilts by Sheryl Stroud. Through May.

Fiddleheads Gallery, Northfield: Photography. New England photographers. Through June 12. Reception Sunday, May 15, 1 to 4 p.m.

Salmon Falls Gallery, Shelburne Falls: 2022 Quilt Group Show. Quilts by Timna Tarr, Lee Sproull, Carson Converse, Wen Redmond, Sarah Stroud, Ann Brauer, Carol Anne Grotrian, and Audrey Hyvonen. Tthrough June 27. Reception this Sunday, May 8 at 2 p.m.

Shelburne Arts Coop Gallery, Shelburne Falls: Grace in Motion: From the Beat of the Hoof to the Beat of the Drum, paintings by Fabio and Sara Deponte. Through May. Reception this Saturday, May 7 from 2 to 5 p.m.

Local Art Gallery, Mill District, Amherst: Diane Nevinsmith, selected watercolors. Through June.

Greenfield Savings Bank, Amherst: History in the Making, hooked rugs and wall hangings. Chris Pellerin's rugs range in style from floral to landscape. abstract to realistic, Art Nouveau-inspired to original designs. Through May.

Gallery A3, Amherst: Cold Water and Millicent: Nancy Meagher. Oil paintings of water and color pencil drawings from her historical fiction book for children, featuring a fish named Millicent. Through May 28. Reception Thursday, May 5 at 5 p.m.

Brattleboro Museum & Art Center: Work by M. Carmen Lane. Roberto Visani. Yvette Molina, Mildred Beltré Martinez, Sachiko Akiyama, Louisa Chase, and Anne Spalter. Information at www.brattleboromuseum.org.

PULP Gallery, Holyoke: No. 28 with Roger Brouard & Tibi Chelca. Brouard's work is a synthesis of art and his building of homes and boats. Chelca combines traditional art practices with digital technologies. Through May 8.

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TV REVIEW

Genius (National Geographic)

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

GREENFIELD – This TV show on the National Geographic channel called Genius has the right name, because it seems to want to focus on some of the greatest minds in history. Einstein was a perfect fit for the first season. He was also a good fit in connection with the kind of things I know they have on this TV network, which also includes a documentary series looking at what went on in the '80s. Einstein developed the theory of Relativity, which I believe was a huge thing to do.

This show's second season, about Picasso, worked as well. Picasso was kind of a

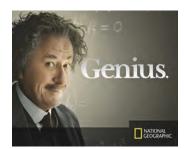
revolutionary when it comes to art. He invented an art form called Cubism. I don't think anybody had done art like that before him. I believe you call that form of art "abstract." It involved cubes.

Both of these seasons covered the whole lives of these guys reasonably well. Picasso's personal life was apparently very complicated. Einstein's life wasn't much better.

The third season focused on Aretha Franklin, which makes some sense because she was a music pioneer at times, and she made history, probably because of her music. Why else would she have gotten the name Queen of Soul? Her song "Respect" became legendary, especially because it played a part in the Civil Rights movement that was going on.

One more fact about her that kind of makes it make sense that the TV series focused on her is that she was the first woman to be inducted in the Rock'n'Roll Hall of Fame. I saw a movie in theaters about Aretha, and found I liked the movie a little better than this show's season on her.

I know that the fourth season of this show will focus on Martin Luther King, Jr., which also does sort of make sense if they want to continue focusing on prominent historical figures who have done what Aretha did



for history. This man didn't do that in connection with science or art, but when it came to the Civil Rights movement, he perhaps did it even more so than what Aretha did with her song "Respect." Dr. King would be on a list of civil rights activists along with Malcolm X.

Lastly, I should say, I do not recognize any of the actors who have appeared in the past seasons of this show except for Antonio Banderas, who played an older version of Picasso. He played the artist very well.

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Sweetheart Tea Returns!

SHELBURNE FALLS – The Sweetheart Tea returns to the Shelburne Falls Historical Society Museum this Sunday, Mother's Day. There will be free corsages for moms of all kinds, and tea and dainties will be served at 1, 2, and 3 p.m. There will be tables and chairs inside and out, weather permitting, so wearing pretty garden hats is encouraged.

There will be maple sugar hearts from Hager's Market, just like the ones Alice Brown had at the former Sweetheart Teahouse, and also delightful sweets by Shelburne Grange's Barbara Giguere, complimented by "a proper cuppa." A "global kindness" heart-making craft, led by local fiber artist Aggie Mitchkoski, is available to all as part of the continuing 1000 Hearts Project. Live harp music by Piper the Pied Harpist will add to the magic.

The event is free to the public, but donations to defray costs are welcome. The Society building is at 33 Severance Street in Shelburne Falls. Regular hours are Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1 to 4 p.m., and alternating Sundays. For more info and to arrange group visits, email *info@shelburnehistoricalsocietyma.org* or call (413) 625-6150.



XLVIII: Ten Gallon Hat

Interview by TROY CURRY (and J. BURKETT)

TURNERS FALLS – This week we get to delve into the insane and blasted world of Ten Gallon Hat. The band stars Sam "spitoon" Potrykus on voice, friendly feedback, and slide whistle; Mickey "Hilltown" O'Hara on bass; Andy "treetop" Allen on drums; and Adam "lil' foamy" Kohl on guitar.

We talked to Potrykus and Kohl about this newish "supergroup," who are kind of mash-up of Massachusetts country, noise, and blues – members of Peace, Loving, Hollow Deck, Negative One, Creative Healing, Knight Howls, and other groups.

Picture some sort of strange, newer DIY combination of Neil Young, the Boredoms, later-era Byrds, GG Allin, Willie Nelson, Flaming Dragons, and Lee Michaels... Check them out on Bandcamp, and also be on the lookout for Sam's new solo project, Groan Man; he has a 7" due out soon. Sam started the arts advocacy group Brain Arts Org (brain-arts.org), check that out too!

MMM: How would you like to groove with this talk about Ten Gallon Hat? Would you all like to share some history?

SP: We formed quite spontaneously at Foam's house, with his kids. Really I think that was the first jam.

And Andy, right Foam? Then we decided to go again and invite Mickey. I'm pretty sure that's how it went.

The idea was to fully improvevery time we play, but some song forms stuck around. We are all lovers of improv, so that was natural, and we are all friends who hang

out already so it really happened organically.

It was super fun for me personally, because I started to find my voice as a singer and lyricist for the first time ever.

AK: We were just hanging out jamming in my basement where there are a lot of different instruments laying around. We settled into some real good grooves when I was playing guitar, Sam was singing, and Andy was playing drums. Afterwards I thought it was really funny because Andy has never played drums in a band before, I've never played guitar, and Sam has never been the lead singer.

I guess we thought it was fun enough to do it again. We needed bass to round it out, so we invited Mickey over. At first the jams were really loose, but we recorded everything. Some hints of songs were in the recordings that we fleshed out more, and all the sudden we were kind of a country rock and blues band!

MMM: Do you mind talking about the albums, Pull Up a Hat and Pass the Hat?

SP: Both are almost entirely recorded on my phone voice memos, then chopped and screwed by Mickey and Foam to highlight our favorite moments and give it some flow.

I think they are a pretty good snapshot of the first two or three years of the band, going from more noise/experimental sounds in *Pull Up a Hat* (appropriately released by the incredible LEM label) to more song-like pieces that eventually were played nearly the same way every time on *Pass the Hat* (released by the infamous Mystra).

But what you hear even on *Pass the Hat* are mostly first or second takes, and largely improvised lyrics-wise anyway.

AK: All of our recordings are us at practice or at a show – mostly practice – and yeah, we had a ton of fun! Some of the songs that appear on our albums were improvised and the first time we played them. We decided to use the original improvised songs sometimes because they had a certain magic about them.

We also included lots of the more shaped-up versions, and those are also magical, in a different way. I like the juxtaposition of those two elements on the albums.

MMM: Have you all played any live shows, pre-pandemic or post-? I was hoping to see you play last July on the Amherst commons.

SP: We played 10 Forward three times, I think, pre-pandemic. And then twice at Andy's tree farm, on the back of my pickup truck – Track 7 on *Pass the Hat* is live from one of those shows. We also played Josh's fest in Vermont. That was a fun, epic show.

We were scheduled for that Amherst show, you're right! I had a panic attack and couldn't play, actually. Everyone was so nice about it.

AK: Before COVID we played out once a month or so. Lately, maybe a couple times a year.

MMM: Is there anything about western Massachusetts each of would like to talk about? Your individual experiences, and maybe as a group if it's applicable?

SP: Dude! I love this question! What is it about W. Mass?

Having been raised in the 'burbs and living in Boston for almost 15 years now, I see western Mass as my safe, happy place away from the chaos of my life. I have always had dear friends and chosen family out there, including Foam, and that's basically why the band started even though I'm in Boston and Mickey is in Worcester.

I love coming out to the Pioneer Valley, and exploring New England in general. The time spent traveling back and forth is when I taught myself how to sing and write lyrics. Route 2, baby.

MMM: I talked to Josh and he mentioned Lowell, and that triggered another memory, the group AMM. I saw them live in 1996. Is there anything each of you would like to discuss about music and community, speaking of Lowell and

western Massachusetts?

SP: Oh fuck yeah. I deeply love Lowell, like W. Mass, and the music scenes past, present, and future in central and western Mass. I've made an effort to take part as much as I could, whether it be X Fest, visiting RRR, Feeding Tube, Mystery Train, 10 Forward, the holy Hollow... and countless other house, gallery, and DIY shows.

I love New England, it's my favorite place. I have actually made a point to report on the Lowell and W. Mass scenes in my monthly newspaper, the *Boston Compass* – even though no one travels across town for a show, let alone across the state, hahah.

MMM: Do you see interconnections that span beyond?

SP: DIY culture, experimental music, and underground touring circuits all keep me connected with my friends and chosen family internationally. So, yes west and central Mass, but New England, the East Coast, the Midwest and the South especially all have strong ties – but even the West Coast, where Foam and I have toured at least a few times across the country. All are ties that remain strong for deep weirdos who have stayed deep and weird.

Internationally, through our booking at the Whitehaus or my music venue in Boston, Foam and I have established and maintained close connections with other awesome artists all over the damn place. It's made my life what it is today.

MMM: Do you all have fun when doing the group? The music sounds really fun, but there's something lyrically and in the name and sound that reminds me of a book by this Zen teacher a friend lent me.

SP: Fun? Of course! I think families and COVID just made it hard to keep it up, so I have been focusing on my solo project, which might just go by Sam P? I haven't decided, but I'm putting out a record this year you bet!

AK: Giddy up. You know it.

MMM: Would you all like to talk about some of your favorite country records?

SP: Glad you asked. Yes, I think the original singing cowboys and Western swing were our first great inspirations. Foam and I love "Happy Trails" and "Don't Fence Me In," which definitely inspired our first songs.

If I could recommend a few, I would like to suggest some contem-

porary artists, because otherwise there are just too damn many favorite records to even get into:

- Jonny Fritz, *Sweet Creep*: Formerly known as Jonny Corndawg. From Virginia, now selling houses in LA.

- Joshua Hedley, *Mr. Jukebox*: Plays fiddle for Corndawg. Awesome classic '50s country style, but an original, awesome voice.

- The Country Side of Harmonica Sam: They're from Sweden, they do '40s-'50s style American country music. Unbelievable.

- Clay Camero: A DIY musician from Maine, also known as Caethua.

- *Dimples*: A Colby Nathan band. Amazing, not exactly country but wonderful, dark shit.

My other favorite country and western music is partly why I have since been focusing on my solo work, which wouldn't have ever even happened if not for Ten Gallon Hat! Now I'm writing songs and taking songwriting inspiration from my favorites – George Jones, Bill Withers, Waylon Jennings, the Staples Singers, Jonny Corndawg – and going after a tighter structure/form like the Minutemen and Meat Puppets.

AK: I got really into Boozoo Chavis and Canray Fontenot over the summer.

MMM: Any YouTube concerts, podcasts, or shows that have been inspiring? Any favorite books?

SP: For podcasts, Cocaine and Rhinestones is a must. And I am currently reading Loretta Lynn's book about her friendship with Patsy Cline, and *Hidden in the Mix*, about the history of Black musicians in country music.

AK: I only really read technical identification manuals and field guides.

MMM: Any thoughts on music and how it's affected your lives? Music, sound, etc.? Listening to nature or just each other?

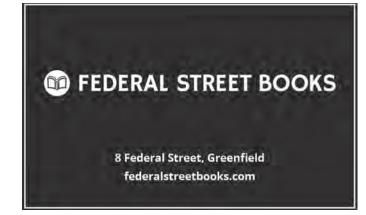
SP: For all the obvious reasons, yes. Music itself is life. But this band taught me so much about my needs and wants as a creative, and how it relates to my mental health. I'm forever grateful to be part of this group.

AK: It's essential!

MMM: What's it like for you all playing the music together?

SP: So fun. It was definitely a beautiful time and place, a spontaneous band that organically happened, and I'm so glad it was captured on these two albums.

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MEDICINE

Managing Stress

By CATHERINE DODDS, MD

TURNERS FALLS — The alarm blares. Bleary-eyed, you reach for your smartphone, the same one that kept you up too late again last night. The screen is full of news notifications — war in Europe, inflation, COVID-19 surges. You drag yourself to the kitchen to make the first of several cups of coffee. You make breakfast for your kids, and wonder if you'll have time to shower before heading into another day of work. And where on earth did you leave the car keys?

You can feel the stress building in you.

And suddenly, before you know it, your heart is racing, you're breathing quickly, you feel flushed and sweaty, and you startle at any sudden noises. Any hunger you had is gone. Your muscles are pulsing and tense, and you hear your heartbeat pounding in your ears. You feel ready to rush out the door, or to explode at the first person who talks to you.

What you're experiencing is the activation of your sympathetic nervous system, often called an adrenaline rush or a "fight or flight" response, named for what this system prepares you to do. Your sympathetic nervous system is a rapid-acting "on switch" that changes your body from its baseline calm, controlled by the parasympathetic nervous system, to a sudden state of danger.

Over millennia of human evolution, the sympathetic nervous system has been a life-saver. See a lion getting ready to pounce? Run away. Facing an enemy warrior? Fight for your life. But modern life is making our body's survival adaptations backfire. Instead of protecting us, the stress response is now activated so frequently in response to non-lethal threats that it starts to harm us.

What happens during sympathetic nervous system activation is complex. However, two of the main actors are the hormones *cortisol* (sometimes called the stress hormone) and *epinephrine* (also called adrenaline). When activated briefly in appropriate situations, these hormones help prepare us to fight or flee. When activated repeatedly and over the long term, they directly contribute to the development of chronic inflammation, obesity, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, anxiety, and depression.

Stress is a reality of our human existence. It can be limited and managed, but not avoided entirely. Some people have naturally higher levels of sympathetic nervous system activation, and have to put more effort into maintaining calm and dealing with stress.

The basic approach to stress is to recognize that your body's responses are often exaggerated compared to the actual level of threat, and to then use therapeutic exercises to change your responses and re-engage your body's natural calming system. Easier said than done, perhaps, but this is absolutely fundamental to managing the stress of daily life and preventing long-term harm from chronic stress response activation.

What can you do to help reduce the effects of stress on your body?

In the moment, when you are experiencing high stress levels, try to deliberately engage your calming, parasympathetic nervous system to reverse the adrenaline rush. You can do this by taking six deep breaths in a row: inhale deeply through your nose for a count of six, hold the breath for a count of six, then exhale for a count of six.

Alternatively, try gently touching or massaging your lips, using one or two fingers and lightly running them over your lips five to ten times. Wash your hands prior to touching your lips, and use lip balm if your lips are dry or irritated.

The parasympathetic nervous system can also be activated by bearing down – hold your breath and bear down with your abdomen as though you are trying to pass a bowel movement. Hold this position for 15 to 20 seconds, if you are able.

Long-term, a healthy diet that limits sugar and caffeine and includes non-processed, whole foods and lots of antioxidants from fruits and vegetables will help repair damage caused by stress. Regular exercise, particularly getting outside in nature, is great for stress management. Getting adequate, restful sleep is also important. Chronic sleep deprivation leads to higher levels of the stress hormones.

Our screens – whether televisions, smartphones, or e-readers – are wreaking havoc with our sleep patterns in the modern age. Take the televisions or other screens out of the bedroom and keep smartphones out of arm's reach and silenced overnight.

Other techniques to help reduce the damaging effects of stress include progressive muscle relaxation, meditation, visualization or guided imagery (envisioning yourself happy in a calm place), playing with a pet, journaling, listening to calming music, stretching exercises, yoga, tai chi, qi gong, and massage therapy. Many of these techniques have lots of information online or available at the library that give more specific details about how to use these in your day to day routine to manage your own stress.

In some cases, stress-related symptoms can be part of mental illness rather than a typical stress response. Diagnosed post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), major depression, generalized anxiety, bipolar affective disorder, or other mental illnesses should be evaluated and treated by a medical professional.

Age and DNA Damage

By SPENCER SHORKEY

MILLERS FALLS – DNA strands, like the short segment shown in the accompanying illustration, are the blueprints for building and maintaining living things. "DNA" is short for deoxyribonucleic acid, and is made up of four different types of nucleotides: adenine (A), thymine (T), guanine (G), and cytosine (C), which are essentially the four molecular "letters" of the DNA alphabet.

A set of human DNA has a length of about three billion nucleotide letters, and encodes the instructions for building the roughly 20,000 different molecular machines and structures used in our cells.

Nearly all of the cells in our bodies contain two sets of DNA, w

bodies contain two sets of DNA, which amounts to 1.5 gigabytes of information per cell. Counting up all 30 trillion cells in a human body, we find there are six zettabytes, or 6 x 10^21 bytes, of DNA data in a single human – roughly the same size as mankind's total digital data storage capacity in 2020.

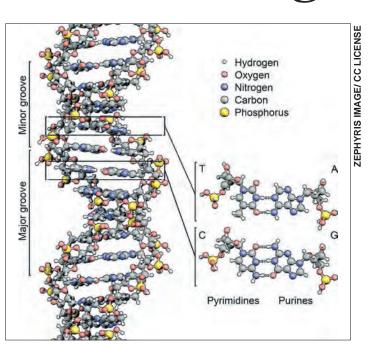
Although cells have many molecular machines devoted to maintaining, repairing, and protecting their DNA, some losses or alterations of the code inevitably occur, termed DNA "mutations." Mutations in DNA can occur from ultraviolet light-induced chemical damage, or simply from copying errors during DNA duplication. Just as corrupted data may cause a computer hard drive to fail, mutations in DNA can cause a cell to no longer function properly.

A groundbreaking study of DNA damage was published last month in *Nature*, titled "Somatic mutation rates scale with lifespan across mammals." In this study, scientists studied the DNA mutations accumulated by intestinal stem cells across 16 species of mammals, finding a remarkable connection between mutation rates and species lifespan.

Stem cells are with us for our entire lifespan, and their role is mainly to duplicate themselves in order to replenish cell populations. Every day in human small intestines, millions of stem cells divide from one cell into two cells, replacing cells of the intestinal lining that are constantly being lost or damaged. Each replication, known as a "cell cycle," entails making exact copies of their full set of DNA letters, and in humans is achieved with less than one DNA error or mutation on average.

However, over the course of a human lifespan, these intestinal stem cells copy their DNA and replicate around 10,000 times, eventually accumulating a few thousand mutations.

In the study, mice were found to have very high intestinal stem cell DNA mutation rates, nearly 800 per year, while humans had much lower mutation rates, just under 50 per year. Human DNA mutation rates were 17-fold lower than mice, which correlates well with our 23-



A, T, G, and C are the four chemical "letters" that make up the DNA alphabet.

fold longer lifespan.

Among numerous other animals in the study were cats, dogs, and horses, which had mutation rates of 290, 250, and 130 per year respectively. The cat, dog, and horse DNA mutation rates are 6.1, 5.3, and 2.7-fold greater than human's, and which correlates strikingly well with their lifespans being 4.4, 5.4, and 2.7-fold shorter than ours.

Mice and humans have similar lengths of DNA in their genome, at around three billion letters. While we differ greatly in lifespans, and rate of DNA mutation, we appear to accumulate a similar total number of DNA mutations per cell by the end of our lifespans: for mice, around 3,000 total mutations per cell over their 3.7-year life expectancy; for humans, a comparable count of 4,000 per cell over a much longer 83.6-year life expectancy.

It is remarkable that a similar total amount of DNA damage was measured by the end of life in these cases, as well as others in the study. This strongly suggests that the accumulation of a certain amount of damage, approximately one mistake per million DNA letters, predicts an animal's demise.

The correlation between DNA information integrity and species' lifespan makes intuitive sense, since DNA is the set of instructions that ultimately control cell functions. Mutations that change important parts of these instructions can result in cells not doing their jobs as well, or at all. Rarely, some mutations will actually give a cell new abilities, such as growing much faster and eventually becoming cancerous.

According to this study, the accumulation of DNA mutations above the count of several thousand mutations per cell appears to be a sort of limit, after which aberrant cellular behaviors have a significant impact on an animal's survival. This limit will likely serve as a benchmark in future studies of aging, which would do well to assess wider varieties of cell types and species, and use other measures of cell and tissue fitness. For now, it is really interesting to think that mankind's relatively low mutation rates could be fundamental to our long lifespans.

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



THURSDAY, MAY 5

Parlor Room, Northampton: Suzzy Roche, Lucy Wainwright Roche. \$. 7 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: GCC Spring Concert. 7 p.m.

FRIDAY, MAY 6

Four Star Farms, Northfield: Rosie Porter and the Neon Moons. 6 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: Drew Paton. 7 p.m. Power Trousers, Grammerhorn Wren, Drowning in Bones. 9:30 p.m

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Pussy-Vision, Thus Love, Thighs, Izzy Hagerup.* \$. Doors at 7 p.m.

The Drake, Amherst: Vapors of Morphine. \$. 8 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: Whalom Park, No Lens. \$. 8:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, MAY 7

Space Ballroom, Hamden, CT: *Deerhoof, Editrix.* \$. 8 p.m.

The Drake, Amherst: *Nickodemus*, *Gabrielle Poso Duo*, *DJ Bongohead*. \$. 8 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: Wooly Bully, feat. DJ Snack Attack and DJ Cashman. \$. 8 p.m.

MONDAY, MAY 9

Stone Church, Brattleboro: Eyehategod, Come to Grief, BAT, Escuela Grind. \$. 8 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: Elka Bong, Foam / O'Hara / KramerWhite / Williams, more. \$. 8 p.m.

FRIDAY, MAY 13

Calvin Theater, Northampton *Tom Rush, Leo Kottke.* \$. 7 p.m. Palladium, Worcester: *Action Bronson, Earl Sweatshirt, Alchemist.* \$. 7 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: Arthur Brooks Ensemble V, Liz Tonne, Jake Meginsky. \$. 7 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Eggtooth Presents: Dragspringa.* 7:30 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Sasha and the Valentines, Moxie.* \$. 8 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: Signal Pine. 9:30 p.m.

FRI-SUN, MAY 13-15

Franklin County Fairgrounds, Greenfield: *Peaks & Valleys Music and Arts Festival* feat. *Soul Keys, Carissa Angelo, Sylvia Pearl, Wild Weeeds* and many more. \$. See *kotvibes. com* for lineup and info.

SATURDAY, MAY 14

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Eggtooth Presents: Dragspringa*. 7:30 p.m.

Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro: Movie with live soundtrack, *The General* (1926, Buster Keaton), with pipe organ by *Ben Model*. \$. 8 p.m.

SUNDAY, MAY 15

10 Forward, Greenfield: Nat

Baldwin/Jake Meginsky duo, Staubitz / Foam / Rawlings trio, Weston Olencki. \$. 8 p.m.

TUESDAY, MAY 17

Bombyx Center, Florence: *Son Rompe Pera*, cumbia punk, with *DJ Bongohead*. \$. 8 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 18

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Trio Mambo*. 8:30 p.m

THURS-SUN, MAY 19-22

Nova Arts, Keene: The Thing in the Spring feat. Sammus, Lee Ranaldo, Nat Baldwin & Stella Silbert, Jeff Parker, Myriam Gendron, Kimaya Diggs, Tashi Dorji, The Huntress and the Holder of Hands and many more. \$. See novaarts.org for lineup and information.

FRIDAY, MAY 20

Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro: Laraaji: Celestial Sound Immersion. \$. 7 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Cinemastorm,* free movie double feature, 7:30 p.m.

The Drake, Amherst: Los Cumpleanos, Habbina Habbina, DJ Bongohead. \$. 8 p.m.

SATURDAY, MAY 21

Pushkin Gallery, Greenfield: *John Sheldon.* \$. 6 p.m.

Palladium, Worcester: *Turn-stile, Citizen,* 3 more. \$. 7 p.m. Mount Toby Meetinghouse, Leverett: *Charlie King, Colleen*

Kattau. \$. 7:30 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *April Cushman.* \$. 8 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Ali McGuirk, The Mary Jane Jones.* \$. 8 p.m.

SUNDAY, MAY 22

Black Birch Vineyard, Hatfield: *Darlingside*. \$. 6:30 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Bob Mould.* \$. 7 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Immigrant Voices*.\$. 7:30 p.m. Race Street Live, Holyoke: *Vieux Farka Toure*. \$. 8 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 25

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: Falltown String Band. 8 p.m.

THURSDAY, MAY 26

Palladium, Worcester: Carcass, Creeping Death. \$. 7 p.m.

The Drake, Amherst: *Maurice Louca*. \$. 8 p.m.

FRIDAY, MAY 27

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Men in Motion*, male revue. \$. 9 p.m.

FRI-SUN. MAY 27-29

MASS MoCA, North Adams: Solid Sound Festival feat. Wilco, Bonnie "Prince" Billy, Terry Allen, Sylvan Esso, Iceage, Eleventh Dream Day, Sun Ra Arkestra, Nels Cline, many more. \$. See solidsoundfestival.com for info.

Camp Keewanee, Greenfield: StrangeCreek Campout feat.

Dumpstaphunk, Max Creek, Badfish, Consider the Source, Bella's Bartok, Adam Ezra Group, Pancreatic Wiggle and many more. \$. See strangecreekcampout.com for info.

FRIDAY, JUNE 3

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Annie Brobst.* \$. 8 p.m.

SATURDAY, JUNE 4

1794 Meetinghouse, New Salem: *Christine Ohlman, Rebel Montez.* \$. 8 p.m.

Young Men's Club of Hadley: Country In the Country, feat. Rodney Atkins, Craig Campbell, Lindsey LaBelle, and more. \$. 3 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 8

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *NRBQ.* \$. 8 p.m.

THURSDAY, JUNE 9

Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro: *Circuit Des Yeux, Dutch Experts, Humanbeast.* \$. 8 p.m.

Colonial Theater, Keene: *Jonathan Richman*. \$. 8 p.m.

FRIDAY, JUNE 10

Race Street Live, Holyoke: *Superchunk, Torres.* \$. 8 p.m.

SATURDAY, JUNE 11

Unity Park, Turners Falls: *Unity Park Festival & Maker's Market*, with *Jimmy Just Quit*. \$. 2 p.m.

1794 Meetinghouse, New Salem: *The Green Sisters*. \$. 8 p.m.





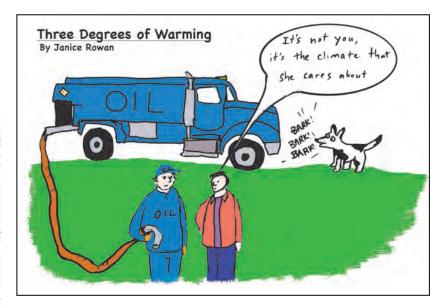




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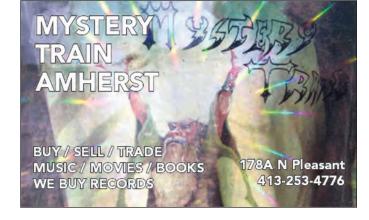
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BOOK REVIEW

Kate Folk, Out There (Random House, 2022)

Singles Be Warned, It's Getting Weird 'Out There.'

Wondrously perverse, often creepy and hilarious, and always sneakily heartbreaking " - CHANG-RAE LEE

By NATHAN FRONTIERO

TURNERS FALLS – If you're ambivalent about the modern dating scene, or the apocalyptic chaos of the world in general, you may find some warped recognition – if not comfort – in *Out There*, Kate Folk's debut collection of short fiction.

Refracting wry gothic narratives with sudden violence akin to Flannery O'Connor through David Cronenberg-style body horror, these 15 stories are as electrifying as they are overwhelming. Imagine waking up mid-run in an endless pitch-black hallway as the pinprick of light at the end threatens to shrink away for good, and you have some sense of the propulsive, onlyway-out-is-through nightmare that the cumulative reading experience offers. Folk grounds her speculative worldbuilding so uncannily on the horizon between absurdity and plausibility that I worried (between fits of laughter) that simply reading this book would inadvertently manifest some of its terrors in reality.

This is most potent in "The Void Wife," a shudder-inducing story about a mysterious black expanse slowly enveloping the planet. Folk laces the dread with acerbic wit via the focal character's desire to avoid getting raptured into an alternate dimension with a man who can't take the hint of her disinterest.

She writes, "Everyone believed that the void was a portal to an unspoiled earth. Everyone also believed you'd exist for eternity with the people you were touching at the moment of absorption. Elise held out against this idiocy. Death was just, same as always. Now Elise wished she'd voided herself with Dave when she had the chance... If she was wrong, and there was an eternity, she couldn't risk being stuck there

with Robert."

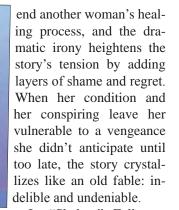
Elsewhere, Folk twists courtship mores but swaps existential horror for the macabre. "Heart Seeks Brain" begins: "At happy hour, my coworker Sarah and I bond, in the way of women, by cataloguing the flaws of our internal organs."

This reads as *outré* but relatively transparent allegory, but then Folk continues to deepen the premise of a world in which only the internal rather than external body parts are objectified, even fetishized, arriving at a compelling cracked-mirror exploration of longing.

Like a more brutally invasive version of the Munchausen-syndrome-by-proxy bond in *Phantom Thread*, the narrator pines for a relationship with a man who will allow her to "take his brain from him, year after year, a tiny bit at a time, through shock treatments and partial lobotomies, until he can't function on his own and I have to care for the drooling husk of his body until it expires. It is only for this that I'd surrender pieces of my literal heart."

Folk's characters are often undone by following the compass of their desire, or even their curiosity, rendering both as dangerous hungers in sardonic rather than sanctimonious prose. In "Doe Eyes," a woman yearns to feel a bullet graze her skin in an elaborate fantasy scenario that returns the husband who left her for another woman – then seeks actual prospects to pull the trigger.

In "The Bone Ward," a woman's jealous efforts to win back the attention of her companion in a hospital wing dedicated to a dissolving bone disorder lead her to actions that up-



In "Shelter," Folk explores the roiling interiority of a woman, dissatisfied with her long-term boyfriend, who splits her time between copywriting for a pornography website and lusting out of boredom for the repairmen who visit to address a mysterious door locked from the inside in their remote apartment's basement.

Consider this passage, where Folk sketches a moment of furious reflection: "He appeared so self-possessed, so contented by his tiny rituals, that Reese was filled with resentment. She knew her anger didn't correspond to the actual structure of their lives... She was not bound to the home by anything but the fact that they possessed a single car. And yet she felt a primordial rage toward Mark, as though he were a brute husband who went out to conquer the world, while she was trapped in this house with its flooded basement. She endeavored to say nothing to Mark, and to observe how much time would pass before he noticed."

As with most of the stories in *Out There*, Folk arrives at an unsettling conclusion that's entirely natural within the inertia of the narrative, equally inviting relief and recoil.

Elsewhere, in "The House's Beating Heart," a group of graduate students distracted by the grotesqueries of inexplicable living organs in the walls attempt to rees-

Montague Community Television News

Always Available

By HANNAH BROOKMAN

TURNERS FALLS – Music and meetings on MCTV! Check out some of the Pink Floyd tribute act that played at the Shea on April 22, and finally catch up on the rest of "Mud Season" with performances by Eric Lee and Cloudbelly.

New meetings from both the Montague and Gill selectboards and the GMRSD school committee are available on our Vimeo page and will air on Channel 17.

All community members are welcome to submit their videos to be aired on TV and featured on Vimeo, which is linked to *montaguetv.org* under the tab "Videos."

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.

MCTV is also still looking for board members, so if you would like to stop in for a meeting, even just to check the vibe, email *info-montaguetv@gmail.com* for the date of our next meeting and a link to the Zoom!

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 infomontaguety@gmail.com.

tablish control over their animate, but not explicitly conscious, home with disastrous results.

The scariest element of the story is not its final plot points but its unflinching clinical description of abrupt harm and the sustained present tense narration after an irrevocable line is crossed, which implies a ghostly omniscience and even a recurring nature to the unnerving events that transpire.

"The Head in the Floor" and "Moist House" further plumb the depths of horrific living situations, the former a quick sketch that could fit well in the apartment nightmare of Roman Polanski's *Repulsion*, the latter a grim depiction of codependency.

The bookend stories of this collection bring the reader closest to the loneliness and surreality of our digital present. The eponymous opener "Out There" focuses on a woman who grows increasingly concerned that the exceedingly handsome man pursuing her with bizarrely stilted *politesse* – his ca-

* Commercial

* Residential

* Industrial

dence like that of a golden retriever imbued with speech – is actually a "blot," an advanced humanoid artificial intelligence employed by Russian hackers to steal data from unsuspecting women through sex. (They vanish into scented vapor upon completing their mission.)

Folk trades this beginning's icy dread for a disarming tenderness in her concluding companion piece, "Big Sur," switching the focal point to a less experienced blot caught up in the mass-crackdown and decommissioning of his kind. Between the homosocial kindness of scenes in which a more successful blot coaches him in the art of kissing, to the doomed romance between him and another woman to whom he admits his dilemma with a deep purgatorial melancholy, Folk finds the soulfulness glimmering under the weight of this bleakly alienating stage of the Anthropocene.

Pat yourself dry from the cold sweat so much of this writing inspires, and you might just leave feeling heartened.

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