

The Montague Reporter

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THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

DECEMBER 15, 2022

Lady Killigrew Workers Vote Unanimously to Unionize



The staff, with UFCW organizer Daniel Weisse (left), celebrate after the union vote.

By MIKE JACKSON

MONTAGUE CENTER – The entire eligible staff at the Lady Killigrew Cafe, eight workers who prepare food and coffee and serve the bar and register from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., seven days a week, voted Wednesday morning to form a union. The unanimous vote comes after a very short public drive with the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 1459, whose staff will now help them negotiate a contract through collective bargaining.

Multiple attempts to reach Lady Killigrew Cafe, Inc. owner Kenneth Majka for comment by email, phone, and online form submission on Wednesday received no response as of press time Thursday morning. “This has actually been a long time coming,” cafe worker Parker Kellner told the Reporter. “My understanding, in talking to previous employees, is that this cafe has always relied super-heavily on its employees to hold so much weight. More than they should.”

see **UNIONIZE** page A5

High School Sports Week: Winter Sports Take Off!

By MATT ROBINSON

TURNERS FALLS – The winter sports season splashed off last Thursday as the Turners Falls Swimming Thunder returned to the lanes, splitting a series with the Monson White Mustangs. An hour later, the Eagles Holiday Classic tipped off over at Franklin Tech.

The Turners Falls Girls’ Basketball Thunder went to South Deer-

field on Monday to challenge the Frontier Red Hawks before traveling over to Greenfield to take on the Green Wavers.

At 4 p.m. on Tuesday, both swim teams went back into the water to host Chicopee, and at 7 p.m. the Turners cheer squad, after ten days with only practices, suited up in their indoor uniforms to cheer on the Turners boys’ basketball team

see **SPORTS** page A4



DAVID HOITT PHOTO

Turners Falls’ Deven Sloan (right) takes a shot against Murdock Blue Devil defenders as the Thunder hosted Murdock in the boys’ basketball season opener.

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD Wastewater Boss Granted New England Recognition

By JEFF SINGLETON

During an extended discussion of issues facing Montague’s sewer system Monday night, Clean Water Facility superintendent Chelsey Little told the selectboard that she had recently been informed she had received the William D. Hatfield award, granted each year by the New England Water Environment Association (NEWEA) to “operators of wastewater treatment plants who through their outstanding performance and professionalism deserve commendation.”

Criteria for the award, granted to one winner each year, include strong communication about wastewater issues with the operator’s oversight board, strong public relations, and “dissemination of information concerning advancements in the field,” according to the NEWEA website.

“It’s a little odd to talk about myself,” Little told the board. “But I am very humbled... and I want to share the good news.” She noted that there would be an official award ceremony in January at the annual NEWEA conference in Boston.

“I think it’s great,” said selectboard member Chris Boutwell.

“We may not always understand what’s going on,” said member Matt Lord. “It’s good someone else does.”

According to the website of the Rocky Mountain Water Environment Association, Dr. Hatfield was the superintendent of the Decatur, Illinois Sanitary District and served as president of the Central States Sewage Works Association and the Water Environment Federation in the 1940s and ‘50s.

The New England association lists 27 awards and “recognitions,” including for operator safety, biosolids management, and a “Golden Manhole” award for longtime service as a treatment plant supervisor.

Little was appointed to the Montague job in March 2020, and had previously directed a facility in Northfield. She has degrees in both biology and public health.

At Monday’s meeting she reported to the board that she had presented a paper on “How Pretreatment Changes Impact Process Control” at an October 26 conference sponsored by the federal Environmental Protection Agency.

Hauling Cake

Little presented the monthly data the Clean Water Facility is required to report on a monthly basis to state and federal environmental agencies under its permit to discharge water into the Connecticut River. The data showed the facility is meeting the permit’s key criteria. Little attributed the reduction in suspended solids, which had been an issue in recent years, in part to the plant’s new sludge press.

The superintendent also shared the results of the bidding process for sludge cake hauling, the shipping

see **MONTAGUE** page A7

Thousands Still Await Fuel Assistance Approval

By SARAH ROBERTSON

GREENFIELD – With snow on the ground and another storm on the way, more than half of the applications for fuel assistance this winter in Franklin and Hampshire counties are still waiting to be processed. A dramatic increase in the number of requests for assistance, compounded by staffing shortages and complications with a new application system, has left thousands of residents wondering when – and whether – they will receive financial aid to heat their homes.

“They haven’t notified anybody about what’s going on, why we haven’t been informed, or why the delay,” Montague resident Donna Petersen told the Reporter. “There might be a few of us, and there might be thousands. I don’t know.”

Petersen, who is retired and relies on approximately \$1,000 annually that she receives for fuel

assistance, said her benefits decision has arrived later and later each year, but this year is by far the longest she has had to wait. “It’s delayed every year a bit, but this year it’s extreme,” she said.

Petersen said she is fortunate to have a wood stove and a propane tank about 30% full as of Tuesday afternoon, but stressed that others might not be as lucky.

“It’s hard to plan when you don’t know what your status is,” she said. “There are people who are probably a bit scared and cold. I’m worried about them.”

The state of Massachusetts subcontracts with 22 vendors, 18 of which are Community Action agencies, to manage applications for the federally-funded Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

Community Action Pioneer Valley (CAPV), the nonprofit that see **FUEL** page A2



While heating assistance can cover oil (above), propane, wood, coal, gas, or electric heat, delayed approval most acutely affects households relying on fuel delivery.

Farmers Market To Become Part Of Montague’s Town Budget?

By JEFF SINGLETON

Montague may decide to incorporate the cost of administering the local farmers market, which in recent years has been located at Peskeompskut Park on Wednesdays during the warmer months, into the town budget. The selectboard did not take a formal vote on the issue at its meeting on Monday, but there appeared to be strong support for treating the market as a town “public service.”

Town administrator Steve Ellis gave the board background information on the market’s status. The town agricultural commission, which had previously served as the “sponsor” of the market, has not met in two or three years, and is on

see **FARMERS** page A3

WENDELL SELECTBOARD Board Chides Solar Company, Hires Shoveler, Hears of Dog

By JOSH HEINEMANN

The Wendell selectboard held its first hybrid meeting on December 7, with one board member attending remotely by Zoom and two in the selectboard office. On a computer screen those two, along with a person being interviewed, were fit into the same size box as single remote attendees, but otherwise the Meeting Owl system served well.

The person being interviewed was Jason Rider, who was applying for a job to clear snow from town walkways when necessary for the coming winter using the town snowblower or a shovel.

Rider came with three glowing references. He lives in Millers Falls

see **WENDELL** page A5

This Is When You Should Have Known You Were Dreaming

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The Gift of the Magi

As 2023 approaches experts are talking of a "triple-demic": flu, RSV, and coronavirus. These sicknesses are felt in the workplace: no one is at full capacity, and no one has been for going on a few years, now. People find new ways to cope, but it's taking its toll. The cost of living is rising, but then again, so are wages.

Our cover stories are both about labor. In the first, at a small shop, a

managerial vacuum inspires collective responsibility. In the second, at the largest social level, we see our governments allocating aid but tripping over their own shoelaces, having outsourced the very administration of that aid to a private sector hobbled by market forces.

Perhaps 2023 will be the year we get the gifts we've always wanted. Hopefully we can still use them.

FUEL from page A1

processes applications from Hampshire and Franklin counties, is working to catch up on a backlog, CAPV energy director Peter Wingate told the *Reporter*.

LIHEAP made payments to about 7,500 eligible households in Hampshire and Franklin counties last winter, and Wingate said he expects even more this year. As of Wednesday afternoon, he said, CAPV had processed 2,875 applications – and another 3,809 remained in the queue.

"This season... got off to a slower start than we planned," Wingate wrote.

This year, for the first time, people seeking fuel assistance in Massachusetts can apply through an online portal provided by the state Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), without needing to meet with an intake worker.

According to Wingate, the portal's availability led to a high volume of applications reaching his organization before DHCD rolled out the software needed to process and submit the applications to the state.

"It used to be that we had some control over how many people applied in a given week, when we did face-to-face application interviews," he said. "The portal created a different set of circumstances."

"The flow of incoming applications has started to slow, which will help us get caught up with work flow," he added. "In a perfect world, we'd also have a few more staff."

Major Bottleneck

Applications for LIHEAP in Massachusetts opened on October 1. Since October 12, CAPV has been advertising two seasonal jobs processing fuel assistance applications for \$17.63 to \$18.70 per hour. Wingate said the agency is now close to filling those positions.

Asked whether CAPV considered raising the base pay for these employees in order to attract more candidates sooner, Wingate replied that the positions are based on salary grades predetermined by the agency. "In a perfect world, we'd want to offer more for every salary grade," he said.

Wingate also confirmed that last month, CAPV's assistant director of energy programs, a 15-year employee who had managed the fuel assistance program, left to take a job with the state DHCD. While no one has been hired to fill the position, he said, another employee has been assigned some of her responsibilities.

State representative Natalie Blais told the *Reporter* that she has been discussing the is-

sue of delayed payments with CAPV executive director Claire Higgins for several weeks. Blais said she considers CAPV a "strong partner" in addressing the delay, and responding to constituent concerns.

"We just had our first snow, so we want to make sure we're keeping an open line of communication," Blais said. "There has been a high number of applications, and when we receive calls or emails from constituents, it is really helpful for us to know that we have such a strong partner in Community Action Pioneer Valley, and that we can make that connection knowing that constituents will be taken care of."

Delayed fuel assistance applications this year are not a problem unique to the Pioneer Valley. Further west, the Berkshire Community Action Council has also received a high number of new applicants. Fuel assistance program director Tammy Biagini told the *Reporter* that her agency is also experiencing delays caused by the influx of applicants and the new system.

"I think people are going into panic mode with inflation and oil prices," she said. "People are coming in droves." Biagini said Berkshire Community Action's Pittsfield office has received about twice as many first-time applicants for fuel assistance this year as last year.

Jumping the Line

A Montague City resident who spoke with the *Reporter* on the condition of anonymity

said that when they called CAPV this week to check the status of their application, they reached a voicemail box that was full.

Wingate said that around 86% of applicants are typically accepted, but that this rate may change this year given the relative ease of applying for assistance with the online portal.

LIHEAP is not intended to pay the entirety of a heating bill; benefits are determined by the type of heating a household uses, the number of people in the household, and their income; the maximum income to qualify for LIHEAP is 60% of the state median income, or \$53,551 annually for a household of two. The benefit cap was increased this year to \$2,200.

That said, anyone with an urgent need for heat can contact CAPV for help, whether they have applied for fuel assistance or not. The emergency line is a separate number than the line to check application status.

If a household has only one-eighth of a tank of heating oil left, or less than a three-day supply, and limited means to pay for more, the agency considers it an "emergency" situation requiring immediate response. For those heating their homes with electricity, a late notice from the power company constitutes an emergency. (From November through March, Massachusetts residents who heat with electricity are protected by law from shutoff.)

It is CAPV's policy to respond to such emergencies within 18 hours. Those with

pending fuel assistance applications who call with an urgent need will have their applications expedited.

"We're not putting people through the wringer if they tell us it's an emergency," Wingate said. "We're taking people's word for it – it's all in good faith."

CAPV typically receives about 20 urgent calls per week, Wingate said, but lately it has been responding to around 20 per day. "We are trying very hard to hire more folks to answer live phone calls," he wrote. "Our vendors and senior centers also have a direct email where they can notify us if they know of folks who fit the emergency definition."

Increasing the Pot

Wingate said he wants to assure potential applicants that there is enough aid money to go around, and encourages people to continue to apply for fuel assistance if they need it. "The good news is the funding is robust," he said.

Last month the US Department of Health and Human Services allocated an additional \$1 billion to LIHEAP programs, with \$36 million going to Massachusetts, bringing the state's total to \$159 million. The program also helps to make dwellings more energy efficient by providing free energy audits, energy-related home repairs, and weatherization.

"LIHEAP has been essential to ensuring that Massachusetts families can stay warm during the winter," US Congress member Jim McGovern said in a November 4 press release. "As Big Oil continues to rip off consumers and the war in Ukraine continues to drive up energy costs, our delegation requested an expedited release of home heating assistance, and I'm proud to see this huge amount of funding moving quickly into the hands of folks who need it."

Massachusetts also put an additional \$57 million into the LIHEAP program under an economic development bill signed into law November 10.

"That was a monumental investment by the legislature this last session, and it was in direct response to what we were hearing from constituents," Blais said. "It just reflects how important it is to hear directly from residents about what they're seeing on the ground every day, because it does make a difference."

Blais specifically credited CAPV for its advocacy to increase funding for LIHEAP. "They were incredibly powerful voices at the statewide level when it came to advocating for increased funding," she said.



Ericka Almeida of Turners Falls has turned her love of coffee tourism into a new home business as a coffee roaster. She roasts beans in this little three-kilo electric machine, making a few custom blends and single-origin batches under the name Stout Pigeon Coffee (www.stoutpigeoncoffee.com).



CAPV's energy programs are headquartered at its Main Street offices in Greenfield.

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Compiled by NINA ROSSI

Our special **Wrapping Paper Edition** has been percolating throughout our readership and beyond, thanks to our twelve vendor outlets and the volunteers who have brought them to sell at several events.

We'll be at the Greenfield Winter Farmers Market at the Second Congregational Church this Saturday, December 17 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. with the Wrapping Paper, *Montague Reporter* aprons (a free gift with any donation of \$100), and collections of our Historical Editions – the perfect gift for a local history buff!

You may also buy or pick up your online orders of the Wrapping Paper at our office at 177 Avenue A from 10 a.m. to noon this Saturday. Buy bundles of five (\$20 per bundle) on at montaguereporter.org and pick them up at the office then, or bring cash or a check if you only want single copies (\$5 per copy).

The public is invited to a **free holiday concert by the Recital Chorus**, this Friday, December 15 at 7:30 p.m. at Trinity Church in Shelburne Falls. The chorus will sing tra-

ditional carols and seasonal music, rounds, and folk songs, as well as works from the 14th century to the present. Composers include Palestrina, Rossi, Vivaldi, Handel, Boyce, Adam, and Vaughan Williams.

Music will be sung in several languages, in unison songs and in pieces for treble chorus and for mixed voices, and Keith Rollinson will accompany on piano and organ. The chorus is directed by Margery Heins, director of the GCC chorus and the Ashfield Congregational Church Choir.

This is the first of two public concerts planned by the Recital Chorus. The audience is asked to wear masks, and donations will be accepted for the Hilltown Churches and GCC food pantries.

The third annual **Winter Solstice Bonfire** and Holiday Artisan Craft Fair will be held at the Montague Retreat Center this Saturday, December 17. The craft fair starts at 11 a.m., and edible tree decorations will be made for local birds at 3 p.m. The fire will be lit at 5 p.m. and music by Tender Spot at 9:30 p.m.; the event also offers a solstice meditation.

This indoor and outdoor event is

sponsored by the non-profit HeART-beat Collective. Food will be available from Vibeman's Jerk Shack.

The Montague Center Firefighters Association will sponsor a **Santa Parade** this Saturday, December 17 at 2 p.m. The route begins in Montague Center, stops at the Common, and proceeds to the park on Broadway Street in Lake Pleasant by way of Federal Street. Then it will take Green Pond Road to Millers Falls.

After circling through Millers, Santa will head up Millers Falls Road to Turnpike Road. The route continues to Montague City, then turns right on to Montague City Road to Avenue A. The parade should be in Turners by 3 p.m., where it will travel the length of Avenue A to First Street, including a stop at Unity Park. The parade will then head back, by way of Unity Street to Turners Falls Road, to Montague Center.

Dress your best and join the artists and friends of Looky Here at their **Art Auction Fundraiser Gala** this Saturday, December 17 from 7 to 10 p.m. at the Pushkin Building in Greenfield.

The event will be a celebration of Looky Here's five years as a community arts space, and will feature a silent auction, musical performances by Blue Dish, Omeed Goodarzi and his Chromelodeon, and Stella Kola. The organizers promise "food, drinks, art activities and great company." Tickets are \$10, for sale online and at the door. More information and tickets at www.lookyheregreenfield.com.

Celebrate the solstice at a **storytelling and songfest celebration** at the First Congregational Church in Ashfield and on Zoom this Saturday, December 17 at 7 p.m. Folks are encouraged to come as early as 6:30 and to bring canned goods for the Franklin Area Survival Center, as well as treats for intermission.

Performers include Jay Goldspinner, Christy Grecsek, Yosli Kurland, Rob Peck, Sarah Pirtle, John Porcino, ReBekka Tippens, Tim Van Egmond, and Rochelle Wildfong. This year's special guests are Anthony Melting Tallow, Norma Jean Hayes, and the Brian Bender & Robby Roiter Jazz Duo.

For reservations and Zoom link, email dancing_story@yahoo.com or call Rebecca Tippens at (413) 624-5140. Donations will be taken at the door for the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts and the Ohketeau Cultural Center. This is the 38th year of this solstice storytelling tradition.

A program at the Village of Light Ashram in Leverett this Saturday at 7 p.m., "Sacred Land, Sacred Waters" pays tribute to **indigenous sovereignty, tribal water rights**, and the way of peace and healing for the global community.

The program presents three documentaries filmed on location in the Amazon rainforest and at Standing Rock in South Dakota by filmmaker Brooklyn Demme. Sharing her experience and wisdom will also be Penobscot Grandmother Elder Cindy Fountain.

Join the event either in person or online. If you are coming in person, organizers ask that you be seated by 6:50 p.m. The Ashram is at 83 Shutesbury Road, Leverett. The Zoom link is at lightomega.org/films. For more information, contact

diana@lightomega.org.

A free winter concert by the **Connecticut River Flute Choir** is coming up this Sunday, December 18 at 2 p.m. at the Erving Public Library. The ensemble consists of eight flutists from all corners of Franklin County. They will perform Christmas and Chanukah music, African American spirituals, and selections by composer Jose Feliciano.

Geology professor Steve Winters will deliver a lecture on the **geology of the Rocky Mountains** on Sunday, December 18 at 1 p.m. at the Millers River Environmental Center, 100 Main Street in Orange. You may register to watch it by Zoom instead at tinyurl.com/rockygeotalk.

Are your smoke and carbon monoxide alarms ten years old or more? Montague residents in houses built before 1975 with older alarms qualify for free replacements through a program administered by the Turners Falls Fire Department.

Up to three smoke and one carbon monoxide alarm replacements are allowed per household, and installation is included in the offer. Call (413) 863-9023 x. 173 to leave a message with your name, address, and phone number. You may also email smokealarms@turnersfalls-fire.org with the same information.

Register either way before January 6, for installation on January 14.

The Leverett Congregational Church invites all to a **candlelight Christmas service** Friday, December 23, at 7 p.m. Celebrate with traditional readings, choir music, and carols, including a closing circle singing "Silent Night" by candlelight.

On Sunday, December 25 at 10 a.m. the church invites folks back to sing carols with them for an hour. They are located across from the Leverett post office; for more information, contact claudia@claudiagere.com or (413) 359-0003.

Join the New Salem Public Library on Tuesday, December 27 at 7 p.m. for an interactive presentation, led by Maura Shea, of images from NASA's **James Webb Space Telescope**. Shea, a graduate of Wellesley College who is now at Georgia State University studying active black holes, will present highlights of selected images, and provide time for questions and discussion.

"If you have a **sick child with flu-like symptoms**," Baystate Health warns us, "it is not always easy to tell when they may need medical care."

The hospital chain gives a helpful list of symptoms that can be treated at home: fever, chills, headache, runny nose, cough, nausea, fatigue, loss of appetite, and sore throat.

They advise you call a pediatrician if your infant under three months has a fever above 100.4 F; of if your child has a chronic condition, an unresponsive fever for five days, extreme fatigue, wheezing, vomiting, decreased urination or tears, back pain, weak legs or feet, severe muscle pain, or red urine.

"Incololable irritability" labored breathing and a persistent cough, neck stiffness, or confusion might merit an ER trip. Visit baystate-health/bch/ for more information.

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Letters to the Editors
Black and White and Appreciated All Over
Each Thursday (or Friday) a gift arrives at our door. It is black and white and read all over. Often it lasts through a few meals, keeping me company and updating me on our iconic old buildings, the adventures of our neighbors – some globetrotting, others keenly observing their home and woody surroundings – and the goings on of multiple selectboards in the region, among so many other things from science to the arts.
The *Montague Reporter* is a gift to all of us, wrought from the devotion and hard work of its editor
Emily Monosson
Montague Center
Per-Bed Cost Seems High
I have appreciated the coverage of the Farren situation, as well as Sarah Robertson's article about CSO's expansion of the Wells Street shelter in Greenfield.
Being a numbers guy (disclosure: also a bean counter here at the *Reporter*), I found it interesting that the \$29+ million to get the 120-bed Farren up to snuff was "impossible" while the 36-room SRO, with renovations of the 40 shelter beds (for a cool \$23 million) was being organized and financing lined up.
DHCD and other bureaucratic layers add massively to the costs, apparently. Even newly-built three-bedroom homes in the area can sell for \$300,000. The price at the Wells Street SRO comes to \$640k per unit – or down to \$300k per bed, as the shelter will also be improved and expanded.
There has to be a better way.
Garth Shaneyfelt
Greenfield

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SPORTS from page A1

as they hosted Murdock. The boys in white scrapped for four quarters before losing the contest on a bounce.

In other basketball news, Brittney Griner is now free and back on the court.

Girls' Swimming

Monson 56 - TFHS 36
TFHS 57 - Chicopee 37

Like many teams in the town of Montague, the Turners Falls swim teams are made up of athletes from both Turners Falls and Franklin Tech. This has proven successful, as the boys are currently 2-0 while the girls are all tied up at 1-1.

In the opening meet against Monson on December 8, Sophia McComb earned 10 of Powertown's 36 points, with first-place finishes in the 50-yard freestyle sprint and the 100-yard backstroke.

On Tuesday, the Blue Ladies swamped the Chicopee Pacers 57-37.

In this match, Blue supplemented their wins with second- and third-place finishes, and swept both relays: Avery Heathwaite, Nicole Porter, Kylee Gamache, and Adelaide Ehle took the gold in the 200-yard freestyle, and Heathwaite, Gamache, Sylvie DiBartolomeo, and Adelyn Wood the 400-yard freestyle.

In individual races, Wood won the 200-yard freestyle and 100-yard butterfly, Heathwaite took first in both the 50-yard and 100-yard freestyles, DiBartolomeo first in the 100-yard backstroke and second in the 500-yard freestyle, Ehle first in the 100-yard breaststroke, Gamache third in the 50-yard freestyle, and Porter third in the 100-yard freestyle.

Boys' Swimming

TFHS 45 - Monson 13
TFHS 39 - Chicopee 26

In the boys' first meet, Powertown scored 45 points against Monson on the strength of seven first-place wins and a relay sweep.

In the 200-yard relay, Matthew Sibley, Cody McDonough, Liam Bliss, and captain Nikolas Martin tapped the wall in 2:22.41.

Sibley added two more wins in the 200-yard freestyle and 100-yard breaststroke. Bliss won the 200-yard individual medley and 100-yard butterfly, while Martin won both the sprint (50-yard) and marathon (500-yard) freestyles. Tyler Galenski added to Thunder's first-place tally with a win in the 100-yard free.

The Blue Boys improved their record on Tuesday with a 39-23 win against Chicopee. Galenski teamed up with Sibley, Bliss and Martin to take first place in both the 200-yard medley relay and the 200-yard freestyle relay.

In individual contests, Martin won the 100-yard and 200-yard freestyles, and Bliss the 200-yard medley and the 100-yard backstroke. Sibley won the 100-yard breaststroke and placed second in the 50-yard free, while Galenski won the 500-yard freestyle and took third in the 50-yard.

Girls' Basketball

FCTS 45 - McCann 31
FCTS 45 - Hopkins 38
Frontier 42 - TFHS 27
TFHS 51 - Greenfield 47

Across the road, Franklin Tech hosted the Eagles Holiday Basketball Classic last Thursday and Friday. I wasn't able to make the first game, but I went to the championship match.

In Thursday's opener, the Lady Birds dismantled the McCann Tech Green Hornets 45-31. Hannah Gilbert scored 17 points in the win, Kendra Campbell put up 14, Kaitlin Trudeau had 7, Kyra Goodell added 3, and Lilianna Inman scored 4 points and pulled down 10 rebounds.

Tech took on the Hopkins Academy Golden Hawks on Friday for the trophy. Franklin

played full court press from the initial tip-off. They may not be the biggest team in the state, but they're quick.

They kept pace with the Academy, and midway through the first, it was all knotted up at 9 each. Hopkins, who continuously sent in line after line of fresh players, simply couldn't adjust to the Eagles' clawing defense. Franklin harassed every ball carrier, and started making steals. In the last four minutes of the period, Tech outscored the Hawks 10-2 to take a 19-11 lead going into the second.

Tech opened the second quarter with a three-pointer, and never looked back. At 5:31 of the half, coach Joe Gamache finally sent in his first substitution, and when the halftime buzzer sounded, Tech found themselves riding a 29-18 lead.

The third quarter was a little atypical for Tech. They began committing fouls, spotting Hopkins four fouls to begin the third. Although the Eagles was beginning to wear down, they still managed to head into the final stanza with the same 11-point lead, 38-27.

In the fourth, the fresh legs of Hopkins took control. With a minute to go, they were within four points, 42-38. The Birds then scored three off an intentional foul and made another freebee to make it 45-38. With six and a half seconds left on the clock, Kendra Campbell intercepted the inbound pass, and the Eagles simply dribbled it out to win the 2022 Holiday Classic.

Only four Eagles scored points in the win: Gilbert got 19, Goodell 7, Inman had 3 and grabbed 11 rebounds, and Campbell hit 16 and was awarded the MVP trophy.

As this week began, the Turners Falls Basketball Thunder Ladies played road matches against two familiar foes.

Monday's opening game was against the Frontier Red Hawks. Red flew out of the gates early, and after one period, Blue was down 19-6.

Powertown regained their composure in the second and focused on defense. They held the Hawks to 4 points in the quarter while putting up 12, making it 23-18 at the half. In the third, though, Frontier increased their lead to 32-25, and then it was the Red D that took control, holding Thunder to just two points in the final quarter.

Seven players scored for Blue: Lily Spera 6, Tatiana Williams 5, Steph Peterson and Keira Richardson-Meatty 4, Taylor Greene and Madi Liimatainen 3, and Morgan Dobias 2.

Then on Tuesday, Powertown crossed the bridge and defeated Greenfield, 51-47.

I asked coach Jim Cadran when was the last time that Turners girls beat Green. "We beat them last year," he replied, "but before that it was seven years."

In this one, the teams played dueling quarters. Greenfield took a three-point lead after one, and Blue stormed back to take a 24-23 lead at half-time. Greenfield won the third quarter 15 to 10, and with eight minutes left to play in the game, the Blue Thunder was down 38-34.

They swung back, though, and had their biggest quarter of the game, scoring 15 points while holding the Wave to 9 and evening their season record at 1-1.

Spera (16) and Greene (14) were the big scorers for Blue, with Abbi Holloway (9), Liimatainen (8), and Richardson-Meatty and Steph Peterson (2) not far behind.

Boys' Basketball

Murdock 56 - TFHS 55

The Boys' Basketball Thunder opened their winter season on Tuesday, hosting the Murdock Blue Devils from Winchendon.

The atmosphere in the gym was raucous and upbeat, thanks in large part to the pep band and the cheer squad. The band, which is larger this year, belted out those old familiar rallying tunes



Turners Falls' Logan Addison drives into the paint against Murdock defenders.

during the breaks. They didn't have to compete for time with the cheerleaders, because the cheer squad clapped and chanted along with the band.

I asked coach Sarah Underwood if she gave her players a day off. She immediately answered, "No!" She was joking, of course. After working Thanksgiving, they took Black Friday off.

But last Monday it was back to work in the practice studio, learning new cheers for a new team in a new sport. (Turners boys wear white jerseys, so some of their new cheers have to rhyme with "white," not "blue.")

The game itself was a barn-burner. Thunder battled the Devils back and forth, and back and forth again. The first quarter was so physical that both teams could only put 8 points in the bank. In the second, Murdock came out swinging, stunning Powertown by scoring eight unanswered points. Turners regained their footing and surged ahead, putting 10 on the board to take an 18-16 lead.

By this point in the half, both teams had at least seven fouls, so any player fouled would get a free shot. This was the first red flag: Turners kept missing these free throws. The game seesawed along, and at the buzzer it was knotted at 23.

Turners gained a slight lead in the third, but couldn't quite pull away. Murdock scored with eight ticks on the clock, and going into the last quarter, Powertown clung to a 38-35 lead.

White slowly stretched the lead to seven points, 52-45, with 2:01 left. But Murdock surged back. They sank two free shots and a three-pointer, making it 52-50, then tied it up, and then landed another three-point dagger to take the lead, 55-52.

With only 2.7 seconds left on the clock, Turners hit a three-pointer to come within a single point, 56-55. Murdock attempted to inbound, but the Thunder stole the ball. They immediately drove the ball to the net, and the player was fouled.

After a couple of freezing timeouts the Turners player went to the line. The first free throw would have tied the game, and the second would have sent the Devils back to Winchendon. Unfortunately, White missed both shots, and the team walked to midcourt to congratulate the victors.

Logan Addison led the Thunder in scoring with 14, and JJ Charles netted 11. Brandon Truesdale and Deven Sloan each scored 9, Levin Prondecki had 7 points, Cameron Burnett 3 points, and Alex Quezada added 2.

The game was exciting and fun, and entertaining for all the folks in the gym. If every game is this close, the concessions stand might just run out of snacks.

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WENDELL from page A1

but said he is in Wendell often, has clients in town, and had worked with Tom Wetherby, who cleared the walks last winter. The selectboard hired him.

Brian McHugh, director of community development at Franklin County Regional Housing & Redevelopment Authority, met the board for an information session on Wendell's next round of community development block grant (CDBG) funding.

The grants are aimed to address blight, to rehabilitate substandard homes including by abating lead paint, and to aid with transitional housing, infrastructure including playgrounds and water supply systems, daycare subsidies, substance abuse counseling, and assistance for homeless or disabled people, abused children or battered spouses.

Wendell is the lead town for a grant shared by either two or three towns, and the application for the next round is due March 3. Board members voted to authorize the housing authority to prepare applications focused on two public facilities, the Meetinghouse and the playground.

Project Updates

Project manager Phil Delorey reported that the money earmarked for capping the former town landfill was lost, and then found again. MassDEP is ready to sign contracts for that work including the engineer, consultants, and monitoring wells. Delorey recommended using the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) to manage wages and the process, and board members agreed.

A similar procurement will be used for work on the highway garage roof, with the hope that it will be ready in the summer for solar panels and a battery system to be installed.

Delorey said the new Kentfield Road bridge is in place, and ready for its punch list and final inspection.

He also reported that Davenport Construction had replaced some loam on the Mormon Hollow culvert embankment, and repaired the washout with riprap.

Selectboard member Gillian Budine said the New Salem selectboard has approved spending \$10,000 to replace the furnace pump at Swift River School, and hopes that Wendell will contribute the same amount. Board members agreed, and decided to ask the finance committee where that money should come from.

Energy Facilities

After the December 7 meeting, and following the selectboard's instructions, town coordinator Glenn Johnson-Mussad sent an email to the Borrego Solar corporation asking politely that Borrego, whatever name it may be acting under, inform the town of any filing it makes with the state energy facilities siting board (EFSB) or Department of Public Utilities (DPU) for any potential development within Wendell.

Johnson-Mussad also sent a second email to EFSB director Andrew Greene and to the DPU asking that Wendell boards be informed of "any filings from any corporation for work in Wendell as a new electric solar utility or energy storage project."

In September Borrego, acting as New Leaf Energy, bypassed Wendell's solar bylaw when it proposed

a new 12-acre battery storage system, independent of any solar array.

Other Business

Wendell animal control officer Meghan Gallo had already visited the owner of a dog that is the subject of a noise complaint, and there has been no improvement.

Selectboard chair Laurie DiDonato said she believed Massachusetts law makes no distinction between what a selectboard may do regarding a nuisance dog and what it may do regarding a dangerous dog. (However, the law defines both, and lists very different actions available for each.)

DiDonato said she would send a letter containing the pertinent laws to the dog's owner. The next step, if necessary, would be a dog hearing.

With a \$10,000 match, Wendell accepted a state Community Compact grant of \$16,005.13 for information technology (IT) purchases and usage. Budine said she wrote the grant in general terms, and will ask for input about the towns' needs.

One suggestion is improvement of the town website. The selectboard voted to allow Budine to oversee this IT spending.

Johnson-Mussad said he has not given up on getting the 2021 annual report into the regular book form, and hopes it will be ready by the end of December. At the annual town meeting last spring, due at least in part to Johnson-Mussad being the fourth town coordinator to serve in the space of one year with a steep list of details to learn in his first months, the report was made available only as a set of loose papers.



UNIONIZE from page A1

The cafe, nestled in the Montague Book Mill complex on the Sawmill River, has been both a popular destination for tourists and a gathering spot for Montague Center residents since its founding in late 2003 by Sarah Reid and Matthew Latkiewicz.

Reid and Latkiewicz sold the business in 2006 to Majka, a Williamsburg businessman who also owns Share Coffee Roasters in Hadley and the affiliated Share coffeeshops in downtown Amherst and Thornes Marketplace in Northampton.

Several staff members described the Lady K.'s reopening during the COVID era as marked by waves of staff attrition, with recent hires pressured to train even newer staff – challenges compounded by difficulty communicating with, and sometimes even reaching, Majka.

One part-time manager, recently returned from a maternity leave, is not in the bargaining unit. In her absence, many of her duties reportedly fell on rank-and-file staff by default.

"The ball really got rolling on in the past four or five months," Kellner said. "We've got a really strong group of coworkers, and we all work really closely and tightly together. We're hoping to give ourselves a more official and equal voice by unionizing, making official the collective work that we do together every single day at the cafe."

UFCW 1459 organizer Drew Weisse said the union has been in touch with the Lady K. staff for "a couple months now."

"Everybody was more or less united, so it was an easy choice" to support the campaign, Weisse said. "It's just about them getting together to have some standard of working conditions that works the best

for them."

"We're looking for more transparency, and more open communication," said Kellner. "We are asking for higher compensation, and there are some unequal benefits between the owner's businesses – we're just looking to be treated fairly."

Kellner said the starting wage at the cafe is \$9.50 an hour, and that they believe it has increased by \$1 since 2016. Except for one seasonal position, a dishwasher hired in the busier summer months, all the staff are tipped; according to three employees, it is not uncommon for compensation with tips to fall short of the \$14.25 per hour state minimum wage, especially during winter evening shifts. (When this occurs, pay defaults by law to the minimum wage.)

"It's such a fascinating place, in that it plays a lot of roles," said Will Quale, a Montague Center resident who describes himself as an "on-and-off regular for the last decade." Quale told the Reporter that "people in the village were really rooting for" the business as it reopened last year with a new crew – including one of his former housemates – and slowly built back up to its full schedule.

"At the same time, I was also aware that the staff was dealing with communication challenges, and overall challenges," Quale said. "They started talking about unionizing... Knowing some of the people who have worked there over the past five or six years, I knew this had been a discussion amongst other iterations of staff, but this time there was just a bit more of whatever factors go into it – the right people."

"We've had like a couple larger turnovers throughout the year-plus

that I've been there," said Fiona Lant, another staff member. "The job functions really well when everyone understands all the parts and can work in all the aspects, because it is a small space, and so when there was a lack of knowledge being carried through it made the working environment a lot more difficult."

"COVID was such a big disruption – a lot of people left, and ever since then, there hasn't been that knowledge of years that existed before," said Rebecca Weiss, who started seven months ago and already has seniority over half the staff. "Over time, it just seemed like the best way for the cafe to be successful in the future is for us all to be able to help it run in the best way possible."

"Because we are a small staff, and there was pretty much unanimous support for it, things moved pretty quickly," Lant said. "We have all been able to work really well together, and share ideas about the improvements and changes we want, and that has motivated us to move toward having a platform



Coffee roaster Ken Majka purchased the Lady K. from its founders in 2006.

**SEARCH RE-OPENED:
TOWN OF MONTAGUE HEALTH DIRECTOR**

Applications will be considered as they are received through Monday, January 9.

The Town of Montague is seeking qualified applicants for the position of **Health Director**. The Health Director will understand and enforce all regulations, codes, and laws pertaining to public health, particularly food establishments, housing, swimming pools, recreational camps for children, and body art establishments, as well as Title V. Preferred qualifications for this position include a bachelor's degree in public health, environmental science, biology or related field, and 3 to 5 years of experience in public health inspection and enforcement work – or an equivalent combination of education and experience. A full job description is available at www.montague-ma.gov/jp/308/employment-opportunities

The Health Director is a full-time, 35-hour per week benefited position that ordinarily works Monday–Thursday. The Town of Montague offers an attractive benefits package, including health, dental, life, and long-term disability insurance, pension, deferred compensation, and paid vacation, sick and personal time. Salary range \$64,035 to \$78,423 depending on qualifications and experience. The Town of Montague is an equal opportunity employer and is interested in candidates from a diverse range of cultural, ethnic, and racial backgrounds, and who are otherwise well-prepared to understand and address the needs of the diverse population we serve.

Interested candidates should submit a resume and letter of interest to Michael Nelson, Search Committee Chair, C/O Anne Stuart at: healthclerk@montague-ma.gov.

**TOWN OF ERVING
ACTIVITIES COORDINATOR POSITION**

The Town of Erving is seeking to fill the position of **Activities Coordinator** for the Erving Senior & Community Center. Reporting directly to the Senior Center Director, this position oversees event scheduling and organizes various programs; coordinates and supervises all aspects of the Senior Center's volunteer program, including the screening and training of all volunteers; plans and coordinates activities; coordinates the senior van transportation program; attends special events and monitors programs; and actively engages with the senior population. This is a part-time (approximately 20 hours per week) and benefited position, working year-round. The anticipated starting rate of pay is \$23.28/hr. to \$24.22/hr., commensurate with qualifications.

The successful candidate will excel as a member of a team by establishing and maintaining effective working relationships with diverse interest groups and work cooperatively with supervisor, staff, and elected or appointed officials and the general public. This position requires a high level of organization and self-motivation. The successful candidate will have an associate degree in a discipline related to human services, hospitality services or business; minimum of two to three (2 to 3) years in a human service-related field, or experience in volunteer recruitment and coordination. An equivalent combination of education and experience may be considered. A CORI check will be performed for the successful candidate.

Applications and the position description are available at Town Hall, 12 East Main Street, Erving, MA and online at www.erving-ma.gov/employment. The deadline to apply is Thursday, January 5, 2023, at 3:00 PM. All completed applications, cover letters, and résumés should be submitted to Bryan Smith, Town Administrator, at the address indicated above, or by email as a single PDF document to careers@erving-ma.gov with "Activities Coordinator Search" in the subject line.

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where we can negotiate for those conditions that we want – to make the workplace more sustainable for us, and for future employees, and for the business."

Lant added that staff have discussed the situation with regular customers and found them to be "really supportive" of the organizing effort. "They've seen the shifts in the cafe over the years," she said.

The union filed officially in early November, with all eight staff in the would-be bargaining unit signing cards indicating they wanted to join. Majka did not voluntarily recognize the union, though according to Weisse, he also did not decline to recognize it.

"I believe what he told us was that he didn't get the email, and then it went to his Spam folder," said Kellner. "The [National Labor Relations Board] and the union were

very consistent with their attempting to follow up with him, making sure that he was properly contacted and notified."

The workers decided to push forward with an election, and two weeks ago, Weisse helped them expedite the process so the vote could be taken before the holidays.

"A lot of people are fed up after the pandemic, and deciding that they're not getting enough from their jobs," the UFCW organizer told the Reporter. "There has been an uptick in people interested in forming unions."

"We're really good at the day-to-day, a lot of which is the small picture," said Weiss. "But without the small picture, the big picture doesn't exist... We don't need to act in charge, but we are interested in having more input, proportional to what we do."

After a one-week break during which Wednesday's election paperwork must be certified before the NLRB, contract negotiations can begin, a process Kellner said can take three months to a year.

"We're excited about the negotiation process starting," said Lant. "The owner has agreed to bargain in good faith... We really love this business. It's a community space, and we're really excited to make sure that it is sustainable – both for us, the employees, and so that it is lasting for the community."

Additional reporting was contributed by Nathan Frontiero.



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Aquí se habla español

Esta es la página mensual en español del *Montague Reporter*. Aquí podrá encontrar cuestiones acerca de la comunidad hispana en el área, eventos de interés, curiosidades, y noticias mundiales en español. Si quiere participar o compartir alguna sugerencia, envíenos un correo electrónico a spanish@montaguereporter.org.



Gente de Franklin County: Alfonso Neal

Por VICTORIA MAILLO DE AGUILERA

GREENFIELD – En esta ocasión la sección está dedicada al co-director ejecutivo del Pioneer Valley Workers Center, Alfonso Neal. Pioneer Valley Workers Center (PVWC) trabaja para que todas las personas tengan los recursos para vivir una vida feliz. Trabajan para fortalecer a trabajadores e inmigrantes de bajos salarios en el oeste de Massachusetts, les ayuda a organizarse en sus trabajos y a tomar medidas políticas para lograr cambios económicos y sociales para los trabajadores.

Alfonso se mudó a Franklin County desde St. Louis, Missouri para hacerse cargo de la codirección de esta organización sin ánimo de lucro y todo ello sin haber puesto antes un pie en esta zona del estado de Massachusetts, pero fue un amor a primera vista. Alfonso vive en Turners Falls, donde PVWC tiene también una sede compartida en lo que antes fue 2nd Street Bakery en Fourth Street desde la que hacen reparto de alimentos a la comunidad.

Conoció a Alfonso porque hace unas semanas lideró un taller de escritura en The LAVA Center en Greenfield del que es un miembro del consejo de dirección. Alfonso también enseña en el departamento de Latinx Studies en Holyoke Community College. Me encuentro con él en una tarde muy oscura y húmeda delante de un par de cervezas dispuestas a charlar.

Su Biografía

Alfonso Herrera Neal llegó el 1 de diciembre de 2021 a Massachusetts. Llevaba veinte años trabajando con Services Employees International Union (SEIU) organizando sindicatos, y dando apoyo a los trabajadores. Fue el director para la zona del Midwest de la campaña "Fight for 15," que consiguió elevar el salario mínimo de los trabajadores relacionados con los negocios de restaurante y alimentos. Así mismo consiguió nuevos contratos para los trabajadores de los hospitales de la zona.

Nació en Seattle, Washington, en una familia de origen hondureño. Su abuelo materno, llamado también Alfonso era un revolucionario, y del que nuestro entrevistado piensa que ha heredado su fortaleza y sus valores en la vida. En 1954 su abuelo trabajaba para la United Fruit Company durante este tiempo es cuando se produce la huelga nacional en Honduras contra la compañía estadounidense. Su abuelo fue uno de los líderes sindicales. Los trabajadores ganaron esa lucha, no sin sufrir muchas vicisitudes, y después de ello, su abuelo inició los movimientos para establecer el Partido Comunista de Honduras.

Alfonso nació en una familia marcada por la lucha política y por los derechos de los trabajadores. En 1969 su abuelo se jubiló de la compañía platanera, y gracias a la huelga, uno de los derechos que habían conseguido era que la compañía pagaría por los gastos de la educación de los hijos de los trabajadores en Estados Unidos con su visado correspondiente.

Así fue como la madre de Alfonso y sus hermanos, un total de ocho, se mudaron a los Estados Unidos para educarse aquí y llegaron a Brooklyn. Estuvieron allí solos, sin sus padres, al cuidado de su tía Gloria. En Honduras ya habían aprendido inglés y sobre la cultura estadounidense al vivir dentro de la comunidad de United Fruit Company, por lo que esta parte fue menos complicada para ellos. Alfonso me cuenta que para sus



Una familia refugiada de Guatemala esperando durante meses en México su audiencia de asilo con un juez de inmigración de EE. UU. (Ciudad Juárez, México, 2019.)

abuelos lo más importante era poder dar una educación a sus hijos.

A Alfonso le gustaría saber más sobre la figura de su abuelo, Alfonso Neal, pero no hay muchos documentos escritos, solamente lo que su abuela vivió y le contó durante su infancia. Sus abuelos han sido importantísimos en su vida y una influencia para él.

La madre de Alfonso H. Neal llegó a los Estados Unidos con 9 años y no volvió a ver a sus padres hasta los 17 años en que sus padres se mudaron a Estados Unidos. Alfonso Neal, el abuelo, estaba enfermo de cáncer de pulmón y le dijeron que mejor debían mudarse a otro lugar con menos contaminación, así que se mudaron a Texas. Allí, la madre de Alfonso conoció a un salvadoreño, Adolfo Herrera, del que se hizo novia. Los abuelos de Alfonso decidieron emigrar a Seattle, y el padre de Alfonso los siguió.

Y allí nació Alfonso H. Neal en el mismo año en que su abuelo murió. Nunca llegaron a conocerse, pero Al me cuenta una historia bellísima que les quiero contar a ustedes. Me dice que su abuelo, tres semanas antes de morir, fue a dormir y tuvo un sueño. En ese sueño él se vio en un campo muy bonito, lleno de flores de lindos colores y escuchó a un niño decir: "abuelo, abuelo." Y apareció en el sueño un niño con ojos azules y pelo oscuro y una niña con piel más oscura que le decían: "aquí estamos, abuelito." A la mañana siguiente, cuando su hija llegó para darle el almuerzo le dijo: "Vi a tus hijos."

Y desde ese día tomó el tiempo para escribir historias y grabar su voz para sus nietos. Su abuela cuidó de ellos hasta que Alfonso tuvo 14 años ya que su madre tenía que trabajar y estaba sola.

En el año 1998, cuando Alfonso tenía 12 años, su madre se casó de nuevo y se mudaron a Tempe. En Seattle, Al dejó a su familia, sus amigos, sus primos y por ello para él fue difícil adaptarse a Arizona.

A los 15 años terminó sus estudios de bachillerato y fue a estudiar Geografía e Historia en Brooks Institute of Photography en Santa Bárbara California, que desgraciadamente cerró sus puertas debido a la corrupción. Tuvo que regresar a Arizona donde terminó sus estudios en Tempe. Al terminar sus estudios, se hizo maestro es un colegio privado cristiano donde se dirigieron a él para crear un sindicato con lo que supuso su marcha del trabajo.

El sindicato entonces escuchó de él y le ofrecieron un trabajo con ellos. De ahí pasó a

Houston, Texas donde inició su carrera como organizador de sindicatos. En Houston pasó siete años, hasta 2016 y de allí viajó por todo el país organizando campañas en Hawái, Illinois, Wisconsin, New México, Oklahoma, Virginia, Alabama, Georgia, y otros.

Alfonso estaba cansado de viajar tanto, de vivir en hoteles, de no tener amigos, de no tener raíces, de no hacer comunidad. Volvió a St. Louis y se tomó un año sabático para escribir. Un día decidió que quería hacer algo más en su vida, y decidió ejercer como periodista y fotógrafo para el periódico *People's World* y dado su trabajo como editor.

Cubrió la situación en la frontera durante el mandato de Trump lo que le llevó a conducir por tres meses desde Brownsville, Texas hasta Nogales, Arizona dando voz a las personas que se encontraban en los campos de detención a lo largo de la frontera. Le interesa especialmente escribir las historias de esas personas que no aparecen en las noticias, y aquello fue una verdadera crisis humanitaria.

Otra experiencia periodística que le impactó fue la muerte de Michael Brown en Ferguson, un suburbio de St. Louis, en el año 2014. Fue arrestado por la policía por documentar las noches de protestas.

Como periodista Alfonso se enfoca en dar atención a historias humanas que normalmente no aparecen en las primeras páginas de los grandes periódicos, dar voz a las personas que están sufriendo y quizás con ello, poder cambiar el mundo. Durante su etapa como editor viajó a Rusia, Cuba, Sri Lanka, Cuba,

Bruselas, Irlanda del Norte, e Inglaterra.

En 2020 estaba en Iowa cuando empezó la pandemia y cubrió las noticias de los hospitales. En noviembre de 2020 le mandaron a Inglaterra para cubrir el fin de Brexit y el país se cerró por la pandemia y tuvo que quedarse en Londres. El periódico le dice que hay problemas económicos y que tienen que bajar su sueldo por tres meses. Al regresar a los Estados Unidos el periódico le dio la opción de dejar el trabajo a cambio de una cifra, y así lo hizo.

En Franklin County

En aquel momento, Pioneer Valley Workers Center estaba buscando un co-director ejecutivo. Algunas de las personas que formaban parte de la organización habían sido entrenadas por Alfonso anteriormente en otras campañas con los sindicatos. Así que le ofrecieron el trabajo y así llegó al oeste de Massachusetts.

Lo que le encantó desde que llegó a Franklin County es su gente, la calidez de la gente. Nunca se ha sentido solo ya que aquí se ha sentido siempre parte de la comunidad.

Alfonso cree que, aunque él está en una posición de liderazgo, su trabajo como organizador no tiene como fin de mantenerse en el poder, sino para poner al centro obrero en una posición en la que él se pueda marchar y todo continúe igual o mejor. Su visión es transmitir ese poder a las bases, a los trabajadores, para poder mantener la organización.

Alfonso me dice que, si quieres ser un buen organizador de cualquier campaña, tienes que pensar que, si te vas hoy, esa organización se mantendrá o no. Si la respuesta es sí, estás haciendo un buen trabajo. Si la respuesta es no, debes pensar en qué debes cambiar para que los trabajadores tengan el mismo nivel y poder que los políticos. Se trata de ayudar a la gente a saber cómo hacer cambios.

La organización quiere ayudar a todos los trabajadores, no importa su origen, ni raza. Apoyan a cualquier trabajador que tenga una pregunta o un problema y especialmente a trabajadores que quieran formar un sindicato en su propia empresa. Por supuesto, cualquier consulta es gratuita. Al ser una organización independiente se basa en donaciones y becas.

Si quieren obtener más información sobre PVWC, puedes ir a su página web www.pvworkerscenter.org. Y si quieren conocer más sobre el arte de Alfonso Neal, pueden acudir a www.al-neal.com.

¡Vive saludable! ¡Vive mejor!

Por VICTORIA MAILLO DE AGUILERA

GREENFIELD – LifePath es una corporación privada sin fines de lucro que lleva prestando servicios en el condado de Franklin durante más de 45 años. Trabaja con personas mayores y con discapacidad, y sus cuidadores.

LifePath organiza un taller en español llamado "Mi Vida, Mi Salud." Son clases virtuales gratuitas en español los días 3 y el 14 de enero de 9:30 a 12:30 de la tarde. Este taller le ayudará a mejorar su confianza para aprender a cuidar de su enfermedad crónica a través de la conexión entre mente y cu-

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MONTAGUE from page A1

of the concentrated “solids” removed from the wastewater stream to other facilities for disposal. She said a request for proposals had produced three bids, “which is awesome,” and that the low bid came from a company called Synagro, with headquarters in Maryland and a disposal facility in Connecticut.

Little said this would reduce the cost of Montague’s sludge cake, which is currently being transported to Canada, and that she hoped the final contract could be presented to the selectboard for approval at its December 19 meeting.

Town administrator Steve Ellis expressed uncertainty about this timeline, indicating that a special meeting may be needed. Little said she would talk to the town’s current sludge hauler, Casella Waste Systems, about extending its contract into January 2023.

The board, at Little’s request, also approved a contract with the engineering firm Wright-Pierce for design services and bidding support needed for an upgrade to a new pump station located in the airport industrial park.

Town Hall Growth

Ellis reported to the board that the committee charged with hiring a new public health director has reopened the search process, and has set a “soft deadline” of January 9 for applying for the position.

“The most important thing is a long-term outcome where we get a highly qualified person for that position,” he said.

Ellis also noted that since the fee-for-service agreement with Greenfield for part-time administrative support only applied to regular hours, former health director Gina McNeely may be willing to assist the town during “off-hour” emergencies.

For the second time in recent weeks the board reviewed a feasibility study for the expansion of the town hall annex, this time presented by the architectural firm that developed the study. Dan Bonham of Thomas Douglas Architects reviewed the initial proposal, which divides the project into two phases. The second phase includes the construction of a large community room that would hold 80.

The architect’s report estimated the cost of Phase 1 at \$75,000 and Phase 2 at \$840,000, though a narrative stated that these numbers would fund only a “bare bones renovation,” and “I have limited faith in the numbers.”

The report suggested that the next steps would be hiring an owner’s project manager to “facilitate cost estimates and fine tune the scope of work,” and conducting a hazardous materials survey of the site.

Assistant town administrator Walter Ramsey suggested that another next step would be to consider “how we deploy our resources, if any, and scouring potential funding sources.”

Ellis reported that newly hired

town planner Maureen Pollock has indicated a “strong preference” for working at town hall on Fridays, when the building is usually closed. He said this was a “matter of service” to Pollock, and of “balancing the workload for themselves.” He added that the “collaborating departments” were not concerned about the request, and that “we will have close oversight of that, because that is our job.”

The selectboard did not express any concerns about Pollock’s request.

The board awarded the contract for replacing the town hall boilers, which have nearly ceased to function, to Jamrog HVAC and Plumbing, Inc., for a “lump sum” of \$34,850.

License Issues

The board voted to return license fees – including for alcohol, entertainment, and food service – to their level prior to the pandemic, but not increase them. The fees, which executive assistant Wendy Bogusz said had not increased since 2016, apply to the calendar year 2023.

An issue of fees for the “sealer of weights and measure,” a service provided by the state, was put on hold pending better data on a recent cost hike.

Newly hired town planner Maureen Pollock has indicated a “strong preference” for working at town hall on Fridays, when the building is usually closed.

Bogusz told the board that the bar and restaurant Hubie’s Tavern, which has been sold to a bookstore company, recently sold its full liquor license to the Shea Theater Arts Center (STAC). She said that the liquor licenses would be renewed at the next meeting so Kristi Boudin, the lawyer for Hubie’s, and Linda Tardif, the managing director of the STAC, could answer questions from the board.

“No decisions intended,” said Ellis of this “information” item, which did not appear on the agenda.

“That’s troubling news to me,” said selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz, apparently referring to the sale.

Boudin said that the parties had signed a purchase and sale agreement, and that she would be “acting *pro bono* as a sounding board for the Shea... We should be able to have the paperwork ready within a week.”

“We’re clearly very excited about it,” said Matt Lord, apparently about Boudin representing Hubie’s and serving as a consultant to the Shea.

“Hold your enthusiasm,” remarked Boudin.

“We’re happy to make adjustments as needed,” said Tardif.

Kuklewicz suggested that the

board table the renewal of the license next week until it could discuss the license transfer, which it must approve, at a future meeting. Boudin said the town might want to discuss that idea with counsel, because the state deadlines are “carved in stone.”

“We’ll figure it out next week, when we have the renewals and it’s on the agenda,” said Kuklewicz.

Public Events

RiverCulture director Suzanne LoManto “publicly thanked” the Turners Falls Fire Department for transporting Santa to a holiday event last Friday at Spinner Park – “the kids went nuts,” she said – whereupon Ann Fisk of Montague Center requested a permit for another parade involving Santa transported by Montague Center Fire Department.

This parade will begin at 2 p.m. this Saturday, December 17, travel from Montague Center to Lake Pleasant and Millers Falls, down Turnpike Road to Montague City, from there to Unity Park in Turners Falls, and return to Montague Center by 3:30 p.m.

The board approved the itinerary.

The board also approved LoManto’s permit application for the annual May Day celebration, which will take place May 7 on the Montague Center common. LoManto pointed out that while the event, which includes a maypole ceremony and performances by Morris dancers, has a long history, it has only recently been officially permitted on town property.

“I don’t change the event in any way,” said LoManto. “The plan is for it to be the same as it has been for decades.”

Other Business

The board approved a new telephone pole to be located on Fosters Road in Montague Center. The Ever-source representative at the hearing promised an “update” on the status of extra or “redundant” poles – a perennial complaint by the selectboard – at a meeting in January.

Ellis reported on a new initiative from the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI) to encourage “more equitable access to digital technology.” “Think WiFi connections, think devices, and think education and literacy,” he said. “To help close what is sometimes referred to as the digital divide.” He asked for the go-ahead to seek a “planning grant” for a local assessment, and for adding a supplemental chapter to the town’s master plan addressing the issue.

“Budget season is coming up, and you guys are going to be busy,” said Lord. “But if you want more, here it is.” The board voted to allow Ellis and Ramsey to apply for a grant to MBI, “or any other organization for digital equity, if such an opportunity arises.”

The board executed a \$25,450 contract with Helene Karl Architects for design services for roof renovation on the Shea and Colle buildings.

A request for a cell phone stipend for new police officer Christopher Smears was approved.

The board voted to appoint Bogusz as the new IT coordinator, replacing town accountant Carolyn Olsen. It also discussed the town paying for the farmers market coordinator (*see article, Page A1*).

The board then retired into two executive sessions, one to discuss property negotiations and the other to discuss “potential litigation.”

The next selectboard meeting will take place December 19.



**LOOKING BACK:
20 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK**

Here’s the way it was on December 12, 2002: News from the Montague Reporter’s archive.

Montague Pulls the Plug on Holiday Lights This Season

The tradition of holiday lighting in downtown Turners Falls began in the early 1990s with just four trees lit up on the corner of Third Street. By 1997, most of Avenue A was illuminated as well as trees in other villages. But during the fall and winter of 2002, there were no lights.

According to Montague super-

intendent of public works Edward J. Parks-Mleczo Jr., the highway department was too short-handed to commit the crews that season. In the past, the department donated its time to string lights, but three employees had left recently. Those positions had remained unfilled because of budget shortfalls.

“It breaks my heart that we can’t get out there,” Parks-Mleczo said.

“I feel like we live in Grinch Falls,” said Dolly Letourneau, owner of Cup O’ Joe café on Avenue A. “The little cheeriness that the lights bring to the town is important.”

10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Here’s the way it was on December 13, 2012: News from the Montague Reporter’s archive.

Should Gill-Montague Be Set Free?

Massachusetts commissioner of education Mitchell Chester came to Turners Falls last week and spent the afternoon talking to Gill-Montague Regional School District teachers and administrators. The message teachers delivered was that it is time for the district to be set free from the stigma of Level 4 status. While they value the things they’ve learned and the methods they’ve put in place through the Accelerated Improvement Plan (AIP), they would like to be able to implement the multiple new programs at their own pace, with a focus on putting the needs of their students first.

Chester was joined on the panel by Eva Mitchell and Joan Connelly of the state department of elementary and secondary education (DESE), state senator Stanley Rosenberg, state representatives Stephen Kulik and Denise Andrews, and superintendent Mark Prince. Kulik had organized the meeting at the Gill-Montague School District in order to have the concerns of the educators heard.

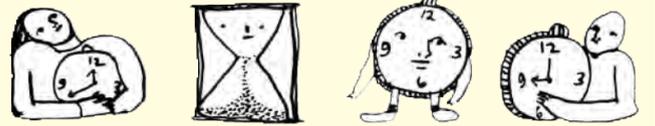
Karl Dziura, president of the Gill-Montague Education Association, said that being labeled Level

4 stigmatizes the district, and that the AIP implementation erodes the goals it sets for student achievement. Teachers would continue the work begun under the AIP, but, he said, they would like to change the pace. He told the commissioner that educators are in danger of not having sufficient time to absorb what they had learned and to implement new practices before they were asked to change focus once again. Teachers who spoke agreed with Dziura, asserting that the systems are useful but need to be rolled out more slowly.

Towns Lose Their Triple-Threat Lawmaker

Steve Kulik, soon to be this town’s ex-representative to the state house in Boston due to redistricting, helped give Wendell and every other small town in the Commonwealth a way to save good money on its health insurance costs. He also recently helped Wendell initiate a coming sea change in the level of technology required to meet state health code in owner-occupied housing.

Native talent and 20 years in the legislature made this modest, engaging man effective and highly respected on Beacon Hill – to the point that in January 2011 he was named co-chair of the powerful House Ways and Means Committee.



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FARMERS from page A1
the verge of disbanding.

Ellis said the town has recently “patched together” a variety of funding sources to cover the cost of managing the market, but would need to consider a number of options – eliminating the town’s support for the market, sourcing out its administration to a vendor, or creating “a programmatic home for the market here in the town.”

Town accountant Carolyn Olsen said she had investigated how other communities administer their farmers markets. They are “all over the place,” she said, with some such as Greenfield only providing space and others administering directly through local departments.

Olsen said she favored making the market a town function. “There’s a lot of support for it, and I don’t think it’s too expensive,” she said. “If you’re trying to make Turners Falls a livable and viable place, a farmers market

is a pretty efficient way of doing that.”

Annie Levine, the current coordinator of the market, said it could probably not be financed by charging fees to vendors. “I view it as a service rather than a business,” she said. “I was brought on thinking it was run by the town, and that is what has made it survive for this long.”

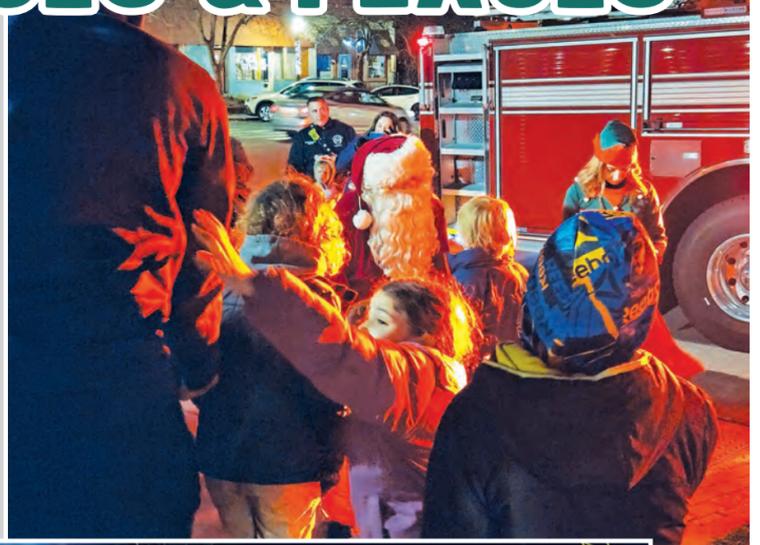
“Agriculture is a difficult business,” said selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz, “and sales [at the market] are low. If we raised the fees to make it self-sustaining, then we would have no vendors. So some funding by the town makes sense.”

Levine estimated that an annual appropriation of \$4,000 would cover the cost of an administrator, but would not be enough for marketing or a potential assistant position.

“I think we should consider a concrete proposal at an upcoming meeting,” said Kuklewicz.



FACES & PLACES



Last Friday was a “Wonderful Night in Turners Falls,” the night Santa Claus stops by to check his famous wish mailbox at Spinner Park. Above: He is mobbed by adoring fans. Below: Kevin Smith, glowing in Santa’s firetruck-light, plays carols on tuba at Moxie.

MONTAGUE COMMUNITY TELEVISION NEWS

A Deep Dive in the Archive

By HANNAH BROOKMAN

TURNERS FALLS – See the friendly faces of the Montague finance committee in their most recent meeting from December 7. And if you like them, you’re going to love the Montague selectboard meeting from December 12.

Want to watch something other than a meeting? Try the search feature on the MCTV Vimeo page to time travel to past events!

There’s the Holiday Spectacular from 2018 – or how about checking out some of the old Coffeehouse performances at the Discovery Center?

Digging deeper, there’s also “Fringe Farming: Goat Birthing” from 2011, or

“Under the Patchwork Quilt: Chapter 1,” a children’s story with the dearly missed Sandy Facto.

All community members are welcome to submit their videos to be aired on Channel 17 and featured on the MCTV Vimeo page. 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. And remember, MCTV is still looking for board members!

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.

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DECEMBER 15, 2022

Above: Things are getting pretty season's-greety over on Maple Street in Greenfield.

Kissers, Jokers, Prickers, and Blooms: The Plants of the Holidays, Explained

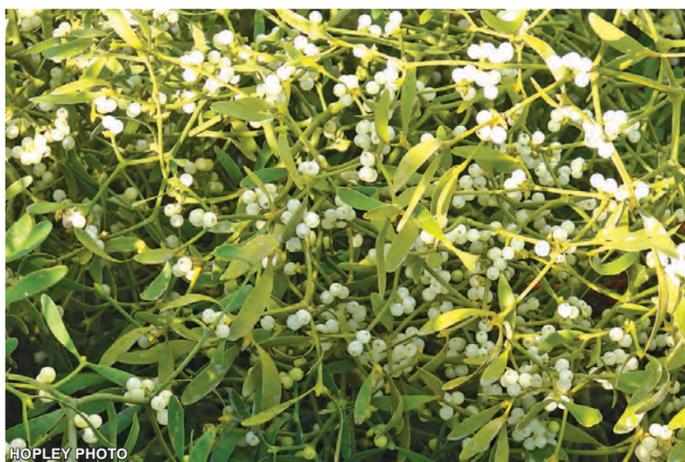
By **CLAIRE HOPLEY**

LEVERETT – Probably you never saw mommy kissing Santa Claus underneath the mistletoe, but you've heard about it – perhaps too many times – in the 1950s song. You may also remember Justin Bieber singing “I should be playing in the snow, but I'm-a be under the mistletoe, whoa yeah” in his 2011 song “Mistletoe.” And you've definitely seen artfully hung sprigs of mistletoe offering kissing opportunities at Christmas parties.

But why kiss under mistletoe? Why not holly? Why not a spray of fir, or a bright poinsettia?

Kissing is the clue. To the ancient Celts, the Druids of what is now Britain, and the classical Greeks, the white berries and paired leaves of mistletoe suggested male fertility. Druids believed that the juice of the berries would make animals fertile. To them, mistletoe seemed magical because it lives without roots in soil. Instead, it's a parasite that forms huge clusters on trees.

The Druids especially valued mistletoe harvested from their sacred oak trees, but in Britain, the motherland of mistletoe lore, the most common source is apple trees. It is traditionally gathered by Roma people who work the apple harvest. They spot prime mistletoe bunches, then gather them in November for the mistletoe auctions that supply



HOPLEY PHOTO

Druids believed that juice of the mistletoe berries would make animals fertile.

all the mistletoe that tempts kissers in the British Isles.

But mistletoe is not the only Christmas plant with ancient lore. Decking halls and houses with boughs of evergreens featured in the Roman winter festival Saturnalia, which was celebrated in December during the darkest days of winter. The symbolism is easy to see. When most trees have lost their leaves and fields are bare, firs and other greenery remind us that all is not dead; plants are growing unseen, and they will return in spring.

Evergreens such as holly that have contrasting berries look especially dramatic. Christians see in their prickly leaves Christ's crown of thorns, and in the red berries,

drops of blood.

Holly is paired with ivy in the carol “The Holly and the Ivy.” They seem to be in a contest, since “of all the trees in the green wood, the holly bears the crown.”

An older carol speaks of “Holly and his merry men, they dance and they sing, Ivy and her maidens they weep and they wring.” The holly decorates the hall, but the ivy is outside, where she is “sore a-cold” – hence, perhaps, her weeping.

Like holly, ivy had Christian significance. Tenaciously clinging to trees and walls in the coldest months, it struck medieval churchmen as an emblem of the soul's life after death, and therefore ideal for decorating

see **PLANTS** page B6

GAME REVIEW

A Satisfying, Futuristic *Stray* Cat Strut



BLUE TWELVE STUDIO IMAGE

The player of Stray helps this orange tabby navigate an underground world.

By **W. KAIZEN**

AMHERST – While canines have long been featured in videogames, from *Duck Hunt* and *PaRappa the Rapper* to the Great Grey Wolf Sif in *Dark Souls*, *Stray* has finally given cat lovers their due. Developed by Blue Twelve Studio, *Stray's* main protagonist is a remarkably lifelike cat who be-

comes lost in a subterranean world inhabited by sentient robots that need its help to avoid mass destruction. There has never been as satisfying a feline character in the history of videogames as the orange tabby in *Stray*. It's well worth playing for this alone.

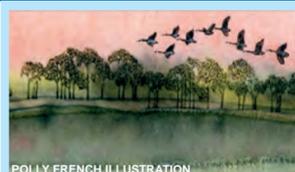
It turns out that a cat makes an ideal videogame protagonist. Cats are nimble, agile, and able to get

into small places, and their small size provides a low-to-ground point of view that gives the game's environments a uniquely monumental feel. Since cats are so much smarter and more independent than dogs (take *that*, all you dog people!), it makes perfect sense that the player-controlled cat would evince human-like intelligence.

The painstakingly designed lead cat was based on the real cats owned by the game's creators. Its back arches and twists in perfectly catlike ways. At the behest of the player its paws can reach out to bat a ball or scratch a carpet or wallpaper. It can curl up in a cozy spot and take a nap, or wind figure-eights around the legs of a friendly robot.

If you're feeling naughty, you can even make the cat trip a robot by walking across its path. Its melodious meow, voiced by a real cat named Lala, features several different vocalizations. None of this behavior, which is available

see **STRAY** page B6



POLLY FRENCH ILLUSTRATION

WEST ALONG THE RIVER A CHRISTMAS WISH FROM THE FLAT

By **DAVID BRULE**

THE FLAT, ERVINGSIDE – As you may recall, over the years I've been telling you about life in this old homestead, now in its one hundred and fiftieth year of harboring this family under its roof. Back when grandfather Abe was moving on in years and the house was going up for sale, wife Monique, son Kevin, and I came back from living in Paris to move here and keep the place in the family.

And over the years, I've written to you about pursuing no small amount of back-yard archaeology, finding old toys, nails, hammer heads, axes, screwdrivers, coins in the wall partitions, and even a seven-thousand-year-old projectile point under a foot of backyard soil.

But in this season, when early winter days like today find snow impending, and this early morning grayness is keeping the sky low, I do spend time upstairs in the cold north bedroom pursuing a sort of indoor archaeology, searching for relics of families past. All manner of stray artifacts and used or broken family heirlooms wind up there. I myself and those who came before me often having no heart to throw old things away.

Every object is treasured, and tells a story, if you care to listen.

Up there are stashed away old almanacs from the 1880s, guides for successfully raising chickens in the early 1900s, 1950s *Field & Stream* magazines, all manner of old shoes, out-of-fashion suits, and jackets that no longer fit, even a porcelain couple, a bride and groom dressed in black tuxedo and white gown that once perched high on a wedding cake for an aunt who grew up in this house and was married 70 years ago. I could never toss away that heirloom.

Given the season, I rummage around to find the old Christmas cards secreted away in a wooden

COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR



A message from 1902, fastidiously squirreled away upstairs until just now.

cigar box by ball-player Uncle Doug, who saved everything. The cards are in impeccable condition. I'm sure that Doug or his mother Lizzie put them away immediately after the holiday of that long-ago Christmas of 1902.

I know by the simple address and the postmark that some friend of great-grandmother Lizzie wrote the card a few days before Christmas, brought it to the Millers Falls post office, wrote a short message in pencil, and handed it to the then postmaster with a one-cent stamp on it.

Brought down from the village to the door here that December in 1902, it was placed on the parlor table with a few others, and then carefully put away to be preserved and forgotten until this December in 2022.

Today, when feeling the melancholy weight of the year and the season – and having the time – I went prospecting for that cigar box. I had opened it years ago on a day like today. That box is full of Christmas cards, Easter cards, postcards, and other mementoes from those days of the 1900s when people actually wrote to each other and sent greetings from only a mile away. (All you had to do was write the intended's name and “town” for an address. The card would arrive.) A few rare others came from far distant vacation locales.

That box also contains the dance card for the Firemen's Ball in 1904, when they retired old Franklin Engine Company No. 2, graduation lists from the Millers Falls grammar school Class of 1910, and so on.

So I've attached here one of those old cards to share with you, in the darkening days of this Solstice, while we wait for the first snowfall of the year.

Then, like the others before me, I'll put that card back in the box see **WEST ALONG** page B3

Pet of the Week



CARMODY COLLAGE

“WYATT”

At a year old, Wyatt is a “teen-age” dog, meaning he’s about as big as he will get, but he’s still got the spunk and habits of a puppy. He did not receive any training in his previous home, so he will need an adopter willing to do normal puppy things but with an older dog.

Wyatt is shy for about two minutes when you meet him, and then is immediately ready for love and friendship. He will bring you his

firehose chew for tug, or enthusiastically pounce tennis balls. Staff immediately fell in love with his cute face and adorable antics.

Interested in adopting? Animals at Dakin are currently available only in Springfield. 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 DECEMBER 19 THROUGH 23

WENDELL

A foot care clinic is held the first Wednesday of each month. Call Katie Nolan at (978) 544-2306 for information or appointments. Senior Health Rides are available. Contact Jonathan von Ranson (978) 544-3758.

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. For more information please call 863-9357.

Monday 12/19

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

Tuesday 12/20

9:30 a.m. Tuesday Knitters
10 a.m. Fruit & Financials
1 p.m. Chair Yoga
3 p.m. Tai Chi

Wednesday 12/21

9 a.m. Veterans’ Agent Hours
10:15 a.m. Aerobics
11 a.m. Chair Aerobics
11:45 a.m. Friends of the Senior Center Meeting
12 p.m. Bring Your Lunch Bingo

1:30 p.m. Mobile Food Pantry

4 p.m. Mat Yoga

Thursday 12/22

1 p.m. Cards & Games
Friday 12/23

10:15 a.m. Aerobics
11 a.m. Chair Aerobics
12 p.m. Pizza Party

ERVING

Erving Senior Center is open 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., Mondays through Fridays. Open for cards, coffee, and snacks daily.

Brown Bag lunch is the first Thursday of each month. Veterans Services the first Wednesday of each month. Erving van services available: Must call 24 hours in advance for a ride to any scheduled appointment. For more information, please call (413) 423-3649.

Monday 12/19

9 a.m. Interval
10:15 a.m. Seated Workout

Tuesday 12/20

9 a.m. Good For U
10 a.m. Line Dancing

Wednesday 12/21

9 a.m. Cardio Low Impact
10:15 a.m. Chair Aerobics
11:30 a.m. Bingo

Thursday 12/22

9 a.m. Core & Balance

10 a.m. Barre Fusion

Friday 12/23

9 a.m. Quilting & Open Sew

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Mark the Winter Solstice At the UMass Amherst Sunwheel

AMHERST – The public is invited to observe sunrise and sunset on the day of the winter solstice among the standing stones of the UMass Amherst Sunwheel on Wednesday, December 21, at 7 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. At the gatherings, UMass Amherst astronomer Stephen Schneider will discuss the astronomical cause of the solstice.

Astronomers mark the start of winter as the moment the sun reaches its southernmost apparent position relative to the stars, which this year occurs at 4:48 p.m. EST on December 21. After that moment, the sun begins moving northward, and the days start getting longer.

On the date of the winter solstice, daylight hours are shortest in the Northern Hemisphere – just nine hours and four and a half minutes in Amherst. On this date, the sun rises and sets at its most southerly spots along the horizon, positions marked by the Sunwheel’s southeasterly and southwesterly



UMASS PHOTO

standing stones.

Visitors who stop in on their own will be able to see the sun rising and setting over the winter solstice stones from roughly December 16 to December 26, because for the week surrounding the *solstice* (which means “stationary sun”), the sun appears to rise at a fixed spot on the southeast horizon and to set in a fixed southwest direction.

Schneider will explain the changing positions of the sun and moon as seen from Earth and how the design

of the Sunwheel helps to track these motions. He will talk about other monuments designed to celebrate the solstice, such as the Temple of Karnak in Egypt, designed more than 4,000 years ago, and answer other astronomical questions, such as why the earliest sunset occurs about two weeks before the solstice and the latest sunrise about two weeks after.

The UMass Amherst Sunwheel is located south of McGuirk Alumni Stadium, just off Rocky Hill Road (Amity Street) about one-quarter mile south of University Drive. Visitors to the Sunwheel should be prepared for freezing temperatures and wet footing. Rain or blizzard conditions cancel the events. Donations are welcome to help with the cost of additional site work and future events.

For more information, visit the UMass Amherst Sunwheel website at www.umass.edu/sunwheel/pages/gatherings.html.

RATIONALES

The ‘Stupa Pole’ of Pumpkin Hollow

By BARRY KUZMESKUS and STEVE THOMAS

CONWAY – We have been asked by a number of people what the structure that we have built in the Pumpkin Hollow hayfield along Conway’s Academy Hill Road is all about, and what its significance is. Below we have attempted to answer these questions:

This structure is an amalgamation of several disparate but overlapping spiritual, social, and aesthetic components. The word *stupa* is of Sanskrit origin, and literally means mound or heap, typically of stones. The Buddhists latched on to this word to describe mounds that were built as places of devotion and communication, including the places where Buddha himself and other prominent religious personalities and their relics were stored.

While it has not yet been scientifically substantiated, some Buddhists believe that if you walk around a stupa in a clockwise direction, bad karma in your life will be attenuated and good karma will be enhanced.

Totem Poles are usually red cedar monuments built by First Nation tribes of the Pacific Northwest to give thanks to their Great Spirit, commemorate ancestry, tribal history, family legends, special beings and important food animals.

So our term “Stupa Pole” is an amalgamation between these two disparate roots. But this is not the only amalgamation embedded in our Stupa Pole.

It is also an amalgamation between two different craftsmen: Barry Kuzmeskus of Native Stone, a very accomplished stone worker who works on a broad range of stone masonry projects, and Steve Thomas of Three Crows Woodworking, who specializes in building timber-framed structures and doing architectural detail carving.

The base of this structure is made from six cubic yards of Ashfield schist, a sedimentary stone that is about 300 million years old. The pole component is made from locally-sourced black locust, a strong and highly rot-resistant wood.

Additionally, our Stupa Pole reflects an amalgam and partnership between the corvid family of birds (like crows and ravens) and humans. Both Native Americans and contemporary people have always deeply appreciated the impressive intelligence of this group of birds. Particularly among Native Americans, the corvids’ role has been as effective messengers (communicators) between humans and their Great Spirits who reside high in the sky.

Accordingly, the sky-pointed crow head and beak of the Stupa Pole woodwork is a very distant analog of the more recent use of steeples on churches, structures that attempt to more effectively transmit the worshiper’s thoughts, prayers and aspirations to their Great Spirit (whoever that may be).

Sooo.... to answer the initial questions, some of the reasons for constructing this Stupa Pole, and our hope for its future relevance include:

- Acknowledging and showing respect for the previously mentioned spiritual, historical, and social traditions of our predecessors;

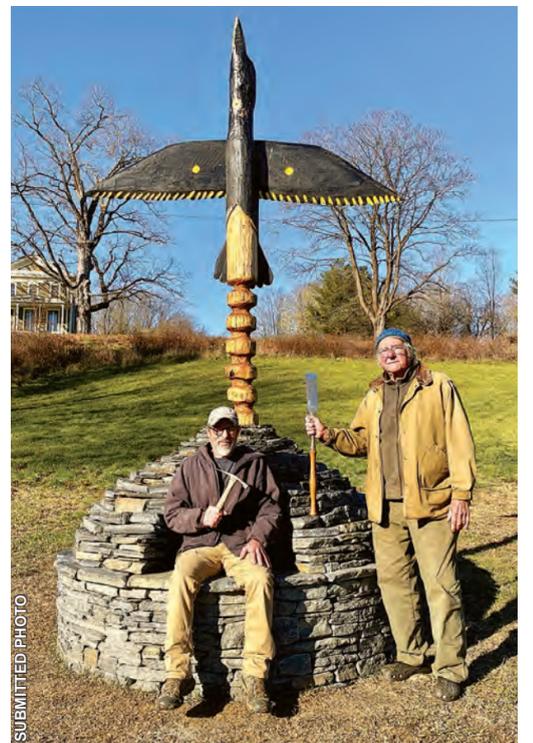
- Encouraging existing, emerging, or aspiring craftspeople to keep moving forward with projects in their areas of specialization, and encouraging clients to support them;

- Providing a place where the general public can, at their own risk, walk down from Academy Hill Road across the hayfield (which Jeanne and Steve own – no vehicles, please) to the Stupa Pole. Feel free to walk around the Stupa Pole (hopefully in the clockwise direction!) and/or sit on the built-in east-facing stone bench to communicate with any deceased partners, family members, or friends, and/or to simply communicate with Nature and/or your Great Spirit (whoever that may be).

And finally, and of quaternary importance relative to the foregoing, we hope that this structure might further enhance Pumpkin Hollow’s existing credentials as one of North America’s few “Centers of the Universe.”

If this Stupa Pole achieves at least some of the above objectives, we will consider this project a success.

Enjoy!



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Barry Kuzmeskus and Steve Thomas explain their construction.

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WEST ALONG from page B1 for some future family archaeologist to find. Someone one day will brush away the dust, and perhaps marvel at the vestige of Christmas days past, when times were so quaint and much simpler. Perhaps some sense of Christmas joy will persist in that future heart.

That person may well think of us back where we are now and will be tempted to actually send off a brief message, wishing all a peaceful and Merry Christmas. Just like I'm doing now in wishing you joy in this season and peace in the New Year.



MOVIE SYNOPSIS

***I Heard the Bells* (2022)**



By **MELISSA WLOSTOSKI**

GREENFIELD – I knew that Henry Wadsworth Longfellow is a famous poet, and I knew of the poem “Paul Revere’s Ride.” But I didn’t know that this man was the one who wrote it – or that he also wrote a Christmas poem called “Christmas Bells,” and that it later got made into a song, which ended up being called “I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day.” I also didn’t know that this man lived in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

I ended up learning these things when I saw the film *I Heard the Bells* at the Garden Cinema in Greenfield.

There is a mysterious first scene in the film, and then we are treated to how Longfellow’s life was three years earlier. He was living an idyllic life with his wife and five children, including his two eldest sons.

They also included, at this time, scenes that showed that the Civil War was going on, and that Longfellow was highly respected by people, his minister being one of them.

The minister wanted Longfellow to write a Christmas poem. That becomes important later – as does a mention of bells, and how they are a kind of signal for the Longfellow family. A portrait of this man shows him as someone who knows he’s highly respected, yet is uncomfortable with the attention of a dinner held to honor him.

Charles, one of his sons, wishes

to enlist in the Union. Then Longfellow finds himself experiencing a life-changing event that affects his family as well. He experiences a crisis of faith, and becomes almost reclusive, and finds himself unable to write poems. He grows a beard.

Charles is having a crisis of faith, too, and he ends up going off without his father’s permission to fight for the Union. Longfellow is able to pull some strings through a friend to keep his son somewhat protected, which does work for a time, and with a little help the poet becomes less reclusive.

But then the story is set for how Longfellow ended up writing that poem in real life. Charles tells his father about how the sounds of bells brought him comfort in midst of a battle, and how his own crisis of faith is resolved. He urges his father to write again.

Longfellow does try to do that. The poem ends up being dark at first, but then he finds his comfort, and the poem turns into one that is hopeful. As he finishes the poem, he hears those bells, just as he did with his family three years earlier. One could call it the light being brought back into his life.

I would like to point out that you might hear the actual song in this movie. I will also point out that the last shot in the movie is definitely of church bells, which given what this film was about, I thought was the perfect last shot to have.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Several Paintball Sprees; Egg-Shaped Device; Sick Cat; Bad Crash With LifeFlight; Purse Snatcher; Smoker

Monday, 12/5

9:56 a.m. Caller from J Street states he had a bike stolen from his living room. Caller states there are cameras in the building. Referred to an officer. 10:38 a.m. 911 open line from K Street; can hear church organs in the background. No voice contact. Officer drove by. Funeral in progress; no signs of emergency.

3:50 p.m. Caller called in stating an alarm went off, but she thinks she canceled it in time. There is no emergency; she and her husband and daughter are wrapping Christmas presents and didn’t realize an employee set the alarm before leaving.

4:18 p.m. Caller from Millers Falls Road states she noticed this morning that her house was hit by a blue egg and there is a hole in the siding of her house. She’d like an officer to come look.

5:17 p.m. Caller from Millers Falls Road states that his house was hit with blue paint balls containing yellow paint.

5:24 p.m. 911 caller states he hit a deer on the northbound side of Federal Street. Minimal damage to car. States deer is still in road. Officer requesting backup. Parties called to pick up deer. They have arrived.

8:27 p.m. Caller states he is watching a young male jiggle the door handles at Sheffield Elementary School; states the party is rounding the building and checking them all. Officer advises night custodian. No credentials being there. Cleared.

Tuesday, 12/6

1:25 p.m. Caller reported that his house on Millers Falls Road was hit with a paintball overnight. No damage. Report taken.

6:25 p.m. Caller from Randall Wood Drive states his security camera showed someone walk up to his door with an “egg-shaped

device” and knock on the door with it. Advised solicitation permits are active.

Wednesday, 12/7

4:52 p.m. Caller from Turnpike Road reports package stolen from porch today. Report taken.

6:04 p.m. Caller requesting a call back regarding surrendering her cat, who needs emergency medical attention. Officer attempted to call back and advise police department will not take the cat; unable to leave a message as her voicemail was not set up.

7:06 p.m. Caller states she hit the curb coming off the canal bridge and has a flat tire; she can’t get a hold of anyone to help her, and is blocking some of the road behind Aubuchon’s. Looking for assistance. Local tow companies all unavailable. Caller states she found a friend who is going to call AAA.

7:42 p.m. A 22-year-old Turners Falls woman was arrested on a straight warrant.

Thursday, 12/8

1:03 a.m. Caller from Fourth Street inquiring about transporting a sick cat to the Deerfield vet. Caller advised message would be passed on to officers; however, the PD would be unable to transport the cat.

1:21 a.m. 911 caller from East Main Street reports that the person a floor above him is making loud noises, stomping and yelling. Officer advises ongoing issue. Upstairs tenant advised of complaint. Quiet upon arrival.

8:23 a.m. Multiple 911 calls reporting a two-car accident on Millers Falls Road; one vehicle is on its side and smoking. FD and AMR responding. Officer requesting a second ambulance. Shelburne Control notified. Officer requesting DPW respond with barricades at Lake Pleasant Road and Lyman Street. Rau’s requested to tow both vehicles. Officer

transporting a cat to Dr. Brown’s office. Operator of one vehicle being transported by LifeFlight to Baystate Springfield. Citation delivered in hand to operator of other vehicle at Baystate Franklin.

5:25 p.m. Caller from Turners Falls Road states that someone keeps pounding on her front and back doors as well as ringing the doorbell, but when she goes to the door, nobody is there. Caller states it has happened a few times over the last half hour. Unfounded.

Friday, 12/9

6:07 a.m. 911 misdial received from a party who was traveling to Montague Center to go hunting.

9:40 a.m. Caller states that a customer fell outside of Kharma Salon; a man helped her up, then stole her purse and ran off. Officers out with male party matching description behind the Cutlery Block. Report taken.

1:06 p.m. Caller states that someone broke into the Third Street laundry overnight. Some damage was done and some items taken. Report taken.

4:40 p.m. Caller states someone is climbing the Montague water tower. Party called in stating he works for the water department; they are having someone take their yearly required photographs of the monitor on top of the tower. Officer advised.

4:50 p.m. 911 caller from Ripley Road states the car in front of her hit a deer. Deer is injured on side of road. No medical attention needed at this time. Report taken. Vehicle able to operate away. Deer no longer on scene.

Saturday, 12/10

9:37 a.m. Walk-in party reporting an overnight theft at her business on Turners Falls Road. Caller has video footage and plate information. Report taken.

10:29 a.m. Caller states that there are 8 to 10 needles on the sidewalk in front of the old storage building on Canal Street that is being turned into a bike shop. Services rendered.

11:29 a.m. Caller states that “Brent” is on Avenue A, asking people for money.

12:52 p.m. Caller from Turnpike Road states that his and a neighbor’s houses were hit by paintball guns overnight. Officer advises that two other houses on Turnpike were also struck by paintballs. Report taken.

3:55 p.m. Caller from Turnpike Road reports that her house was hit by paintballs overnight. Would like it on record as this is an ongoing issue lately with houses in her neighborhood.

4:21 p.m. 911 misdial. Caller states no emergency; her grocery bag hit the 911 button in the elevator.

11:56 p.m. Caller reports she and her boyfriend were driving on Lake Pleasant Road and came across a truck that was smoking a little. Caller states they got out and checked on the vehicle and the individual who was with it. Caller advises that the male party appeared to be walking in a weird manner, as if intoxicated, and stated to them that he “blew up the truck.” Male then got into the truck and took off. Officer advises he checked entire area and was unable to locate the involved vehicle.

Sunday, 12/11

7:23 a.m. Caller from Prospect Street states that someone shot paintballs at his house overnight. Two other residences were also hit. Report taken.

9:24 a.m. Caller from Farnen Avenue reports that her neighbor is throwing furniture. CSO unable to respond due to another call; they will call back when available. Report taken.

10:13 a.m. Caller from Millers Falls Road would like it logged that his house was hit by paintballs sometime over the last few days.

3:36 p.m. 911 caller reporting a two-car accident at the Route 47/63 intersection. No known injuries. Airbag deployment. Officers advised. Caller states another two cars were just involved in the accident, totaling four cars now. Injuries unknown. Shelburne Control contacted for medical; DPW contacted to treat road conditions. Sander in area. Officer advises two-car accident; other two cars stopped to offer help. Rau’s requested for both vehicles. Citation issued to one party for failure to stop.

6:06 p.m. Caller from Fourth Street advises he believes someone broke into his car and stole his title, insurance papers, and phone charger. Advised of options.

10:57 p.m. Caller states that someone just pulled into the Judd Wire parking lot with their truck on fire. Caller states everyone is out of vehicle and they are hitting it with fire extinguishers. Call given to Shelburne Control; officers advised.

11:27 p.m. Caller states that the roads in the center of Millers Falls are not plowed and therefore he can’t get up the hill to his house. States this happens every time it snows. Caller states he did slide into a guardrail, but doesn’t need anything; just wants it on record.

EXHIBITS

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Junior Duck Stamps.* See the top Massachusetts youth entries for the 2022 Junior Duck Stamp competition. Through December.

Artspace Gallery, Greenfield: *A Figure Drawing Exhibition,* work from the figure drawing group at Artspace. Through December 29.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: *Healing the Heart.* Community art exhibit curated by K. Kemah Wilson. Through December. Also, a Holiday Art Salon on Saturdays in December, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Looky Here, Greenfield: *Another Person, Another Place,* gouache works by Danielle Chenette. Through December. Gala and art auction fundraiser this Saturday, December 17 at the Pushkin.

Geissler Gallery, Stoneleigh-Burnham School: *Visual Cycles:empty, full,absence, presence,* installation by Olivia Bernard and Karen Dolmanisth. Through December.

Goose Divine Energy, Greenfield: *Donna Estabrooks,* paintings. Through January 15.

Fiddleheads Gallery, Northfield: *Season of Light.* Member artists’ holiday shop. Through January 15.

Salmon Falls Gallery, Shelburne Falls: *Josh Simpson: 50 Years of Glass,* retrospective exhibit by the local glass artist. Through December.

Shelburne Arts Coop Gallery, Shelburne Falls: *Season of Wonder.* Members’ show. Through January.

Gallery A3, Amherst: *Small Wonders.* Group show. Through December.

Anchor House, Northampton: *It’s a Kitschy World.* Valerie Flex Gilbert creates three rooms full of brilliantly colorful assemblage making humorous visual stories. Through December.

A.P.E. Gallery, Northampton: *Flat File Pop-up,* December 15 through 18. Drawings, prints, and other works on paper in an informal display.

Brattleboro Museum & Art Center: *The New Herbarium,* fungus and plant images by Madge Evers; *We Feel Our Way Through When We Don’t Know,* group show; *The Space Between Memory and Expectation,* large-format photographic installations by Renate Aller; *Moons and Internment Stones,* rock and moon paintings by Alison Morit-sugu; and *(de)composed,* sculpture by Judith Klausner. All through February 12. www.brattleboromuseum.org.

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MONTV / MUSIK / MOUNTAIN

Byron Coley / Ted Lee,
As Seen in Your
Wildest Dreams
(Feeding Tube Records, 2022)



MYSTRA REVIEWS #9

Review by JOSH B. & TROY C.

TURNERS FALLS – So, this week we are reviewing a brand new release. Not only is it on the Feeding Tube label, but... it's by the two guys who run the Feeding Tube label! It was a bit of a surprise to see it listed, but since they both are pretty prolific with music writing/making, I guess it shouldn't be.

Ted Lee has been in bands like Zebu, Donkey No No, and Curse Purse, and Byron Coley is known for being half of the flame behind the music magazine *Forced Exposure*. He still writes for *Wire*, and he has books out, too – like a Chuck Norris bio even!

On this record, Byron reads short pieces about music and musicians, with accompaniment by Ted.

JB: Troy, have you listened to this yet?

TC: Yes, Josh – now listening to the one about Alex Chilton, “with the insanity of ‘Baron of Love, Pt. 2’”... I’m glad an audio document exists of this, because reading it is a different experience.

This is cool! Now he’s onto Beefheart: “The old fart was smart!” Byron’s poetry is great to hear. I’m glad an audio document exists of this, because reading it is a different experience.

JB: It is a good document. Did you listen to the Dylan one (“What I Think When People Ask What’s Your Favorite Dylan Song”)? I’m not sure of my favorite Dylan song...

Byron used to be more angry or something. I think he’s more positive now... or maybe that side shows more. And he talks about Dylan and Alex Chilton and stuff more now. I think that’s cool, but he’s still way pro-punk, too.

TC: This has a more positive tone in each of the poems.

JB: He’s kind of deeper in his old groove.

TC: Yeah. Definitely pro-punk. The picks – each poem, and the history.

JB: I don’t know if I would listen to reviews on an LP, but if I did, this would be the one.

TC: Heather just heard this and knew it right away. She said “that’s Byron and Ted?”

JB: Yeah, this is kind of what I pictured would be on this one. But it’s good... Byron reading, Ted playing cymbals and stuff...

TC: I will buy this LP. It’s good, Josh. It reminds me of a history growing up, too, and friends. I think a lot of great magic and perspective is here in this LP document that can not be experienced unless one hears Byron live, but these selections are remarkable in how they weave a collective history.

I’m on “Mick Farren Last Left the Building” now... he brings in Ginsberg in this one. Wow, “now give the anarchist a cigarette!” This LP is a must.

JB: Back in the day, Byron had Mick Farren play at the Yod space. Mick did a reading. That was cool.

TC: That’s wonderful – that would have been magical to see.

“Owed T’Burns 2” is really launched. “Marsalis, Marsalis & Crouch... Sounds like a law firm!” This is where Byron and Ted start cookin’ after a while. Parts remind me of Ouija board John Cage, or Kenneth Patchen.

JB: Oh, wild. It makes me want to relisten to a lot of these now. Meredith Monk, the Germs, etc... some great LPs. I actually recently finally got into *Soft Boys*, too. Though I never disliked them – it’s just that other folks would play them.

TC: Back to the Dylan one... This is really great, and perfect placement. Ted flows in and out as it gets moving.

JB: On the Dylan track? Yeah, that one stands out. And it’s true... good songs used to be covered in cool ways, back in the day. Now it’s less about the songs. Dylan influenced everyone back then, I think.

TC: Yes, everyone. I can’t pick a fave Dylan song either. That’s a vast cosmos.

JB: I haven’t heard Dylan’s Xmas LP this year – I guess he got some shit for that.

TC: Speaking of Xmas – I’ve not heard Dylan’s Xmas record, either – this has an Xmas vibe to it, and I’m not sure if it was intended.

JB: Yeah, I guess it could be an Xmas present for the right person.

TC: I think it would make a good gift!

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Reduce Trash This Holiday Season

What to recycle, creatively reuse, and compost

By AMY DONOVAN

GREENFIELD – During the holiday season, according to the EPA, the average American family disposes of 25% more trash than they usually do. Think about your household: could some of this trash be reduced, reused, recycled or composted?

When families reduce their holiday trash, they can save money on “Pay As You Throw” town trash stickers or bags, reduce carbon and methane emissions, and protect our environment.

Recycling: Yes vs. No

These items are on the “yes” list for household recycling: wrapping paper, gift bags, tissue paper, and paper greeting cards and envelopes that do *not* contain metallic inks, glitter, or foil, such as foil-lined. Tape and labels are okay. Remove batteries from singing greeting cards before recycling the cards.

Other recyclable paper items include catalogs, calendars, paper shopping bags, corrugated cardboard, and paperboard. (Here’s a tip: when opening or wrapping gifts, keep a paper bag handy to collect paper recyclables.)

These items are on the “no” list for household recycling: ribbons, bows, tinsel, glossy photo cards, holiday light strings, Christmas tree netting, bubble wrap, paper envelopes lined with bubble wrap, packing peanuts, Styrofoam in any form, plastic shipping envelopes, and the formed plastic used to package toys, electronics, etc.

Holiday light strings, power cords, and Christmas

tree netting are not acceptable in municipal recycling programs, because these “tangles” get wrapped around the sorting equipment at recycling facilities.

Recyclables from Franklin County towns are processed at the Springfield Materials Recycling Facility (MRF). For recycling guides, including a colorful yes/no holiday recycling guide, visit springfieldmrf.org and click on “What’s Recyclable.”

More Advanced Recycling

Holiday light strings and power cords are accepted for recycling at scrap metal dealers and in the scrap metal dumpsters at town transfer stations. In addition, mail-in programs are available at holidayleds.com and christmas-light-source.com.

“Pack and ship” stores, such as UPS in Greenfield, accept clean, dry packing materials such as bubble wrap, packing peanuts, and inflatable “air pillow” packaging.

Plastic bag recycling programs at grocery and retail stores accept bubble wrap, plastic shipping envelopes (no paper), inflatable “air pillow” packaging, and other bags or films marked #2 or #4. A list of acceptable items is at plasticfilmrecycling.org.

Certain batteries – rechargeable, button, and lithium – are accepted for special recycling at transfer stations. Place them in a bag or container and hand it to an attendant.

When the holidays are over, check with your town about Christmas tree recycling. Your tree may be recycled as mulch this spring.

Compost

Another way to reduce holiday trash is to compost food and paper waste generated from holiday meals. Food scraps might seem small, but they add up. According to Mass-DEP’s 2019 Waste Characterization Study, 28% of the residential trash in Massachusetts is compostable material such as food and paper waste.

Municipal compost programs accept all types of food waste including meat, bones, and cheese, plus paper waste such as napkins and paper towels. Unacceptable items include liquids, foil, metal, glass, and plastic.

These transfer stations have compost programs: Bernardston, Charlemont, Conway, Deerfield, Greenfield, Leverett, Montague, New Salem, Northfield, Orange, Shelburne, Warwick, Wendell, and Whately. These programs accept compostable material free of charge, though an access permit or entrance fee may be required. Greenfield’s is open to non-residents for a \$5 host fee.

The Solid Waste District sells discounted “Earth Machine” home compost bins and compost pails to District residents. Pricing is \$25 or \$55 depending on the resident’s town. It is not recommended to put meat, bones, or dairy in home bins. For details and pricing, contact the District or see franklincountywaste-district.org/Composting.

For more information, contact the Franklin County Solid Waste Management District at (413) 772-2438 or info@franklincountywaste-district.org, or visit franklincountywaste-district.org. (MA Relay for the hearing impaired: 711 or 1(800)439-2370, TTY/TDD.)



Hanukkah gift wrap made with potato stamps – a great craft activity to do with kids.

Creative Reuse

In addition to recycling, consider wrapping your gifts in reused materials you already have at home. Gifts can be creatively wrapped in reused wrapping paper, old calendar pages, sheet music, maps or map book pages, paper bags, old posters, wall-paper scraps, fabric, scarves, newspaper, comics, kids’ artwork – or the *Montague Reporter* special wrapping paper edition!

Gifts can be wrapped in cloth bags, reusable decorative tins, reusable shopping bags, or baskets. Or make the wrapping part of the gift: for example, a kitchen towel or oven mitt to hold kitchen utensils or gadgets, or a book wrapped in a scarf.

Wrapped gifts can be tied up with twine and adorned with pine or holly branches, pinecones, shells or buttons. Last year’s holiday cards can

be cut up to reuse as gift cards.

For a fun activity with kids, this online tutorial from Tori Avey shows how to make beautiful Hanukkah gift wrap with homemade potato stamps: toriavey.com/homemade-hanukkah-wrapping-paper/.

Grab some reused paper bags, a couple of potatoes, and some acrylic paint or stamp pads. Cut the bag along the side and bottom to make one big sheet. Cut the potatoes in half and have adults carve shapes into the flat potato surfaces – or use cookie cutters to press shapes into half-inch potato slices. When you are all done, you can cut off the painted parts of the potato and compost the rest!

One of the most important steps for reusing materials is unwrapping gifts carefully and saving gift wrap, gift boxes, ribbons, bows, and gift bags for reuse next year.

Amy Donovan is a program director at the FCSWM.

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

The Reporter is looking for volunteers to help us curate this listing. Interested? Contact us at editor@montaguereporter.org

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 15

10 Forward, Greenfield: *New Erotics, Olivia Nied, Rockin Puppies*. \$. 7:30 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Vimana*. Free. 8 p.m.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 16

Gateway City Arts, Holyoke: *The Friday Experiment* feat. *Abdul Sherzai, Craig Chin/Irman Peck duo, Craig Douglas, Bonnie Kane*. \$. 7:30 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Rave in Sagittarius* feat. *LUCY, Blix, DJs Mike and Bux Wild*. \$. 8 p.m.

Hutghi's At The Nook, Westfield: *Chained to the Bottom of the Ocean, Come to Grief, Edict*. \$. 8 p.m.

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *The Mary Jane Jones*. \$. 8:30 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *The Scrooges, Motorhawk, Power Trousers*. \$. 9 p.m.

The O's Music Bar, Sunderland: *Lush Honey*. No cover. 9 p.m.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 17

Four Star Farms, Northfield: *Rosie Porter Trio*. Free. 6 p.m.

Deja Brew Pub, Wendell: *The Can Collectors*. Free. 7 p.m.

Pushkin Gallery, Greenfield: *Looky Here Gala* featuring *Blue Dish, Omeed Goodarzi, Stella Kola*. \$. 7 p.m.

Pioneer Valley Brewery: *The Boom Box Band*. Free. 7 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *John Hodgman and Monte Belmonte's Holiday Spectacular* feat. *Jean Grae, Jonathan Coulton, Heather Maloney, High Tea*. \$. 8 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Dark Temptations* feat. *Dialog Talk, DJs Hedone, Lucie R., Aoife*. \$. 8 p.m.

Academy of Music, Northampton: *Suzanne Vega*. \$. 8 p.m.

Divine Theater, Holyoke: *Lou Barlow, Jeffrey Lewis*. \$. 8 p.m.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Vapors of Morphine, Muddy Ruckus*. \$. 8 p.m.

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *Jess Royer, Lexi Weege & JJ Slater Big Band*. \$. 8 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Olivia Nied*. Free. 9:30 p.m.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Sunset Mission, Cheap City, Back in '86, When The Deadbolt Breaks*. \$. 7:30 p.m.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 19

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *The Sweetback Sisters Country Christmas Singalong Spectacular*. \$. 7 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Open mic night*. Free. 8:30 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 21

Academy of Music, Northampton: *The Sweetback Sisters Country Christmas Singalong Spectacular*. \$. 7 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Wes Brown*. Free. 8 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Felly*. \$. 8:30 p.m.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 22

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *Khalif Neville, 6 p.m., Mav-*

rodaphne, Organ Transplant. \$. 8:30 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Les Taiauts, The Honky Tonk Angels*. Cajun dancehall, two-step, country karaoke with a live band. No cover. 8 p.m.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 23

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Bev Ketch & J. Burkett, Jeff Gallagher Unfortunately, Michael Slyne*. Free. 9:30 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Jeopardy, Bent, Slob Drop, Ugly Sweater Band*. \$. 8:30 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 28

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Masala Jazz*. Free. 8 p.m.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 30

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *Fat*. \$. 7:30 p.m.

The Drake, Amherst: *LuxDeluxe, Ruby Lou*. \$. 8 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Bag Lady, Always Manic, Power Trousers*. \$. 9 p.m.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Bella's Bartok, Consider the Source*. \$. 9 p.m.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 31

First Night Northampton (18 venues): *Soul Magnets, Pan-geans, The Fawns, Father Hotep, Vimana, ReBelle, Mal Devisa, Carinae, Northamptones, Cheap City, The Nields, LUCY, Sandy Bailey, The Greys, Lonesome Brothers, Happy Valley Guitar Orchestra, Hoonah, Ray Mason, Banish Misfortune, The Leafies You Gave Me, Lush Honey, Pamela Means, The Suitcase Junket*, and dozens more. \$. Starts at 12 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Jimmy Just Quit, AfterGlo, The B-52.0s*. \$. 7:30 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: *DJs Witch.Wav, Maysee Morpho, nitu, Sillysounds*. \$. 8 p.m.

Race Street Live, Holyoke: *Max Creek*. \$. 8 p.m.

Shutesbury Athletic Club: *Electric Carnival*. \$. 8:30 p.m.

Deja Brew Pub, Wendell: *The Shadow Twisters*. \$. 8:30 p.m.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Bella's Bartok, The DiTrani Brothers*. \$. 9 p.m.



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PLANTS from page B1

churches at Christmas when they celebrated the child that brought them eternal life.

No religious significance hangs about the bays and rosemary that bedeck the boar's head that is being paraded in the Boar's Head carol. This is all about Christmas feasting. Given the jolliness of this song, it's no surprise to find that it is a joke.

Because rosemary signifies remembrance, scholars wore rosemary sprigs to stimulate their brains, while circlets of bay leaves honored poets. But medieval Christmases had a tradition of turning power and pomp upside-down: this carol comes from Queen's College in Oxford, where the lowly boar's head wearing symbols of prestige cuts the assembled scholars down to size.

Today's largest and favorite Christmas plant is the Christmas tree. It is a time-hallowed way of decking the halls in the densely forested Baltic countries, from where it spread through Germany. Almost all the American towns that claim to have had the first Christmas tree cite a German source.

Windsor Locks, Connecticut is one of such towns. There, a Hessian soldier put up a Christmas tree in 1777 while imprisoned at the Noden-Reed House.

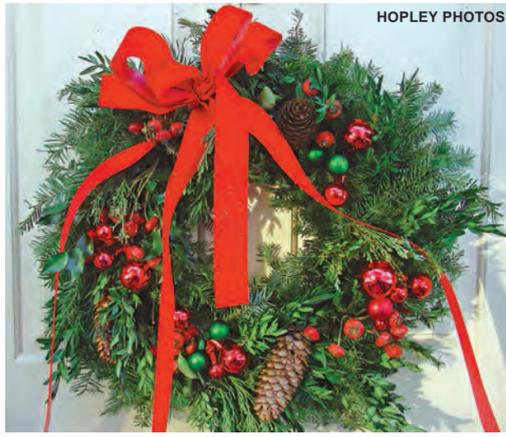
Lights on the tree, originally candles, now fairy-lights, witness the hope of light returning, and all the baubles, trinkets, and cookies suggest a tree blooming with gifts.

Of course, in the northern tradition real blooms were rarely possible, with the exception of hellebore, a perennial often called the Christmas Rose because it blooms at Christmas. A legend suggests it has this habit because it sprouted in the snow from the tears of a young girl who had no gift to bring the baby Jesus in Bethlehem.

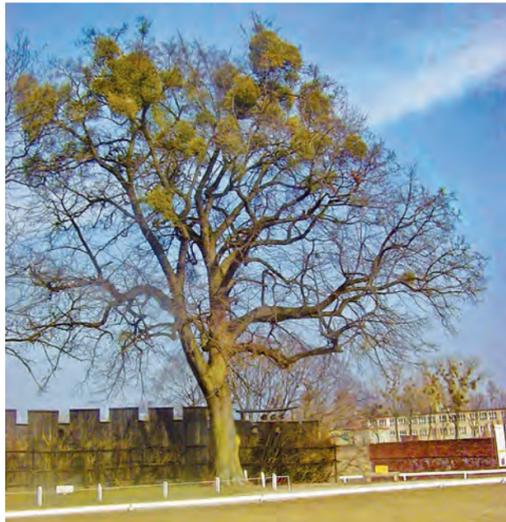
Virtually the same legend is used in Mexico. In the 16th century – significantly, around the time that Europeans got there – a little girl too poor to bring a gift to the Virgin at Christmas was told by an angel to gather wild flowers and put them on the altar. From her wilting weeds, gorgeous scarlet flowers spread their



Holly and bay laurel offer interesting greenery and berries for decorative uses.



HOPLEY PHOTOS



Above: A typical holiday wreath using holly and evergreens. Below: Mistletoe is a parasitic plant that grows on trees.

petals. They were the star-shaped poinsettia, which blooms in winter and became the Christmas plant of Mexico and the Caribbean.

Living in the north, we get our poinsettias from the south or from greenhouses where they can get the warmth they need.

Like poinsettias, white chrysanthemums have star-shaped flowers that look beautiful in arrangements of evergreens. Now familiar year-round, chrysanthemums are natives of Asia, where they are revered for decorating churches at Christmas.

But whatever plant we choose – the old-timey holly wreath or mistletoe sprig, the swags of fir or bay, the pale hellebore or vivid poinsettia – all the plants of Christmas bring brightness to the season, and remind us that spring will eventually arrive.



STRAY from page B1

throughout the game, is in service of advancing the plot. All is for the pleasure of virtually inhabiting such a well-simulated cat.

During playtesting, the designers made the smart decision not to make this a traditional platformer. The player moves the cat through the game's 3D world by nudging it, via third-person point of view, in whatever direction they want it to go. When a jump is necessary, the cat will look expectantly toward an area it can jump to, tightening its body in an archetypically feline, spring-like way. It can't fall or die. If the player pushes the cat in a direction it can't jump, it will ignore their commands, just like in real life.

In the opening scene the cat falls down a series of ramshackle pipes into a city tucked deep underground, where it meets a floating, baseball-sized robot named B-12 who becomes its ever-present companion. B-12 provides translation services and helps guide the player through quests. It also has a magic scanning beam that allows the cat to carry items by digitally reconstituting them.

You set off to help B-12 recover its lost memories, which promise to reveal the fate of humanity and why the city was built underground.

You and B-12 quickly emerge into a densely packed metropolis inhabited by scores of humanoid robots called "companions." Their heads look like old Macintosh computers with screens displaying emojis that capture their varied personalities.

The companions are charming, but the star of the show is the environment itself. Modeled on Hong Kong's Kowloon Walled City – the most densely inhabited place on earth before it was torn down in the 1990s – the companions' home is a tightly-packed network of buildings connected by alleyways, pipes, boards, and other detritus. Dirt abounds, and the walls are fly-

papered and covered with graffiti. Its dense verticality is perfectly suited to navigating as a cat.

Stray's lighting effects are of particular note. The interior of a single building can have multiple light sources that are as fully realized as the cat itself. In one dive bar alone, the lighting changes dramatically as you move, from the warm orange incandescence of the bottom floor through a stairway's sickly yellow fluorescence on your way up to a pool room lit by a variety of neon signs. The streets are a riot of artificial colors.

Stray doesn't offer much challenge from a gameplay perspective. It's mostly fetch quests tied to light platforming, with a few moments of tension spent running from "zurks," a destructive bacteriophage that eats companions – and cats – for lunch. Because the controls for avoiding them are poorly honed, the most tedious parts of the game are spent running from zurks. I had to restart these sequences numerous times.

Along with helping B-12, saving the companions quickly becomes the game's focus. To do so you move from the lowest level of the city, climbing ever higher, which dizzily emphasizes the city's height. By the time I reached the top, I was well satisfied with both exploring the game's world and the thoughtful twists and turns of its story.

Along with *Elden Ring* and *Vampire Survivors*, both of which I've previously reviewed for the *Reporter*, *Stray* is one of the best video-games I've played this year. Unlike these other games, which respectively took 103 hours and 61 hours plus to play, *Stray* only took me about seven hours to complete.

At the scale of a good Netflix series and with comparable writing, it's a definite game-of-the-year contender. It's certainly the best sci-fi game wrapped in a kitty simulator I've ever played. Or, better: the best kitty simulator wrapped in a sci-fi game.



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