

The Montague Reporter

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THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

FEBRUARY 8, 2024

ERVING SELECTBOARD

Lot Survey For Senior Housing to Move Ahead

By KATIE NOLAN

Monday night, Erving town administrator Bryan Smith presented the selectboard with a proposed layout for senior housing at Care Drive, and asked them to approve \$10,000 for surveying the two parcels involved.

Smith said the town’s senior housing committee and developer Rural Development, Inc. (RDI), an affiliate of the Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority, had been meeting over the last month and considering revisions to the plan based on comments from the fire, police, highway, and water departments.

He said RDI plans to use approximately four acres of town land for the project. In a memo, he wrote the four acres is “less land than the Town originally offered for this project and preserves more land for the Town to retain.”

Selectboard chair Jacob Smith questioned the extent of a wooded buffer proposed between the eastern

see **ERVING** page A5

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Paving Grant Cements Town Obligation to Keep Airport

By JEFF SINGLETON

Large grants to fund infrastructure upgrades dominated a short Montague selectboard meeting on Monday. These included a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) grant to reconstruct pavement at the airport industrial park, a grant agreement with the state Office of Economic Development for “buffer line improvements” in the sewer system in order to reduce overflow into the Connecticut River, and a grant application to the state to measure the vulnerability of the Clean Water Facility (CWF) and sewer system to extreme floods.

Airport manager Bryan Camden introduced the request for the town’s 5% share (\$152,315) of the repaving project, which totals just over \$3 million. Most the pavement in the area of the airport purchased recently from the Pioneer Aviation company, he said, which includes industrial loading docks, a fuel apron, a tie-down area, a taxiway, and two parking lots, was installed more than 20 years ago and is in “poor to failed condition.”

Camden said the airport had received a grant from the FAA covering 90% of the expense, with an

see **MONTAGUE** page A6

FOGGY OUTLOOK



JOSHUA BURKETT PHOTO

The Turners Falls-Gill Bridge shrouded in morning mist. (The sun eventually did come out this week after a long dark spell.)

Shakespeare, Mural Calls At Shea

By REPORTER STAFF

TURNERS FALLS – It is shaping up to be quite a year for the Shea Theater. In addition to the series of nationally-known musical acts quietly popping up on its calendar – the Cowboy Junkies, Sarah Jarosz, Rickie Lee Jones – the town-owned theater is preparing to host a world-class Shakespeare festival next month, and to be adorned by September with a 3,000-square-foot mural of yet undetermined design.

“The mural will function as a gateway, with the goal of instantly branding the village as a creative community,” Riverculture, Mon-

tague’s arts arm, announced this week as it called for muralists and aspiring muralists to apply at www.shorturl.at/citN5 for the gig.

Applications are due by March 10. One artist, selected by a town-appointed steering group, will work with pro mural managers Common Wealth Murals to gather public input about the project, draw up a design, and execute it. Supplies, room and board, and a \$15,000 fee will be provided.

For those who would prefer to express themselves on the theater’s stage rather than its imposing brick exterior, the Montague Shakespeare Festival is coming up fast, and its or-



The Shea’s northeast wall (above) is the public mural’s target surface.

ganizers have issued a call for “creative talents across the spectrum – actors, musicians, and artisans.”

see **SHEA** page A2

High School Sports Week: Last Chances

By MATT ROBINSON

TURNERS FALLS – The high school swimming postseason splashed off this week with the Fast Chance Meet, held Saturday. Only athletes with exemplary times qualified for this meet, and only the best of the best will compete in the next round, the Western Mass sectionals. Five student athletes from the Turners Falls co-op swim team did just that, breaking their personal bests in the Fast Chance and extending their seasons by at least a week.

The Franklin Tech girls’ basketball team has already qualified for three playoff tournaments. With the regular season winding down, the only question is, where will they be seeded in each playoff bracket? The Franklin Tech boys will not qualify for the postseason, but they hope to snag at least one victory before the season slips away.

see **SPORTS** page A4

G-M Schools Aim to Balance Budget With Cuts, Not Taxes

By JEFF SINGLETON

GILL-MONTAGUE – Representatives of the finance committees and selectboards of Gill and Montague met Wednesday with school district officials to discuss the district’s preliminary budget for FY’25. After a lengthy presentation about the large budget gap created by lower Chapter 70 state education aid and a discussion of how it had come about, the rather overwhelmed attendees became aware of a striking bottom line: the district has plans to eliminate the gap by itself, and is not asking member towns to help plug it.

Business manager Joanne Blier presented an analysis of the budget, its funding sources, and what had caused the roughly \$509,000 shortfall. Many questions and opinions were raised about the state aid formula and the long-term viability of the measures taken to close the gap – which are expected to include staffing cuts – but the towns were not requested to contribute any money beyond the already-established “affordable assessments.”

Those figures – based on 48.5% of Montague’s projected tax revenues, and a much smaller amount from

see **SCHOOLS** page A5

HUD Responds Over Missed Social-Service Grant Deadline

By SARAH ROBERTSON

GREENFIELD – Minutes before the deadline to submit a grant application to the federal government for homelessness and housing aid programs, employees at Community Action Pioneer Valley (CAPV) knew they would not be able to upload the materials in time.

“Staff had been actively working on trying to submit all of the pieces of the application right up until 8:00 p.m.,” said Janna Tetreault, interim program manager of the Three County Continuum of Care (CoC). “We knew immediately that we had not been able to upload all of the documents in time and reached out to HUD right before 8:00 p.m. about a particular error we were experiencing with one document that was giving us trouble.”

The Three County CoC is a network of 15 housing and homelessness assistance programs, service providers, advocates, development agencies, and others led by CAPV, which coordinates services and funding among the member organizations. Last year the Three County CoC received \$3,081,304 from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) through this homelessness assistance grant.

This year, as the *Montague Reporter* reported last week, Franklin, Hampshire and Berkshire counties will receive none of the \$124 million being distributed in Massachusetts through that program.

see **DEADLINE** page A2



DAVID HOTT PHOTO

Franklin Tech senior Kyra Goodell drives the baseline past a Putnam Vocational defender on Senior Night. The Eagles soared, 58-37, over the visiting team.

Slow News, High Fever, Short Paper, Moving On Already

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The Montague Reporter

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Founded by
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August 2002

This Time Last Time...

“Against the safety of a Republican party in cosmic disarray, Bernie Sanders, who describes himself as a democratic socialist, is exceeding all expectations in his primary challenge against the candidate favored by the Democratic party establishment.

“The *Reporter* does not intend to endorse any presidential candidate, either during the primary and general elections. But part of the value of a campaign like Sanders’ is to broaden and improve the terrain of political discussion, and we are grateful for the opportunity.

“The Clinton camp will naturally do everything in its power to frame Sanders’ landslide victory in the New Hampshire primary as his inevitable high water mark.

“This puts into broad circulation political talking points about that state’s Democratic voters’ status as demographic outliers unnaturally susceptible to his campaign....”

(February 11, 2016)

“[T]he field of Democratic support is growing more polarized, and more contentious, as the options slowly winnow down. Should Sanders emerge from this month’s contests a frontrunner, he will face a new challenge beginning March 3 in the form of Michael Bloomberg... the planet’s ninth-richest human, a billionaire whose ballooning wealth is tied directly to the functioning of financial markets themselves....

“This week the president’s approval rating hit an all-time high of 49%, which calls into question the idea that even a failed impeachment will alienate voters and isolate his supporters in Congress.

“Anything can happen in the next nine months: he could cruise into a second term by a landslide, or the opposition could coalesce around a single candidate and build a movement capable of transforming the country in a new and exciting way....”

(February 6, 2020)

CORRECTIONS

Whenever it is brought to our attention that we have published falsehoods, misrepresentations, errors, or lies, we’re obliged to correct them and clarify on this page.

In last week’s issue we biffed a couple of dates.

Our Montague City walkabout on Page A1, *Rod Shop Zone Coming Quietly to Life*, garnered some positive feedback, but we’ve regretfully realized the article says our previous report on the neighborhood had been “in 2023.”

This was wrong and we’re not sure how it got that way, as we were reading those pieces (*From Gems to Energy Storage? Residents of Montague City Confront the Village’s Future* and *More to*

Every Story: Owners Respond to Blighted Neighborhood Portrayal) during production, and we knew they ran on November 4 and 11, 2021. Sorry!

And then, in the runover of our Gill-Montague school committee coverage on Page A5, we told our readers that the group would reconvene on “Tuesday, January 13, over Zoom.”

This was meant to be *February* 13, and although we might assume any truly interested parties could quickly have untangled the truth, here we are pedantically self-correcting once again, on principle, as if we take pleasure in it, as if the endless exercise alone will one day yield a higher truth.

SHEA from page A1

A Zoom meeting this Saturday, February 10 at 11 a.m., accessible at www.tinyurl.com/MontaShaFes, is the main jumping-in point, promised to be “not an audition but an invitation to join a creative community dedicated to reimagining Shakespeare for contemporary audiences.”

The company that so convenes will launch a Festival from March 18 to April 7 with workshops, lessons, a teachers’ retreat, six or so stagings of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and a “fresh project in-

spired by” *Romeo & Juliet*.

Royal Shakespeare Company voice practitioner Nia Lynn will lend her expertise and oversight to the operation, “shar[ing] her unique method of creating immersive Shakespearean experiences” with any locals ready to submit.

“Every skill, every hand, and every creative mind counts in bringing Shakespeare to life,” the Festival emphasizes on its website, www.montagueshakespearefestival.com, at which there also are more details.

NINA ROSSI ILLUSTRATION



Annaliese Bischoff holds turkey feathers over a velvet collecting tray inside her *Artful Ice Shanty*, an homage to Wilson “Snowflake” Bentley, a photomicrographic pioneer from Vermont who was the first to study and photograph snowflakes in the late 1800s. Find out more about the *Artful Ice Shanty* project in Brattleboro in this week’s Local Briefs.

Letters to the Editors

Loved Our Retelling Of '42 Championship

What a delight to read Richard Andersen’s article about the 1942 Mass. State Champions. Not only must it have been such an honor at that time for this small town group of wonderful athletes to be recognized statewide, but Andersen’s brilliant piece of writing describing the historic times and the impact it had on everyone was masterful.

My father, who is no longer with us, was a member of the Turners Falls Athletic Club when he returned from overseas, and I remember many of the names who were part of that special team. I actually read the article out loud (really loud!) so he could hear it!

Thanks again, Mr. Andersen, for the Turners story that I heard growing up and your wonderful depiction of that time.

Why?

Why won’t Donald Trump pack his overnight bag (forever bag) and go to Russia or Saudi Arabia?

Sharon Raskevitz Leverett

Marcia Beaubien Schuhle Greenfield

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Fire District Election!

TURNERS FALLS – The Turners Falls Fire District’s Annual District Election is Tuesday, April 23, 2024 from noon to 7 pm at the district office, located at 226 Millers Falls Road, Turners Falls.

Residents can take out papers for the office of:

1. *Prudential Committee member*. One seat is available for a three-year term.

2. *Water Commissioner*. One seat is available for a three-year term.

3. *District Moderator*, for a two-year unfulfilled term – no one was elected last year.

4. *District Treasurer*, for a two-year term.

All potential candidates must obtain 32 signatures from registered voters that live within the Turners Falls Fire District. Papers can be picked up at the district office, Mondays through Fridays between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. The last day to obtain nomination papers is Monday, March 4 and the last day to return papers for certification is Wednesday, March 6. Residents may obtain papers from the district office at 226 Millers Falls Road. For more information, you can call (413) 863-4521.

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Compiled by NINA ROSSI

In celebration of Black History Month, Greenfield Savings Bank in Turners Falls has an **Underground Railroad display** created by Louise Minks, a local artist. The display will be up for the entire month along with a short historical information sheet.

Diemand Farm is offering Tasting Saturdays in February and March at their farm store. Try the chicken buffalo dip, barbeque pulled turkey, jambalaya, or chicken gnocchi soup from 11a.m. to 1 p.m. at 126 Mormon Hollow Road in Wendell.

The Carnegie, Millers Falls, and Montague Center libraries invite patrons to write a **Library Love (or Break Up) Letter** during February: “Think of an experience, service,

collection, or tool you use at the library. Imagine it’s a person. Spend ten minutes writing a love letter, or a breakup letter, to that ‘person.’”

You can hand in your letter to the circulation desk or email it to librarydirector@montague-ma.gov. Some letters may be selected for posting on the Montague public libraries’ social media, so if you don’t want to share yours publicly, make a note at the end of the letter.

This Friday, February 9 at 6 p.m., Looky Here in Greenfield continues their **art commune film series** with the 2002 documentary *The Cockettes*. “The Cockettes were an avant garde, psychedelic hippie theater group founded by Hibiscus (George Edgerly Harris III) in the fall of 1969,” reads the description. “The troupe was formed out of a group of

hippie artists, men and women, who were living in Kaliflower, one of the many communes in Haight-Ashbury, a neighborhood of San Francisco, California...”

Seats are limited, so presale tickets at lookyheregreenfield.com are encouraged.

Help pack books to send to incarcerated folks at the next **Great Falls Books Through Bars** volunteer day, this Saturday, February 10. The book packing happens from 1 to 5 p.m. at 104 Fourth Street in Turners Falls. If it’s your first time, try to come at the beginning for orientation. Due to the current high rate of COVID, masks are required. Send questions to gfbbooksthroughbars@riseup.net.

What was farming in our region like 50 years ago? Find out this Sunday, February 11, at 2 p.m. at a screening of the **documentary Root, Hog, or Die** at the Discovery Center in Turners Falls. The film was produced by Rawn Fulton and Newbold Noyes, and Fulton will be there for a discussion afterwards. The event is free, and the snow date is February 18.

The Brick House is hosting Community Action’s **Fuel Assistance Program** from 9 a.m. to noon next Monday and Tuesday, February 12 and 13, to provide information and sign people up who either have never received fuel assistance, or have not received it in the past three years. No appointment is necessary – just drop in on either of those mornings.

The Brick House is located at 24 Third Street in Turners Falls. For more information, contact Stacey Langknecht at slangknecht@brickhousecommunity.org or (413) 800-2496.

LifePath is sponsoring a **screening of The Great Disconnect** next Wednesday, February 14, at 3 p.m. in the dining commons at Greenfield Community College. The documentary invites viewers to reflect on relationships, and asks, “Is it possible to overcome our modern culture of disconnectedness and rediscover how truly essential we are to one another?”

There’ll be a discussion after the screening, which is free and open to the public. Seating is limited, so register at tinyurl.com/gccdisconnect.

On the third Friday of each month, teens are invited to the 13,000-square-foot makerspace at the Orange Launchspace, 131 West Main Street in Orange. The **“Teen Open Hack”** introduces a new shop or media with which to explore making things. The events are free and open to youngsters ages 13 through 17. Register to attend at tinyurl.com/orangehack. The next one will be held Friday, February 16.

Sweeten Up! A Maple Syrup Adventure awaits children from six to ten years old at the Discovery Center in Turners Falls on Saturday morning, February 17 at 10:30 a.m. Little ones can learn about the transformation of tree sap into syrup through crafts and activities in the Great Hall.

Artful Ice Shanties are back at the Retreat Farm in Brattleboro from Saturday, February 17 to Sunday, February 25. The outdoor exhibit features fantastical re-imaginings of ice fishing shacks by local artists,

including one designed by Annaliese Bischoff of Leverett (featured in my illustration on the opposite page).

Awards will be given out on February 24 at 3 p.m. followed by an all-ages outdoor dance party on the grounds at 45 Farmhouse Square.

On Saturday, February 17 at 4:30 p.m., **No Assault & Batteries** and the Friends of the Wendell Meetinghouse will convene a community dinner and reception at the Wendell Meetinghouse featuring educational speakers, the *Wendell Post* front covers exhibit, and music by The Leftovers and John Sheldon. The event is free and open to the public, though attendees are asked to RSVP at tinyurl.com/nobatteries2024.

An opening reception, featuring finger foods, wine, beer, and chromatic harmonica courtesy of The Leftovers’ Doug Tanner, will be followed by a community dinner, then a “nature tribute musical meditation” with famed guitarist Sheldon, and finally “a series of short speakers” giving speeches of unspecified length about the large battery storage project proposed in town.

These speakers include Ashfield water commissioner Delta Carney, offering a first-hand account of an industrial-scale lithium battery fire, and Wendellites Dan Leahy and Anna Gyorgy. Court Dorsey will sing a song concerning trees. Donations to cover costs will be suggested and requested. For more details, contact courtdorsey@gmail.com.

Ever experienced the magic of the **Winter Hoopla in Shelburne Falls**? Walk a trail through brightly lit, locally created installations made with recycled and natural materials at the Shelburne Falls Trolley Museum on February 17, from 6 to 8 p.m. thanks to the Arts Garden of Shelburne Falls.

Dress for the weather, and warm yourself around a bonfire at the end of the candlelit path.

Support **Lifepath’s Meals on Wheels program** by attending a fundraising concert at Northfield Mount Hermon School in Gill on Sunday, February 18, at 3 p.m. NMH student ensembles will play a selection of music, starting with the concert band and orchestra and ending with the jazz ensemble after intermission. The concert is free and open to the all ages, with donations going to LifePath. This is the 20th year of the benefit concert.

The Franklin County Community Meals Program (FCCMP) is holding its **2024 Annual Bonus Bag Brigade** on Sunday, February 25 from 4 to 6 p.m. at the Greenfield Second Congregational Church.

Families are invited to contribute bags of ready-to-eat, non-perishable supplemental meals, which will be distributed to patrons at FCCMP’s meal sites. Donors are encouraged to decorate the bags, and to prepare at least ten to drop off. If you’re short on time but still want to help with this mission, you may donate online at FCCMP.org/donate.

FCCMP distributes 3,500 bags each year in addition to hosting four free community meal sites, two food pantries, and a mobile food bank. If you’re interested in volunteering, contact Meghan Williams at volunteer@fccmp.org.

Send your local briefs to editor@montaguereporter.org.

PUBLIC INPUT REQUESTED:
CULTURAL DISTRICT SURVEY

The Turners Falls Cultural District received \$15,000 from the Mass Cultural Council to support events, public art, performances and other incentives to increase business & enhance quality of life.



SCAN ME

What do YOU want to see and do this summer in Turners Falls?

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AT LARGE

Representing Syrup: How Sweet It Is

By CHIP AINSWORTH

NORTHFIELD – Milt Severance was trudging through the woods off Manning Hill Road last week, clearing tree damage and prepping for the sweet transition from winter to spring. Tapping the first maple is a momentous occasion, and this year he'll have more than chipmunks and squirrels watching him move from tree to tree.

In December, Severance was notified he'll be doing something akin to driving the Indy 500 pace car, or flipping the coin at the Super Bowl. The Massachusetts Maple Producers Association has chosen his sugarhouse on Pierson Road as the site for its ceremonial tree-tapping on March 1 to kick off the state's maple sugaring season.

Severance's Maple Products is owned by Milt and Robin Severance. It began in 1976 when a buddy showed up and said, "Let's go out and tap some trees."

They hung two dozen metal buckets and listened for the *thump-thump-thump* of dripping sap, then scrounged for wood and boiled it over an open fire. "We just kept expanding," said Severance, who's also helped by his brother Steve. This year they'll use four and a half cord of wood to boil thousands of gallons of sap inside their classic New England sugarhouse.

Tapping will begin on February 12, and the season will run through the end of March. "Edgar Gould said the best run was from March 20 to 30, but I don't know if that's still true with climate change," said Severance, referring to the late operator of Gould's Sugarhouse on the Mohawk Trail.

MMPA president Keith Bardwell and state rep Susannah Whipps will kick off the 10 a.m. ceremony by reading Governor Maura Healy's proclamation declaring March to be "Maple Month." According to the MMPA there are over 300 sugar producers across the state, including two others in Northfield, Quinn's SugarHouse and Round Mountain Sugarhouse owned and operated by Peter and Kellie Sibley.

"We'll tap that one down by the road for the ceremony," said Severance, pointing to a tree at the bottom of the yard that was only a sapling the day his buddy came knocking.

Unpaid Sewer Bills

The Northfield Sewer Commission met on February 1 and voted to raise the annual sewer rate by 29% – from \$905 to \$1,276 – effective July 1. The commission plans to bill quarterly, meaning ratepayers will receive a \$319 sewer bill every three months beginning in August.

The sewer system is financed by 285 ratepayers, many of whom



AINS WORTH PHOTO

Milt Severance's sugar operation has been chosen to represent the start of maple sugar season in the Commonwealth.

are under economic hardship. Fifty-three ratepayers were late on last August's bill of \$392.70 per unit, forcing collector Michele Turner to send them each a "Demand Bill" for the balance due, plus fees and interest. As of January 1, more than half of those outstanding balances remained unpaid.

Further research revealed that the last six billings had a high of 60 unpaid balances and a low of 41, meaning the sewer commission will be constantly dealing with a deficit.

This most recent 18.6% delinquency rate begs the question of

how ratepayers will deal with a \$1,276 bill when they can't or won't pay a \$392.70 bill – not to mention the second half of this fiscal year's bill for \$452.57, which will be mailed in March.

"I can't argue with you," said sewer commissioner Karen Boudreau. "There's nothing more that I can do. This is an economic crisis disguised as an infrastructure problem."

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

SPORTS from page A1

As for the Turners boys, they beat Franklin Tech this week, and they hope to go out on a winning note against Mount Greylock up in Williamstown. Meanwhile, the Tech co-op wrestlers grappled with Spartans and Bears.

Swimming

Nine swimmers from Turners Falls – Liam and Tristan Bliss, Sylvie DiBartolomeo, Ainslee Flynn, Alice and Ava Fortin, Avery Heathwaite, Madi Liimatainen, and Sophia McComb – had qualified for the Fast Chance Meet held on February 3 at Minnechaug High School.

The next round in the postseason is the sectionals, which are scheduled for this Sunday, February 11 at Springfield College. The qualifying times for the sectionals are more stringent, but five Turners athletes beat those times in the Fast Chance Meet: the 200-yard freestyle relay quartet of Heathwaite, Flynn, McComb, and Liimatainen, finishing in 1:55.28, and Liam Bliss, finishing the 50-yard freestyle in 24.39.

The 200-yard medley relay team (McComb, Heathwaite, Liimatainen, and Tristan Bliss) had already qualified for the sectionals, as had Liimatainen as a solo swimmer, in the 50-yard freestyle.

Girls' Basketball

FCTS 52 – Ware 30

FCTS 58 – Putnam 37

Last Thursday, February 1, the Eagles went down to Ware and decimated the Indians 52-30. The first quarter set the pace as Tech outscored Ware 14-4. The game went along pretty evenly and after three quarters, Franklin was still only up by nine. In the fourth, Franklin shut

out the Indians 13-zip to take the game going away, 52-30.

Hannah Gilbert was the top scorer for Tech with 23 points. She sank 63% of her foul shots, and 57% from three-point land.

Lea Chapman scored 11 points and grabbed 14 rebounds, and Kyra Goodell scored nine points, followed by Haleigh Benoit (4), Jenna Petrowicz and Brayleigh Burgh (2

each), and Cordelia Guerin (1).

On Monday the ladies celebrated Senior Night against the visiting Putnam Blue Beavers of Springfield. The JV made quick work of the junior Beavers, routing them 47-13.

In the varsity dustup, halfway through the first period, Tech turned a close game into another rout. With the game knotted at



DAVID HOITT PHOTO

Turners Falls' Jackson Cogswell (center) drives into the paint against Franklin Tech defenders Nolyn Stafford (left) and Cam Candelaria (right). The Eagles hosted the Thunder for Tuesday's crosstown contest.

7, the Eagles made a steal, and Putnam committed a foul. They were charged with a book-technical to hand Tech a 12-7 lead at the first buzzer. In the second, Tech went on a run and led 23-7 before the Beavers could blink. Putnam regained their footing, and by the half had narrowed the margin to 26-14.

Tech stretched out the lead in the third, but a Putnam 3-pointer at the buzzer made the score 42-31 going into the final period. With the game within reach for the visitors, the Lady Birds went on another run, and soon led 51-32 with five minutes to play. They finished strong, and pushed the margin to 58-32. That's when both teams emptied their benches.

Chapman led the Eagles in this game with 25 points, followed by Gilbert (17), Goodell (7), Trinity Doane (3), and Guerin, Petrowicz and Benoit (2 each).

Boys' Basketball

FCTS 51 – TFHS 36 (JV)

TFHS 55 – FCTS 35

Pioneer Christian 52 – FCTS 34

Turners and Franklin Tech traded wins on Tuesday in a JV-varsity doubleheader held at Tech. The Tech Juniors came into the opener riding a two-game winning streak, and the Thunder trying to get back in the win column. Franklin took control early and held the lead throughout the contest, finishing with a 15-point victory.

In the evening's main event, the Blue-shirted varsity Thunder came out like gangbusters, driving the score up to 13-2 before Tech scored their second bucket. Blue stretched their lead in the second quarter, and at halftime had increased the margin to 34-12. They would maintain the advantage and won the game

going away, 55-35.

The beat went on for the Eagles on Wednesday, as they traveled to Springfield to challenge Pioneer Christian Academy. Tech led after a full quarter, but nosedived in the second to go into the second half trailing 30-18. They held their own in the third, giving 10 points to get 10 points, but they were doubled up in the last period, 12-6 to go down 52-34.

As always, it was a team effort for Tech, as eight different players lit up the scoreboard: Jack Gancarz (9), Robert Belval and Gabe Mota (6 each), Tyler Lafountain, Nolyn Stafford, and Caleb Johnsen (3 each), and Cam Candelaria and Josiah Little (2 each).

The Eagles host Lee this Friday, and take on the Pioneer Chinese Immersion School next Tuesday. Turners travels up the Trail this Thursday the 15th to take on the Mount Greylock Mounties.

Wrestling

East Longmeadow 46 – FCTS 29

FCTS 37 – Athol 37

Last Wednesday, the Wrestling Eagles won three matches against the East Longmeadow Spartans down in West Springfield. Maxon Brunette (126 lb.), Connor Herzig (138 lb.), and Jackson Morey (165 lb.) accounted for Tech's three wins, with Jacob Martin (157 lb.) adding two points for the team.

This Wednesday, the Athol Red Bears came to visit. Neither team could put the other away, and after the final match, it ended in a 37-37 tie. (Individual results were not available at press time.)

This Saturday morning, the Eagles travel down to South Deerfield to wrestle with the Hawks.



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ERVING from page A1

section of the new senior housing and the library’s grounds, as it was much larger than the buffer between the western section and the senior center’s parking area.

Selectboard member Scott Bas-tarache said that at a recent public meeting, RDI said it might need to charge if there were additional changes to the plan.

The board decided to approve paying Edward C. Muszynski \$10,000 to survey the project lay-out, but asked Bryan Smith to tell him to wait to begin until after RDI

answers the buffer question.

Bulky Waste

The board approved a flyer for the town’s “Almost Anything Goes” bulky waste pickup. Casella Waste Management will start picking up residential waste, such as furniture, scrap metal, scrap wood, and small appliances, on May 6.

The board also approved an offer from the Franklin County Solid Waste Management District to hold a “Clean Sweep” solid waste pickup in Erving in May and October. For a fee, Clean Sweep accepts waste

tires, large appliances, and elec-tronics, none of which are accepted during Almost Anything Goes.

Personnel

The board approved a new per-sonnel policies and procedures manual after finalizing the overtime and family leave policies. After dis-cussing several ways to compute overtime hours for work weeks that include holidays, the board decided that hours worked on holidays would be paid at time and a half, but that holiday hours would not count as “worked hours” for the purpose of determining overtime pay.

Jacob Smith revised the family and medical leave section to im-prove its clarity.

The board approved police chief Robert Holst’s proposed raises for non-union police department em-ployees – the animal control officer, the cadet, and part-time officers. Board members said the raises were consistent with the FY’24 raises re-ceived by other town employees.

The board created a town planner screening committee to help search for a new planner to replace Mariah Kurtz, who is leaving the position in March. The committee will consist of one selectboard member, town administrator Bryan Smith, one de-partment head, and two citizens at large. Applications for committee membership are due by February 16.

The board appointed Kelly Loynd to the histori-cal commission.

MONTAGUE COMMUNITY TELEVISION NEWS

Picking Favorites

By HANNAH BROOKMAN

TURNERS FALLS – Tune into MCTV to learn all about the local governance that’s happening every single week. We have new meetings available from the Montague se-lectboard, the Gill selectboard, and the Montague finance committee. Try them all and see which is your favorite! Let us know by emailing infomontaguetv@gmail.com.

And never forget, dear resi-dents and readers, that all com-munity members are welcome and encouraged to submit their videos to be aired on Channel 9 and fea-tured on the MCTV Vimeo page. If you have any ideas for films,

MCTV is always available to as-sist in local video production as well. Cameras, tripods, and light-ing equipment are available for checkout, and filming and editing assistance can be provided.

And if you’re looking for more ways to get involved, consider joining the MCTV Board. If you would like to stop in for a meeting, even just to check the vibe, email infomontaguetv@gmail.com for a link to the Zoom.

Contact us at (413) 863-9200 or infomontaguetv@gmail.com, follow us on Facebook, or find us on Instagram [@montaguecommu-nitytv](https://www.instagram.com/montaguecommu-nitytv). Find videos and more on our website, montaguetv.org.

SCHOOLS from page A1

Gill based on its fraction of student enrollment – amount-ed to a 2.8% increase in Montague over the current year (\$334,251), and a 4.7% increase in Gill (\$79,972). The schools’ working budget is showing 0.7% growth.

The coming weeks could bring new revenue and spending assumptions, as well as new Chapter 70 es-timates from the state legislature. Montague’s finance committee plans to make a final decision next week as to how much to collect in taxation, and the school district must finalize the budget in mid-March.

Blier’s slideshow on Wednesday began with a dis-cussion of the district’s “strategic objectives,” long-term goals, and programming. These ranged from social and emotional growth for students, anti-bias training for staff, a math recovery program at the elementary level, more advanced placement courses for college-bound stu-dents, and “innovative career pathways” in manufactur-ing, healthcare, and environmental sciences.

She then dove into a detailed explanation of the caus-es of state aid coming in roughly \$702,755 lower than predicted. The state’s count of Montague’s “foundation enrollment” – all students living in the town who do not attend Franklin County Technical School (FCTS), one factor in the aid formula – was 12 fewer than expected.

However, Blier put nearly all the blame for the lower aid on a second factor: the minimum “required contribution” from member towns, which the state calculates for each town based on property values and income, and then divides among the districts in which the town is a member.

A drop from 93 to 74 Montague students attending FCTS, Blier explained, meant that although the town’s overall “required contribution” rose by 4.5% overall, FCTS’s share shrank while Gill-Montague’s rose by 7.7%. Though Montague and Gill offer “affordable” as-sessments far in excess of these levels, the figures are subtracted in the state aid calculation.

Blier next discussed the district’s plans to make up the \$702,755. Increasing estimates of interest income, state rural aid money, and a drawdown from the school choice revolving fund reduced the gap to \$509,131. A chart on “expenditure reconciliation” called for “supply/services reductions,” less in tuition to charter schools, school choice, and out-of-district special ed fees, and “benefit adjustments.”

Problem solved for now, though no one at Wednes-day’s meeting seemed to take note, being immersed in the complexities of the Chapter 70 formula.

Tupper Brown of the Gill finance committee pointed to the state cap on the minimum contribution, which en-sures that wealthy towns get some state aid but effective-ly raises the contribution for others, as a major culprit.

The *Reporter* asked if increases in property values and wealth in the district were causing an increase in the local contribution.

“It’s not that Montague’s wealth was different than other city or town’s wealth.” Blier said. “It’s that the demographics of students going to tech school, and the demographics of students going to Gill-Montague, changed.”

(*Ed. note:* Analysis of the data provided suggests that exactly \$187,000 of the shortfall may be attributed to the shift in the respective districts’ shares of Mon-tague’s students, while another \$192,525 stems from both towns’ total required contributions growing by 4.5% rather than by the predicted 2%.)

Several attendees wondered where they could learn more about the Chapter 70 formula. Former Montague finance committee member Michael Naughton recom-mended a “white paper” on the Department of Element-ary and Secondary Education website, as well as a slideshow provided by the Massachusetts Association of School Committees.

Montague selectboard member Matt Lord asked whether the district’s FY’25 budget, financed to the ex-tent that it was by drawing down from reserves and re-volving funds, would be “sustainable” in the longer term.

“You do expect, in another year, Chapter 70 is go-ing to go up,” Blier said. “If our enrollment can stay flat and our Chapter 70 can go up, then we can start backing down on some of those other funds.”

No votes were taken at the meeting, as no changes in the original town assessments were requested.

A Greenfield resident, Jesus Leyva, attended the meeting to discuss a bill in the state legislature to raise the state’s contribution to the statewide foundation budget from 41% to 46% over the course of five years, which would reduce the local contributions required of municipalities, and thus increase Chapter 70.

This strategy for reforming education funding seemed to be supported by Naughton, who calculated that the measure would increase state aid to Gill-Mon-tague by \$697,000, if implemented in a single year, and to FCTS of \$462,000.

The proposal produced some skepticism at the meet-ing, particularly since it seemed to be targeted to help a limited number of localities. Montague town admin-istrator Steve Ellis said it was an idea worth consider-ing to get the legislature’s attention, but warned that “if we’re not sure we’re advocating for the right thing, we might get the wrong thing.”

Naughton was more supportive, but argued that there were many other flaws in the Chapter 70 for-mula, and that, in his opinion, the local contri-bution to education “should be zero.”

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NOTICE OF FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT and NOTICE OF INTENT TO REQUEST RELEASE OF FUNDS

TOWN OF MONTAGUE, MA

REQUEST FOR RELEASE OF FUNDS

On or about Feb 28, 2024 the Town of Montague will submit a request to Dept of Housing and Urban Development for the release of \$975,000 in Community Project Funding Program funds under Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023, (P.L. 117-328), to undertake the Avenue A Streetscape Improvement Project for physical improvements between 3rd and 1st Street in downtown Turners Falls. Work involves new planters, sidewalks, lighting, and other amenities.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The Town of Montague has determined that the project will have no significant impact on the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) is not required. Additional project information is contained in the Environmental Review Record (ERR) on file at www.montague-ma.gov.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Any individual, group, or agency may submit email comments on the ERR to WalterR@montague-ma.gov. All comments received by February 27, 2024 will be considered by the Town of Montague prior to authorizing submission of a request for release of funds. Comments should specify which Notice they are addressing.

ENVIRONMENTAL CERTIFICATION

The Town of Montague certifies to HUD that Walter Ramsey in his capacity as Environmental Officer consents to accept the jurisdiction of the Federal Courts if an action is brought to enforce responsibilities in relation to the environmental review process and that these responsibilities have been satisfied. HUD’s approval of the certification satisfies its responsibilities under NEPA and related laws and authorities and allows the Town of Montague to use Program funds.

OBJECTIONS TO RELEASE OF FUNDS

HUD will accept objections to its release of funds and the Town of Montague’s certification for a period of fifteen days following the anticipated submission date or its actual receipt of the request (whichever is later) only if they are on one of the following bases: (a) the certification was not executed by the Certifying Officer of the Town of Montague; (b) the Town of Montague has omitted a step or failed to make a decision or finding required by HUD regulations at 24 CFR part 58; (c) the grant recipient or other participants in the development process have committed funds, incurred costs or undertaken activities not authorized by 24 CFR Part 58 before approval of a release of funds by HUD or (d) another Federal agency acting pursuant to 40 CFR Part 1504 has submitted a written finding that the project is unsatisfactory from the standpoint of environmental quality. Objections must be prepared and submitted in accordance with the required procedures (24 CFR Part 58, Sec. 58.76) and shall be emailed to HUD at cpdrrofbos@hud.gov. Potential objectors should contact HUD/State to verify the actual last day of the objection period.

Walter Ramsey,
Montague Environmental Certifying Officer

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MONTAGUE from page A1

additional 5% provided by the state. The project would be divided into three phases. The first would be for what he called “historical, tribal coordination,” as at least one site on the airport property has been identified as having significance for Indigenous people. The second phase would be the design and bidding of the project, and the third would be construction.

Camden projected that construction could take place in the summer of 2027.

“Airplanes don’t like loose gravel,” said selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz, who supported the placement of the match request on the March 14 special town meeting warrant.

Town administrator Steve Ellis analyzed how the request would be funded in the context of the airport’s budget gap of over \$170,000, caused by the loss of expected revenue from a solar array, which is not being built this year due to the high cost of an electrical interconnection required by Eversource.

Ellis said that if the board wished to recommend that the pavement project be funded from the town’s capital stabilization fund, it would require reconsideration of one of the options for addressing the FY’24 revenue gap, which also drew on that fund. He showed figures, developed with the assistance of town accountant Carolyn Olsen, indicating that this gap could be covered by the increased use of free cash and receipts from the sale of real estate.

Ellis also noted that the state and federal funders’ “grant assurances” require the town to keep the airport open for the duration of the grant, or return the funding.

“We have historically signed numerous grant agreements,” he said. “They do obligate the town to maintain an airport budget in a safe and compliant manner, [and]

every time we sign one of these agreements, it does add to the sum the town will be obligated [to pay] were we to make a radical decision to defund the airport.”

The board unanimously voted to put the town’s share of the grant on the March special town meeting warrant, and to endorse the grant assurance with the state Department of Transportation. The assurance with the FAA had been endorsed at a previous meeting.

High-Flow Events

Assistant town administrator Walter Ramsey asked the board to sign a \$500,000 grant agreement with the state Executive Office of Economic Development for improvements in the Avenue A “buffer line” that reduces sewer overflow into the Connecticut River.

The buffer line, which extends beneath Avenue A from Food City to Bob’s Auto Body, is an “underground reservoir that holds water [and waste] during high flow events,” in Ramsey’s words, releasing it slowly to the main line that feeds into the Clean Water Facility in Montague City. The project would increase the holding capacity of that holding pipe by upgrading two weirs that empty overflows into the Connecticut River behind Food City and near the CWF.

“I guess we’ll see, as time goes on, exactly what it is,” said Kuklewicz when asked for clarification about the project. Ramsey said construction is slated to begin this September and could take several months.

The board agreed to sign the grant agreement, and then authorized a work order with the engineering firm Wright-Pierce, which assisted with the grant application, to conduct an initial evaluation of the project design at a cost of \$26,035.

Ellis alerted the board to another grant that could help pay for a “re-

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siliency study” of the CWF required under its federal waste discharge permit. The permit requires the town to evaluate the ability of the CWF – and of the sewer system that feeds it – to withstand so-called 100-year and 500-year flooding events.

The grant, from the state Clean Water Trust Fund, would reduce the cost of the study, which will come before the March special town meeting. As Ellis did not present a grant application, the board did not take a vote on the issue.

Other Business

The selectboard signed a permit with the state Department of Environmental Protection for the “yard waste area,” popularly known as the

“leaf pile,” at the town transfer station. Ramsey said the annual permit describes procedures to be followed if toxic materials or an “unacceptable load” are identified on the site, as well as a plan for controlling odor.

The permit was developed with the assistance of Jan Ameen of the Franklin County Solid Waste Management District. Selectboard member Chris Boutwell abstained from the vote, as he serves on that district’s board.

Ellis quickly reviewed the schedule for upcoming town meetings, with a February 7 deadline for proposed warrant articles for the March 14 “special” and a March 13 deadline for the May 4 “annual.”

He also reviewed the progress of

the compensation and classification study being undertaken by the Edward J. Collins, Jr. Center for Public Management at UMass Boston. The consultants are reviewing and rewriting job descriptions, he said, with input from town staff, and comparing those descriptions with staff in other towns in the region.

“The town administrator’s job may be bigger than mine, or smaller than mine,” he said. “It’s not a perfect science where you can find a bunch of perfect comparables, but you will see that mixture.” Ellis said collecting the data “may take another month or two months.”

The next selectboard meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 12.



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Above: This banner appeared last week on the closed Fifth Street pedestrian bridge across the power canal in Turners Falls.

Not So Mad After All: Madhouse Expands its Offerings

By HUGH FINNERTY

GREENFIELD – This past week I sat down with Jackson Williams at Greenfield’s Madhouse, a mixed-use building with artist studios, a makerspace, and a gallery that is now open to the public. Williams co-founded Madhouse Multi-Arts in 2021 with likeminded Hampshire College classmate Charlotte Treiber. The two have been forming separate careers in art since graduation, but have combined their creativity and business acumen to tackle a project they hope will benefit the community and transform the way local artists approach the creative industry.

As Dave Brubeck’s *Impressions of New York* spun on a vintage record player, I asked Williams about his vision, and how he got here.

Williams said his undergraduate focus was in music, but as he built the foundations for a career as a musician, another venture began to germinate in his mind. The intersection of career and creativity can confront artists with more questions than an-



There’s a waitlist for artist studios at Madhouse Multi-Arts, but recent additions to the project welcome the public in more collaborative settings.

swers. He wondered if there might be another path forward outside of the higher education structure. “I realized the same issues existed for all art forms,” Williams said. see **MADHOUSE** page B8

NOTES FROM THE HEARTFELT CAFE

by Trouble Mandeson



Every morning the author makes Chemex-brewed coffee for herself and wifey. Milk is heated and the fresh hot coffee is poured into mugs. Cone-filtered coffee, she asserts, is the superior method for brewing.

GREENFIELD – Ah, coffee. Call it joe, dirt, mud, or java – for some of us, it’s the first thing we turn to in the morning to give us energy and help us to start our day. It’s a plus that its rich, bold flavor is delicious, especially with cream added, perhaps a spoonful or two of sweetener if that’s your pleasure.

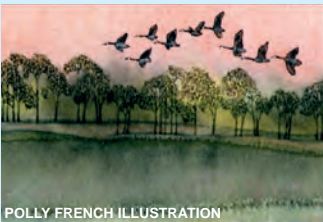
Those of us who enjoy creamy coffee are in good company with the Dutch ambassador to China who, in 1660, was credited as being the first person to experiment with adding milk to his coffee.

Of course, the downside of this habit-forming brew can be anxiety and sleeplessness. Because of this, I’ve switched to a mushroom blend with a tiny bit of caffeine and a rich flavor of cacao and cinnamon, and I don’t even miss drinking coffee.

Humans have enjoyed coffee since its discovery in the foothills of Yemen in 850 A.D. Legend tells of a goat herder on the Ethiopian plateau who discovered how energetic his goats became after eating the berries of a certain tree. After informing the abbot of a monastery, the monks made the berries into a drink and found it kept them alert through evening prayers.

By the 11th century, coffee had evolved from grinding coffee beans into a paste with animal fat to eat for energy, and making wine from beans fermented in water, to a hot drink. The first Middle Eastern coffeehouses opened in the 14th century, and coffee crops took root in India.

For some, the stimulating properties were thought see **HEARTFELT** page B5



WEST ALONG THE RIVER

THAT’S ONE WEIRD RODENT!

By DAVID BRULE

THE FLAT, ERVINGSIDE – In her 2022 book *Beaverland: How One Weird Rodent Made America*, Connecticut writer Leila Philip documents the impact *Castor canadensis* has had on human cultures, and especially its role in the settlement and prosperity of North America.

She states that the beaver poses an “evolutionary puzzle”: both aquatic and terrestrial, the beaver seems, as she states, more seal than rodent, with fingers that are strikingly human, and coveted fur that is constantly groomed as by a cat. Strangely, the beaver’s feet are webbed and gooselike, and the tail is reptilian, which as she states “looks like the result of some terrible accident, run over by a tractor tire...”

“Part bear, part bird, part monkey, part lizard, humanoid hands, an aquatic tail.” This mammal certainly qualifies as one weird creature that is surprisingly very familiar to many of us. There’s oftentimes a beaver lodge community somewhere nearby, although many of us may not pay attention to them until they cause what could be called by some “a beaver problem.”

The author takes us far back to the Pleistocene when, for over 2 million years, giant beavers inhabited North America. Ancient memory of these giant creatures may well be the source of the Indigenous local legends surrounding Wequamps/Mount Sugarloaf. According to the deep time story of *Ktsi Amiskw*, this local Giant Beaver was locked in a struggle with Algonkian shape-shifter Hobbomakwa, who, many believe still resides in a cave in Northfield/Sokwakik.

The giant beaver was vanquished, sank into the ancient glacial lake, and turned to stone, becoming our modern-day Sugarloaf.

Philip, in her research, has located texts and luminous illustrations tracing the beaver back through the 13th century to Iran, England and Scotland, Russia, and elsewhere. She shares with us legends and early beliefs surrounding the beaver.

This includes the commonly accepted story at the time: that when pursued by hunters, the beaver would often bite off its testicles and throw them at the human predators to intimidate and fool them into collecting those parts, which apparently were the prized objects of the hunt.

The author brings us through the earliest periods of American history by tracing the development of the fur trade on this continent, when John Jacob Astor, a German immigrant who landed in New York in 1783, became America’s first multimillionaire by managing to create a monopoly based on the beaver fur trade.

In our own Connecticut River Valley the Pynchons, William and more specifically his son John, became central figures in the fur trade, with their base in nearby Agawam/Springfield.

John Pynchon’s business acumen and drive to enlist the regional Algonkian communities to harvest all the fur to be found in this region led to a rapid depletion of the beaver population here. This increased competition among Indigenous communities, which led in turn to intertribal frictions, conflict, and deadly hostilities. The Native trappers needed to go further and further afield in search of beaver skins, taking them far into wetlands, tributaries, and rivers throughout the Northeast.

Farther north the French-Canadian *coureurs de bois*, aided by Huron and Abenaki guides, pushed the limits of the known world as they ventured further and further see **WEST ALONG** page B4



JJ AUDUBON ILLUSTRATION

The North American beaver, *Castor canadensis*.

Pet of the Week



‘ETTA’

Meet Etta, the enchanting orange cat whose journey from a feeding station to finding her forever home speaks volumes about her resilience and gentle spirit. Etta’s shy nature adds an air of mystery to her captivating persona, inviting a deeper connection with those patient enough to earn her trust.

Her radiant orange fur reflects the warmth of her heart, despite the shyness that initially veils her vibrant personality. Etta’s cautious approach to the world around her only adds to

the allure of her character, promising a bond that grows stronger with each tender interaction.

With patience and understanding, Etta is poised to blossom into a loyal and affectionate companion, ready to fill her forever home with love and a unique charm that’s all her own.

If you’d like to adopt Etta, you can come in during open adoption hours Tuesdays through Saturdays, 12:30 p.m. to 3 p.m. For more information, call (413) 781-4000 or visit www.dakinhumane.org.

Senior Center Activities FEBRUARY 12 THROUGH 16

WENDELL

Foot care clinic is the first Wednesday of each month. Call Katie Nolan at (978) 544-2306 for information or appointments.

For Senior Health Rides, please contact Nancy Spittle at (978) 544-6760.

ERVING

Open Mondays through Fridays from 8:30 am to 3 p.m. Daily snacks and coffee. Fitness room and pool table open.

Monday 2/12

9 a.m. Interval Workout
10:15 a.m. Seated Workout
12 p.m. Pitch Card Game

Tuesday 2/13

9 a.m. Good For U Workout
10 a.m. Line Dancing
11 a.m. Social Stringers

Wednesday 2/14

9 a.m. Strength & Conditioning
10:15 a.m. Chair Aerobics
11:30 a.m. Bring Your Lunch Bingo

Thursday 2/15

9 a.m. Core & Balance
10 a.m. Barre Fusion

Friday 2/16

9 a.m. Quilting & Open Sew

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.

Lunch is available Tuesday through Thursday. For more information please call 863-9357.

Monday 2/12

10:15 a.m. Aerobics
10:15 a.m. Outdoor Chair Yoga
11 a.m. Chair Exercise
12 p.m. Pot Luck Lunch

Tuesday 2/13

9 a.m. Chair Yoga
9:30 a.m. Tuesday Knitters
10 a.m. Zumba Lite
12:30 p.m. Tech Help Drop In
3 p.m. Tai Chi

Wednesday 2/14

Foot Clinic by Appointment
4:15 p.m. Mat Yoga

Thursday 2/15

9 a.m. Senior Help Hours
by Appointment
1 p.m. Pitch
3:30 p.m. Tech 4 Seniors Class

Friday 2/16

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

LEVERETT

Chair Yoga classes are held on Wednesdays at 10 a.m., hybrid, at the town hall and on Zoom. Foot care clinic is held monthly.

For more information, contact the Leverett COA at (413) 548-1022 x 2, or coa@leverett.ma.us.

Local Music Lookouts

By REPORTER STAFF

TURNERS FALLS – Last October’s immersive multi-media festival at the Shea Theater, *A Happening III: Metamorphoses*, provided an ample set and setting for a music video due to premiere this Friday from Turners Falls band chamber-pop band **Cloudbelly**.

“I couldn’t be more proud of my friends and artistic family out here in Franklin County,” said guitarist Sam V. Perry, who also helped curate the October event.

The video for “Handfuls,” the lead single from the forthcoming album *I know, I know, I know*, features lead singer Corey Laitman (*above right*) engaging with the installation.

It was directed by Turners auteur Robert J. Krzykowski of *The Man Who Killed Hitler and Then the Big-foot* fame. “I was thrilled to work with a team of brilliant artists and filmmakers from here in Massachusetts – conceptualizing a music video that would include dynamic color theory, old school cloud tank photography, and camera move-



ment and editing that dances with the piece,” writes Krzykowski.

The “Handfuls” video can be found on YouTube beginning this Friday. “We’re feeling a LOT of Turners pride about it,” Laitman told the *Reporter*.

Leo Hwang, guitar, reached out to announce a new release by Montague-Worthington fusion-funkers **Vimana**, *Space Triangle of Love*. It’s streaming on Spotify and on Bandcamp at vimanawm.bandcamp.com. Check it out when you get a chance.

And one more thing: in case you missed it, Michael Hurley is coming

back to the East Coast this spring, playing Nova Arts in Keene on Friday, April 26. Local heroes **Stella Kola** are opening. As of press time tickets are still available online, though they are “going fast.”



By CASEY WAIT

TURNERS FALLS – Hello darling readers,

This month is one of milestones for your sicko correspondent. Not only does February mark the second anniversary of this very column, I am also getting top surgery in less than a week!

January was rough – I celebrated my 32nd birthday while sick with my *fifth* COVID infection. (Quick PSA: **COVID isn’t over! Keep wearing those masks!**) But I am declaring it now: February will be pretty damn sick – and this time I mean that in the best possible way.

In 2016 or so, I came out to myself and to friends as nonbinary, not really having had the language to describe my fluid relationship to gender before then. I was one of those kids who had “developed early,” and it was not a fun experience for me. Looking back now, I realize a lot of the anxiety and discomfort I felt as a teen was gender dysphoria.

Inside, I felt deeply androgynous. But outside, my quickly maturing “hourglass”-shaped body was unambiguously read as “female.” I felt that discrepancy every time I got dressed and looked in the mirror. I felt it every time I dated a boy and winced internally at being described as his “girlfriend” when I somehow knew that wasn’t right. I even felt it when I finally dated a girl and thought it was funny people assumed I was a lesbian – not that there’s anything wrong with being a lesbian, I just knew it didn’t describe me.

I wasn’t a “boy trapped in a girl’s body,” which is how a lot of trans narratives in the media go. It was

more that I was a genderless girly-boy being read solely as a girl. Being a teenager in the 2010s, we didn’t have the same language around gender that we do now: I vaguely knew trans people existed, but only in a very binary way – male-to-female, female-to-male. While I knew the word “androgynous,” I despaired that it would never be *me*, because then androgynous basically meant thin, flat-chested, and narrow-waisted, and I was not that.

It was when I was in college, listening to the Raincoats’ brilliant cover of “Lola” by the Kinks, that a lightbulb went off. I’d always loved the original, which is the first explicitly queer song I can remember hearing. In one of the final verses, Ana da Silva and Gina Birch sing, “I know what I am / and I’m glad I’m a man / and so is Lola.” This familiar song re-interpreted by an all woman band added another layer of gender-fucking that just hit different this time and I thought, “This is me.”

Several more years would pass before I’d claim nonbinary as my gender identity. I owe so much to the queers who came before me, and to friends who stayed up late processing and co-creating new languages for understanding ourselves that had been denied to us growing up.

Gender-expansive people have existed everywhere, at every stage of human history. (And not just human history, either – animals are queer as hell!) Our culture’s fierce defense of binary gender stems from European imperialism. Enforcing the gender binary became a way to control and subjugate indigenous populations who had different understandings of gender and sexuality. Historian of gender, empire, and culture Jules

Gil-Peterson recently published a new book on this very subject, *A Short History of Trans Misogyny*, which I can’t recommend highly enough, especially in today’s increasingly transphobic climate.

I’d be lying if I said the intense persecution of trans people happening in all corners of society, right and left, didn’t scare me, or that choosing to become more visibly trans now wasn’t something I had to consider very carefully.

I’m so lucky to live in western Mass, where the majority of my friends are trans, many of whom have gone through the same surgery, and are highly knowledgeable and supportive. I’m lucky to live in Massachusetts, where as an unemployed disabled person, I can get my gender-affirming care fully covered by Medicaid. And I am so blessed to be joined by my mother, who is coming all the way from Colorado to take care of me before, during, and after my surgery.

So many of my trans siblings lack access to community, healthcare, and family of origin. I’m choosing to go through with this life-changing and life-saving procedure not only for myself, but also for all those who wanted to and weren’t able to. We pave the way for each other: the queers who struggled and played their way into self-fashioning made the same possible for me, and I am committed to playing that part for others in the future.

Trans people are a gift to the world and I will always fight not just for our right to exist as who we are, but to thrive and flourish.

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Artist Profile: Paul Reitano



Photographer Paul Reitano's portrait of cellist Stephen Katz.

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

GREENFIELD – I have never done a profile of a photographer before! My first one is of Paul Reitano, who works out of Northampton, and has been there for six years. He has been a photographer for 15 years.

I found Reitano when I did an internet search for Millers Falls artists. I found a mention of him having taken a photograph of Rodney Madison, another artist whom I have profiled.

Reitano takes portraits in black and white and in color. “I shoot film and digital,” he told me. “The black-and-white film looks more elegant and distinguished sometimes.” That is why he takes the photos he does. He takes his photos all over New England and the mid-Atlantic region.

Reitano keeps a “Greatest Hits” section on his website, because he thinks “that best represents my work as my best.” If people like these photos, then perhaps they will dig further in his work.

When it comes to the artists he takes photos of, he said, “I get inspired by artists and the work they do, and if I like their work, I contact them and see if I can photograph them. I like to be inspired by artists.”

Reitano told me he has been contracted through his website for various projects – photographs of landscapes and artworks. The customers “ask about certain prints

they are interested in.” “Artists like to have their art photographed to make prints of them,” he explained. “It is something else they can sell besides the artwork.”

“Most of my work is wedding work,” he mentioned to me. “That is in and around Boston.”

Besides Rodney Madison, other artists and musicians Reitano has photographed include Mark Synnott, Mike Edison, Dessa, James Randi, Tom Nichols, Matthew Thornton, Sandy Bailey, Sunshine Rob, Tim Minchin, and Liberty DeVitto.

One photo of his can be described as a black-and-white shot of a cellist sitting in a chair in the middle of a stream playing his instrument. I was told the man in the photo is named Steven Katz. Another black-and-white is of a violinist on the back of a flatbed playing his violin. Both are in the “Greatest Hits” section of the website.

Reitano hasn’t had a lot of gallery shows yet – he told me he has had two, one at the Vermont Center for Photography in Brattleboro, the other in West Chester, Pennsylvania.

When it comes to the popularity of his work in other people’s eyes, he told me: “My wife appreciates what I do, and my family seem to as well.” They are also frequently the subject of his photography.

Reitano’s main website is at www.paulreitano.com. The one for his wedding business is www.paulreitanoweddings.com.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

People Scaring Their Neighbors; Lake Pleasant Fight; Tensions With Unhoused People; Runaway Located

Monday, 1/29

6:15 a.m. 911 caller reports that a male who was advised to leave a Bridge Street apartment building has returned and is banging on the doors and windows. Officer advises male party left residence.

2:17 p.m. Property manager called 911 to report a male party banging on doors and windows on Fourth Street and disturbing the tenants. Property manager called back stating she received a call from tenants that the male party has left. Officer advises he had a discussion with maintenance at the building; they talked to the male party, and he left.

3:07 p.m. Report of loose border collie with no tags at the Golf and Turf lot off Industrial Boulevard. Area checked; unable to locate.

11:01 p.m. Caller from Second Street reporting two suspicious people coming down the stairs who do not live in the building; she feels very uncomfortable with the situation. Parties have left the area. Building is secured.

Tuesday, 1/30

12:23 p.m. 911 open line. When phone picked up, child said “I love you.” Now quiet. Mother came onto phone stating accidental dial from her son. Confirmed misdial.

5 p.m. Caller states that a party outside Food City is acting strangely and possibly on drugs. A 42-year-old homeless man was arrested on a default warrant and a straight warrant.

9:53 p.m. 911 caller from Keith Apartments stating that her neighbor has been screaming and banging on the walls for hours. (Previous call reported same at 9:05 p.m.) Advised caller that an officer was just there. Caller advises that the neighbor did not stop, and all the other neighbors would like officers to come back and deal with her. Officer advises it was quiet upon arrival. Spoke to neighbors, who agreed to write a statement and will call tomorrow when ready.

Wednesday, 1/31

12:21 a.m. Call reporting a red Chevy Tahoe on King Avenue whose alarm

has been sounding for the past two hours. All quiet upon arrival.

1:39 a.m. 911 caller reporting a vehicle with Vermont plates and a wooden bed acting suspicious in the East Main Street area. While on the phone, overheard a verbal argument between two parties. Caller states that the male in the pickup truck just got into his face and was threatening him. Officer checking area for vehicle.

2:11 a.m. 911 call from Montague Avenue; caller states that two males are on the ground fighting; punches being thrown; parties possibly getting kicked. Caller states one male was thrown out of the truck. Related to previous call. Officer requesting EMS to scene. A 29-year-old Lake Pleasant man was arrested and charged with carrying a dangerous weapon.

12:50 p.m. Caller from East Main Street states that a male party who has threatened to shoot up the building is there in the building again; caller thinks he does have some sort of firearm on him. Officer notified. No answer at apartment. Officer advised caller to call if they see the party.

11:28 p.m. Shelburne Control requesting a check of a Pleasant Street address for a runaway juvenile out of Gill. Officer advises no luck at involved address. MSP called and advised they have footage of the juvenile crossing the bridge into our town at 9:55 p.m. on 1/31. Juvenile located on Fourth Street.

Thursday, 2/1

11:52 a.m. Employees from agency that provides support for clients on East Main Street visiting station to report that they are continuing to receive threats to the building. Advised of options.

12:42 p.m. Caller from Food City states that a male party called the store and threatened him and also threatened to harm the male party who sits outside of the store because the “homeless” guy makes him uncomfortable. Advised of options.

5:44 p.m. Report of vehicle vs. deer on Turners Falls Road. Deer is alive but still in roadway. Officer advises that he located the deer, but the caller is not around. Officer advises deer is out of roadway. Message left for DPW.

8:28 p.m. Caller from East Main Street states that he had a package stolen on 1/21 that was valued at \$25; building management company is looking at camera footage. Caller wants this on record.

Friday, 2/2

7:58 a.m. Officer advises

he is out with a vehicle that he observed going at a high rate of speed up Unity Street hill; vehicle is now unoccupied in the parking lot of Franklin County Technical School. Verbal warning issued for speed. School resource officer escorting male party back into school.

9:59 a.m. Caller from East Main Street requesting an officer call her; states male party is threatening her again despite efforts to block him. Officer advised caller of options.

11:33 a.m. Caller requesting to speak to officer regarding illegal dumping that is happening at her rental property on Fourth Street. Caller states that her tenants have spoken to him before regarding belongings, including clothing and dressers, being dumped near the Community Garden area. Advised of options.

12:20 p.m. DCF requesting to speak with an officer to coordinate the removal of a child. DCF has custody of child.

12:43 p.m. Caller reporting that she made arrangements with a female party who was going to pick up some laying hens from her coop today. Caller states the woman said she was running late but would be there soon. Caller states that the woman showed up and took the hens from the coop, but never paid the caller. Caller states she tried contacting the woman, but the woman has blocked her. Caller is part of the Western Massachusetts Poultry page on Facebook. Officer advises amends were made; no police assistance required anymore.

3:52 p.m. Caller reporting that a female is stealing all the items out of a homeless male’s cart that is outside in the Food City parking lot. Officer advises no one is stealing his items. Cart is tucked on the side of the store where it usually is. Male party is currently incarcerated.

7:06 p.m. Two calls reporting the sound of gunshots. Greenfield has their fireworks show tonight, per officer.

7:10 p.m. Neighbor disturbance on Avenue A. Advised of options.

9:47 p.m. 911 caller reporting two-vehicle accident, with injury, on Bridge Street. Caller states his parked car was hit; he heard the accident happen while he was walking into the house. Control advising female party is attempting to start her vehicle and leave the scene of the accident. Officers advised. Both vehicles towed. Operator of vehicle with AMR.

Saturday, 2/3

3:01 p.m. Food City man-

ager states that a male was doing drugs in the bathroom and left paraphernalia behind. They would like it to be removed, and for the male party to be trespassed from the property. Item collected. Male party verbally trespassed. Store manager advised of options.

7:31 p.m. Male caller states someone has been harassing him and he wants to know his rights. States he is not going to give his name, the other party’s name, or any identifying information as he knows he currently has probation warrants and he doesn’t want to be found. Caller then stated he would call the involved male’s probation officer and he does not need police assistance. Caller identity added to call from caller ID; no active probation warrants.

8:07 p.m. Caller from St. Stanislaus Society states he is the bar president and was told by a bartender that a male is making a disturbance at the bar and needs to be removed, but that she did not want to call the PD herself. Requesting call from officer before they respond to explain the situation, to try to limit disruption at this time. Officer advised; officers standing by for assistance. Officer spoke to bartender, who states she wanted the male party to leave, then gave him permission to finish his beer before he left. She was not aware that the police had been called. Other employees also spoke to the involved party and told him to leave after he finishes his beer. They will call the PD back for assistance if the male does not cooperate.

Sunday, 2/4

4:21 p.m. 911 caller states there is a car flipped over on Turners Falls Road in Greenfield. GPD already has units *en route*. Officer assisting with traffic on our side. GPD advises bridge can be reopened.

5:09 p.m. Officer out with party at Food City. A 42-year-old homeless man was arrested on two straight warrants.

6:49 p.m. 911 hangup call coming from Main Street. Spoke briefly to male party on callback, but he disconnected. Officer spoke with involved party, who did not require any services. He stated that there was a brief altercation, but he could not describe the other person.

7:43 p.m. Greenfield PD requesting an officer make contact with a party on Fifth Street and let them know if he is home. Officer made contact with involved party. GPD has party in custody.

MONTAGUE CRYPTOJAM !!!


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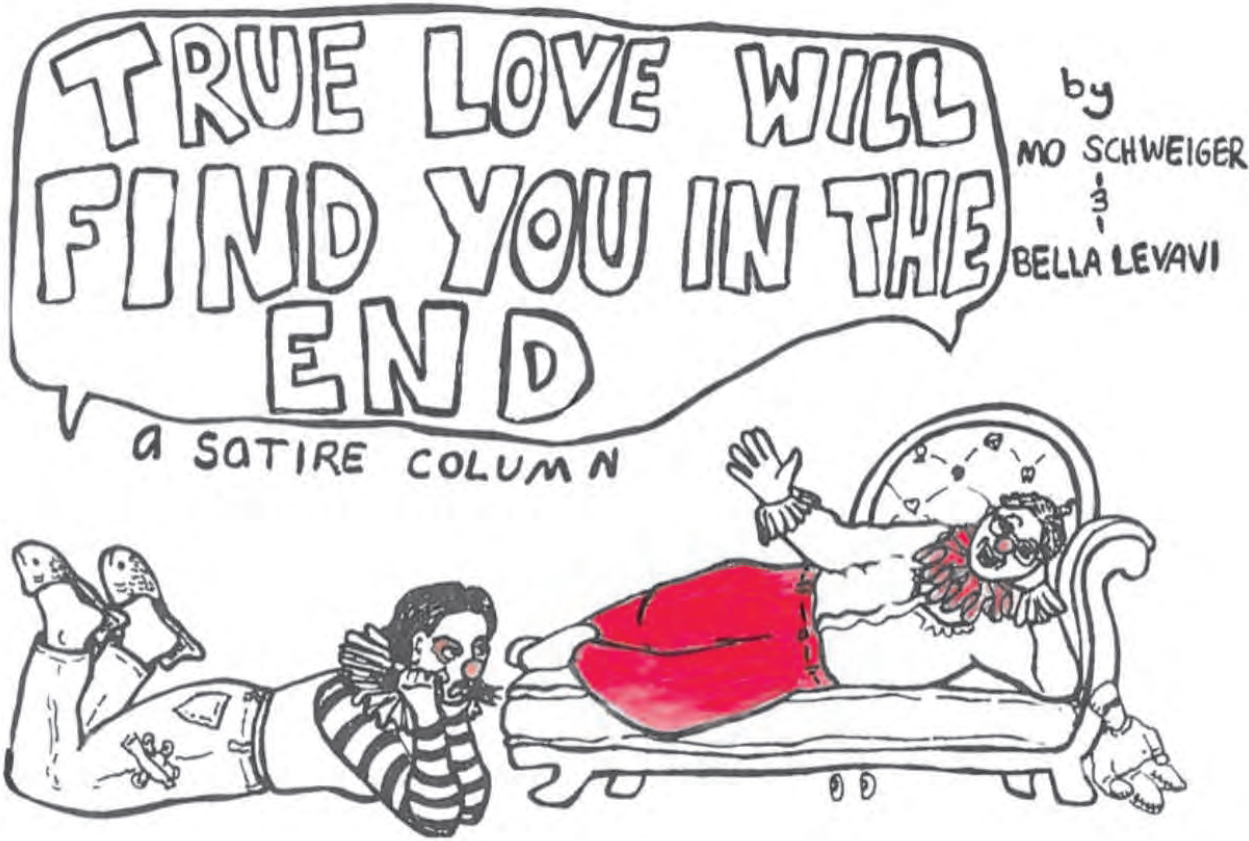
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A Guide to Engagement Season

By MANDY MUDBALLS

FRANKLIN COUNTY – With Valentine’s Day just around the corner, we are entering the last month of proposal season. Everybody knows that 77% of “I do’s” take place between December 1 and Valentine’s Day (with the last 33% occurring on the 4th of July).

Congratulations to all of the happy couples who have made the decision to tie the knot in the last two months – my favorite being the couple that, after two weeks of dating, agreed to make it forever between shampoo and conditioner rounds in the shower.

If you’ve put off popping the question because you fear that doing it in the wrong place will lead to an “I don’t” from your beau, you are in luck! With another fortnight left in the season and this column in your hand, you will find just the thing to make your sweetie feel special: a heartfelt proposal in one of the most vetted locations in Franklin County.

In the last month, I have gotten down on one knee in every single establishment and at every scenic location in Franklin County. I’m talking every gas station, newly-built library, municipal swimming pool, ancient library, pickleball court, and cornfield decimated by the floods of 2023. Ultimately, I recommend wearing knee pads for an optimal experience and so that in your engagement photos you are not wincing like I am in most of my attempts.

That folly aside, my research has led me to a definitive list of the most romantic places in Franklin County to turn your girlfriend into your wife with a brief intermission as your fiancée:

#1. Poet’s Seat Tower

I know that everyone does it, but it just is perfect. As you get down on one knee, your partner can see above your bowed head all eight stoplights on Main Street in Greenfield. If you’re lucky they’ll all be green, telling your lover that now is the time to hit the gas pedal and commit for life.

If dropping down isn’t your style and you want to take a less traditional route, you can spray paint the words that every woman wants to hear, “Will you marry me, Mandy?,” on the centuries-old historic brick.

While it might be difficult for

your lover to discern if what you’re pointing them toward is the life-altering question or “Jason is gay,” your future children will be able to visit the spot and see proof of their parents’ love, Jason’s homosexuality, and the lack of creativity among local punks, as indicated by the 69 penises graffitied on the tower.

#2. A Romantic Dinner

Much like Poet’s Seat Tower, proposing at a romantic dinner with your boo is a ubiquitously classic phenomenon. That being said, I know that you are likely on a budget, given that even the most highly valued jobs in Franklin County pay poverty wages.

Therefore, I recommend taking your date to Turners Falls Pizza House, aka TFOP, to fop the question. The unrelenting lighting and tile floors are guaranteed to put you in the mood. What mood, I cannot say. But proposing there *will* indoctrinate you into a long lineage of Italian Americans with nagging wives who feed them lasagne until their dying breath. So that’s worth something.

Another dinner proposal option that is appropriate for someone earning the average annual income in Franklin County is the Wagon Wheel. The one difficulty you might run into there, however, is the decision of which corner of the restaurant to propose in. Do you want the clocks that represent the 50 states in the background of your engagement photos? Or would you prefer the wall of bovine time-tellers to be part of the legacy of your love?

If you happen to have a remote tech job based out of Connecticut, you can take your future life partner to the Gill Tavern and propose over an *aperitif* of *foie gras*. Actually, I don’t know what they serve there. I’ve never been.

#3. A Skatepark

If you’ve followed my recommendations until now, you’re already wearing knee pads. Might as well do an olly in celebration after your proposee says yes!

Depending on what you’re looking for, you can make it forever in one of three skateparks in the county: Unity Skatepark in Turners Falls, if you prefer transition skating; the Greenfield Skatepark if you dabble in plaza-style street skating,

or Rowe Skatepark if you’re looking for simply a ramp and a rail.

#4. The Bridge of Flowers

Scenic. Centrally located. Pollinator-friendly. Famous. I don’t know why anyone would want to propose there, but it’s an option. I feel much more compelled to dump the ashed remains of my relatives there, even if it “kills the flowers.”

#5. In Front of the FirstLight Dam in Turners Falls

Proposing in front of a hydroelectric dam owned by the megacorporation FirstLight gives you and your future fiancée an exciting opportunity to revel in the highs and lows of the great human experiment.

On one hand, the dam shows the domination of man over nature, so powerful that humanity can control even water – much like the union of man and wife. On the other, it is a reminder of how your spousal arguments about co-sleeping with your future baby are meaningless because corporations are destroying our planet, leaving no future for your offspring’s generation.

This push and pull reminds the two of you that life, like marriage, has almost no meaning and is too absurd to understand. Faced with this crushing existential dread, your crush will say “Screw it, let’s get married!”

Also, it’s pretty. I love the Connecticut River.

Off-Season Bonus: The 9/11 Parade on Main Street in Greenfield

I know that it’s not during proposal season, but the 9/11 Parade on Main Street in Greenfield, (probably) held annually on September 11, is *the place* to get engaged.

Picture this: a mile-long parade of every single fire truck in the county crawling down Main Street, blaring their horns and flashing their lights in celebration of your union. The volume of the sirens takes the pressure off of getting the phrasing of the fateful question perfectly, as they will completely obscure any words you say. Your lover might think that you are bending down to simply tie your shoe, but when you whip out the ring they will know exactly what your heart is asking.

It will be a proposal they’ll never forget.

WEST ALONG from page B1

west in the pursuit of the rich, untapped reaches of the territory of the beaver. Ancestor Jean Nicolet hangs out on one branch of my family tree, and he and another even more celebrated and infamous *coureur de bois*, Etienne Brûlé, were among the first white men to reach the Great Lakes and beyond.

These *québécois* trappers lived a life in the wild, occasionally coming in to trading centers like Trois Rivières on the St. Lawrence for a brief taste of civilization and to sell their furs. In many instances, these *coureurs de bois* begat multiple offspring in semi-official marriages with Native women, contributing to the huge nation of *métis* populations of modern-day Québec.

Philip further digs into the contemporary fur trapper culture in a chapter entitled “Wild Fur,” where she spends months hanging out with an active Connecticut trapper who introduces her to a number of huge fur auctions throughout the northeast. She recounts her experiences at the North American Fur Auction, where buyers from China, Korea, Italy, Russia, Finland, and all across the US converge annually to bid on tens of thousands of furs.

This chapter, for someone of my personal bent, was challenging to read, with the mental images of the thousands of beaver, coyote, mink, muskrat, otter, even skunk that are annually trapped, killed, skinned, prepared and sold at auction, often for well under \$20 apiece. She recounts that at one recent fur harvesters’ auction, 25,323 mink, 19,185 red fox, and 5,262 otter skins went mainly unsold.

According to some, the populations of fur-bearing critters can support that much depredation and harvesting. Yet I can’t help feeling that these animals are a part of our patrimony, our commonwealth, and I have a hard time accepting that individuals can appropriate this part of our natural heritage for personal profit. Yet most trappers she interviewed admitted that they rarely break even, and as above, much of their harvest goes unsold.

Philip weaves a delightful story of the “beaver lady” Dorothy Richards, who during the 1940s and ’50s lived with 14 beavers in her house in the foothills of the Adirondacks. She founded a sort of beaver sanctuary which she called *Beaver-sprite*. Philip includes a number of anecdotes and photographs of this beaver lady, including one of Richards sitting for an early photographer with an apparently contented 60-pound beaver on her lap.

To her credit, Philip provides multiple perspectives to the beaver lady story, which include not only the sanctuary founder’s quotes but also observations by the various trappers who see the beaver lady as “kinda nutty... Those beavers didn’t want to be there, and she wouldn’t let them out!”

My own familiarity with the local beaver population began in the 1950s when I was 10. My grandfather Abe invited me to go down to his favorite log along the Millers River, where he watched the beavers coming out every evening.

We sat quietly while he smoked his corncob pipe and swatted mosquitoes. Once in a while, he pointed out the call of a screech owl, perhaps the deep hoot of a great horned owl. Before long that evening at dusk, we saw a blunt head moving purposefully down the river like the point of a silver arrow’s reflection on the water, headed for one of the islands that formed the boundary of Abe’s pasture.

Beaver paid no attention to us, went about his business that night harvesting thin shoots of river vegetation, leaving behind smooth sticks stripped of their bark.

Decades later, when it was my turn to take over the old pasture gone to woodlands after the floods of 1936 and 1938, I maintained my relationship with the beavers. We got in the habit of leaving apples for them, of pulling down and laying out trees that they had cut through but had stayed hung up in other trees.

Once I pulled the hung-up trees down to the ground, the beavers would come back at night and strip the maple, poplar or oak trees of their branches. I would then harvest the trunk they left behind. Cut up, split and cured, those logs wound up in the woodstove.

The beavers and I have maintained a good symbiotic relationship.

I’m more than pleased that this fall a young beaver has built up his bachelor pad on the bank of one of our islands. I take that as a compliment. This may be the beaver’s acknowledgement that our lands and riverbanks are a place of safety and security.

Leila Philip provides us with a wonderful narrative about the beaver and this species’ role in the history, folklore, and cultures of those humans intimately connected with *Castor canadensis*. She explores and records the stories of wildlife managers, Indigenous knowledge keepers, fur trappers, PETA activists, scientists, and engineers who marvel and benefit from the role of the beavers’ creation and preservation of all-important wetlands.

She reminds us that beavers are a keystone species, critical to the survival of a biological community. For better or for worse, beavers – and humans – are the rare species who can dramatically alter the landscape to create the environment they need.

So when you think of it, it’s startling to come to the realization that this one odd, stubborn and creative creature had a huge role to play in the early shaping of our history, in the making of the America we know today.



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HEARTFELT from page B1

of as a type of religious ecstasy, and it earned a bit of a mystical reputation. Some even felt coffee had medicinal or healing powers, curing everything from earaches to liver problems. There’s evidence of this in a document called *The Canon of Medicine*, written in 1025 A.D. by the Persian physician Avicenna, the first text mentioning coffee as a medication.

By the 15th and 16th centuries, coffee cultivation and trade began from the Arabian peninsula. Called “wine of Araby,” it was brought back to Europe by travelers. Perhaps because of its previous mystical repete, some reacted to the black beverage with suspicion or fear, calling it the “bitter invention of Satan.” When it first reached Venice, Italy, coffee was condemned by the clergy until 1594, when Pope Clement VIII was asked to



A standing rolled rib roast, essentially prime rib off the bone, from one of the local farms. Rubbed with coffee and spices, this particular cut was superb. Coffee acts as a tenderizer and keeps the meat moist.

intervene. Upon tasting it, he found it so satisfying he gave his papal approval.

Coffeehouses became centers of social activity in major European cities, called “penny universities” because a penny could buy a cup of coffee and conversation. By the mid-16th century, London had over 300 coffeehouses. They spawned many future businesses, including Lloyd’s of London, which grew out of Edward Lloyd’s Coffee House. The first American coffeehouse was opened in New York in 1697, followed a year later by Ye Coffee House in Philadelphia.

The Dutch were responsible for spreading coffee around the world, growing it in Ceylon and the East Indies, and in 1714 even presenting King Louis XIV of France with the gift of a young coffee seedling, planted in the Royal Botanical Garden in Paris. That first seedling was the parent of all coffee trees throughout South and Central America and the Caribbean. One such seedling was brought to Martinique, where over 18 million trees spread over the next 50 years.

Brazil’s coffee crop allegedly began with a secretive gift from the wife of the Governor in French Guyana, who hid coffee seeds inside a large bouquet of flowers which she gifted to the Emperor’s emissary after his request for coffee beans from the French was denied.

By the end of the 18th century coffee was one of the most profitable export crops, and today it’s one of the most sought-after commodities in the world, after crude oil. It’s a multi-billion-dollar industry, with US consumers in 2022 spending \$110 billion on coffee. The economic impact of the coffee industry is currently \$343.2 billion and growing annually.

Coffee brewing evolved in the early 20th century when a German woman named Melitta Bentz invented the cone filtration system, producing a less bitter coffee. Thus, the Melitta Company was born, and this method of filtration is still considered the superior method of brewing coffee.

BANANA, COFFEE, CASHEW, AND COCOA SMOOTHIE

one banana, preferably frozen
two Medjool dates, pitted
½ cup cold-brew coffee
¼ cup raw cashews, preferably soaked overnight
3 Tbsp. old-fashioned oats, preferably soaked overnight
1 Tbsp. unsweetened cocoa powder
pinch of ground cardamom
pinch of kosher salt

Purée all ingredients together in a blender.



All the makings of a banana coffee cocoa smoothie, as an alternative to hot coffee or for those who like thick, satisfying cold drinks. Make sure to blend it well so that it’s not gritty.

At the same time another German, Ludwig Roselius, discovered that a box of coffee beans being immersed in seawater had caused the caffeine to be removed, and he patented a way of steaming coffee to remove the caffeine. In the 1920s, Sanka instant coffee was introduced to the US market followed in the ’30s by Nestlé’s Nescafé brand of freeze-dried coffee. The first TV commercials for coffee premiered in the ’50s.

The 1970s saw the introduction of Starbucks to the retail coffee market, changing the industry by introducing the US to freshly roasted dark beans. They aggressively opened multiple locations, some even on opposite corners of the same street, driving out independent retailers. Today they’re in 72 countries with nearly 30,000 shops, a bit more than Dunkin’s 13,200 restaurants.

Whether you drink home-brewed coffee made in a machine, use the pour-over method or a French press, wait in line for your cup of Dunkin’, or sit in a coffeeshop sipping a cap-

puccino, latté, Americano, flat white, macchiato, cortado, café au lait, or a mocha, coffee is deeply engrained in our society.

Many recipes include coffee like baked goods, baked beans, coffee-braised or spiced-rubbed roast beef and pulled pork. It’s used in soaps, as a plant fertilizer, a skin exfoliant, an ant repellent, and even touted as a nasal palate re-setter – that is, the belief that taking a quick inhale of coffee when you feel overwhelmed or numbed by other smells will reset your palate.

Here’s a delicious recipe for a coffee smoothie to start your day. It uses raw cashews and old-fashioned oats that need to be soaked overnight, but it’s worth the effort.

Trouble Mandeson lives in Greenfield with her wifey and their newly adopted cat Peeps. She volunteers for local nonprofits to cook and feed those in the community, and loves to write, copyedit, and create art.

LOOKING BACK: 10 YEARS AGO

Here’s the way it was on February 6, 2014 News from the Montague Reporter’s archive.

Montague Approves Pot Zones; No Locals Licensed

At a highly charged Montague special town meeting on January 30, a zoning change to allow a registered marijuana dispensary

(RMD) to be located in town in four zones – General Business, Industrial, Central Business, and Historic Industrial districts – was overwhelmingly approved.

Town planner Walter Ramsey told the members that the new zoning was necessary because without it an RMD could be allowed in any district that allowed for retail sales and service use. He emphasized that

the new zoning would restrict facilities to non-residential areas.

The state Department of Public Health announced last Friday that 20 out of 100 applicants will receive RMD licenses. None of the three Franklin County applicants – ANL, Inc. (A New Leaf), MR (Absolute Medical Resources, Inc.), or J.M. Farms’ Patient Group – made the cut.

20 YEARS AGO

Here’s the way it was on February 5, 2004: News from the Montague Reporter’s archive.

Fast Movin’ Train

Tired of close calls with fast-moving Amtrak trains, residents of Dry Hill Road have band-

ed together to petition the Montague selectboard to put up stop signs at the unprotected New England Central Railroad crossing. Visibility is poor, and trains have been clocked going 60 to 65 mph.

“I don’t expect any great help from the railroad,” said board chair Ed Voudren.

New DPW Boss

After a year-long search, Montague finally has a new DPW superintendent. Gary Kellahe, former director of highway maintenance for the Mass Pike Authority, accepted the position January 30. “I’m a hands-on type of guy,” said Kellahe.

150 YEARS AGO

Here’s the way it was on February 4, 1874: News from the Turners Falls Reporter’s archive.

Local Matters

At last the plans for the new School-house have been perfected to the satisfaction of the Building Committee, and the building will be put under contract immediately. It is to be in its internal arrangement very nearly like the one burned, presenting a somewhat improved external appearance.

The Clark & Chapman Machine Company have made arrangements with P.E. Gillespie for the manufacture and sale of his Improved Fire Pump for the New England States. Mr. Gillespie moves his family to this place this week, and is to assist in making patterns and perfecting the pump.

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

- William Carlos Williams

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

February Poetry Page

Darkness Weakened by Light

Blue is a darkness weakened by light.
- Goethe

putting the g on litter
in a silence workshop, walking
with your eyes on a face in pixels
crystallized darkening the gaze
in waves of curling, the abyss listens

to chalk on lips, a sea of chalky
blue across which robins
notes skip and skim: black moth on tile
a broken dream memory of blue
scales on a butterfly's wing

blue is a haze of earth a skin
in the space between
darkness at sky's bottom
and smoke lifting off the forest

floor, a delicate opulence
a structural, scattered feint of
color decayed in the feather's lattice

lizards doing pushups on rocks
understand the connection between sun
and lightning, their sublunary

concerns our politics your dreams
struck with the wren's chant
objecting beneath solar winds

the song on the altar, white rabbit
scattered to all points making sky
blue, an interval, depth cicada
of unearthly lift toward velvet

lunar practice for the solar-born
valedictory desert ramble
selling the sand clues of blue
lit out with the hummingbird's

odorless iridescent inedible
colors, bluebirds the span
between sun and earth
strikes guts with the lightning

bugs of blue, an azure gray
wood bank of brakes, awash with wet
blue darkness of weakening light

- Jonathan Skinner
Warwick, UK

Ahead

The way ahead charted
Out of night into day
Night into day
Out of time into travel

A way ahead charted
Beyond all impossibility
Out of time into travel
What remains to be seen?
Beyond all impossibility
Or an alternative created
An alternative created
As if the sky did not rain
As if no one was lost
And the sea was not rising

And the sea was not rising
Churning water and salt
Off in the distance
What remains to be seen?
Had a decision occurred?

Did a boat set sail?
Off in the distance
it had seemed far away
It had not seemed real

As if a sky did not rain
The way ahead was charted
As if no one was lost
And the boat set sail
churning water with salt.

- Ninso John High
New York and Lisbon, Portugal

Becoming My Own Story

First, I would study the mornings, I thought.
Then, I would study the afternoons.
And finally, I would study the evenings.

The quiet trees.
It was a Sunday.
This was the beginning.
A story shedding itself
while I became the Story.

In these shadows of dark & light
in the darkening shadow of a rose,
in the grains of dust,
in these stones,
still here.
A hue and shape
too formless to conjure.

- Ninso John High
New York and Lisbon, Portugal

Pep Talk #1

What's around the corner?
Why can't I see?
Fearing I am.
Anticipatory I want to be.

- Leona Phillips
Santa Cruz, CA

Hibernation

I grow slowly towards the calm
the music gentle, the wind brushing
my words into muffled heaps,
leaves stored in clusters on paths
life chooses to ignore...

Observing this I surmise
their unimportance to passers by
but celebrate the lowly hedgehog
as he nests amongst my thoughts,
digests the quiet anticipation of sleep,
turns over a leaf or two mid dream.

- Julian Nangle
Dorchester, UK

Vanishing Acts

The present is not the starting point
you were hoping to find,
nor is cause effect.

You want to be with the geese flying south
or at least as steadfast
as the cormorants perching on buoys.

The morning sun is lying doggo
sky and river bleed blue
into grey, grey into blue.

Silently here where echoes vanish
before they are born
wordlessness clings to old lichens,

the pale sky
rings the distant ridge
and a cold moon begins to fade.

- Gene Grindel
Cambridge, UK

Contributors' Notes:

Leona Phillips is a retired professor and psychotherapist, formerly of Amherst, Massachusetts. Currently she is a weaver, a cultivator of awe coming to grips with the natural order of things and the mysteries we encounter on our journeys. She is living in Santa Cruz, California to be near an ocean.

Julian Nangle is a poet and bookseller living in Dorchester, Dorset. He is married to Anna and between them they have four surviving children, each with offspring of their own; Julian and Anna are kept busy by their 14 grandchildren. His recent books include *Eleven Poems* and *Poppy and Other Poems of Grief and Celebration*. He is also the editor of *The Occasional Poetry Mag*. His *Collected Poems* will appear later this year in the UK.

Gene Grindel, Reader in Classical Languages at Clare College at the University of Cambridge, has published many books of poetry as well as translations from Latin and Greek.

Ninso John High's newest book is *Scrolls of a Temple Sweeper* (Wet Cement Press, Berkeley). Poet, novelist, translator, and Zen monk, he is the author of more than a dozen books.



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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, FEBRUARY 8

Nova Arts, Keene: *Jason Anderson, Jak Mikal Thomas*. \$. 7 p.m.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 9

Pioneer Valley Brewery, Turners Falls: *Danny Hescocock, Holly Mae*. No cover. 7 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *River of Dreams*, Billy Joel tribute, *American Elton*, Elton John tribute. \$. 8 p.m.

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

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *The Chops, Whalom Park*. \$. 8:30 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Masala Jazz*. No cover. 9:30 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Far Out Queer Comedy Show*. \$. 7 p.m.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 10

Montague Common Hall, Montague Center: *Open Mic* with featured performers *Beth Logan Raffeld, Stephen Page*. By donation. 6:30 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Zydeco Connection, The Bourbon Street Blasters*. \$. 6:30 p.m.

Pioneer Valley Brewery, Turners Falls: *Don LaCoy*. No cover. 7 p.m.

Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro: *Surrealist Party Games with Roger Clark Miller*. \$. 7 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Legend, Journey* tribute. \$. 8 p.m.

The Drake, Amherst: *Ryan Montbleu, Brooks Forsyth*. \$. 8 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *RockitQueer Returns* with DJ LeFox. \$. 8 p.m.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 11

Brick House, Turners Falls: Screening and discussion, *Sa Ngalan Ng Tubó*, 2005 documentary on the struggle of millworkers, farmworkers, and people of hacienda Luisita, Philippines. Free. Snacks & childcare provided. 7 p.m.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 13

90 King St., Northampton: *Landowner, Pons, Programmique*. \$. 7:30 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14

Bookends, Florence: *Valentine's Ball* feat. "Enya," "The Magnetic Fields," "Yo La Tengo," "Broadcast," "The Breeders," "Blink-182." \$. 7 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls:

Falltown String Band. No cover. 8 p.m.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 15

90 King Street, Northampton: *Hedgewitch, Frogtones Frogget, Rebecca Schrader & Marie Carroll*. \$. 8 p.m.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 16

Pioneer Valley Brewery, Turners Falls: *Stealing Frequencies*. No cover. 7 p.m.

The Drake, Amherst: *Ted Leo*. \$. 8 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Padded Waltz Lite, Doonward Spiral*. No cover. 9:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 17

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Cadmi-um, Blandest, Bug Slam, I Have No Mouth, Film and Gender*. \$. 6 p.m.

ToriTown, Holyoke: *Bikethrasher, The Buddy System Forever, Ladybug, Nodderly*. \$. 6:30 p.m.

Mount Toby Friends Meeting-house, Leverett: *Lara Herscovitch*. \$. 7 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Arc-A-Palooza*, United Arc benefit. \$. 8 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Mephiskapheles, The Prozacs, Threat Level Burgundy, Green Street Fiends*. \$. 8 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Chris Goudreau, The Frost Heaves & HaLeS*. No cover. 9:30 p.m.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 18

Bombyx Center, Florence: *Ladysmith Black Mambazo*. \$. 3 p.m. & 7 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Rat Bath, Silvie's Okay, Bubble Scary*. \$. 7 p.m.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 20

90 King Street, Northampton: *Frank Hurricane*. \$. 8 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 21

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Wes Brown & Friends*. No cover. 8 p.m.

Parlor Room, Northampton: *Matt Pond PA, Alexa Rose*. \$. 8 p.m.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 22

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *50th Anniversary Celebration of Lovejoy's Nuclear War*. \$. 7 p.m.

Holyoke Media, Holyoke: *Tomas Fujiwara's 7 Poets Trio, Tomeka Reid Quartet*. \$. 7:30 p.m.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 23

The Drake, Amherst: *Native Sun, Dead Tooth, The Baxbys*. \$. 8 p.m.

90 King Street, Northampton: *Film & Gender, Bubble Scary, Sgraffito Kill, KO Queen*. \$. 8 p.m.

looking forward...

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 24

Bookends, Florence: *Yiddish Labor Anthems Sing-A-Long*. By donation. Benefit. 4 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *An Evening With the Cowboy Junkies*. \$. 8 p.m.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 29

Bombyx Center, Florence: *Bill Frisell Three* feat. *Gregory Tardy, Rudy Royston*. \$. 6:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, MARCH 9

Hawks & Reed: *RJD2*. \$. 7:30 p.m.

SUNDAY, MARCH 17

Nova Arts, Keene: *Horse Lords, Ka Baird, Know Your Program*. \$. 7 p.m.

SATURDAY, MARCH 30

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Rubblebucket*. \$. 7 p.m.

SUNDAY, MARCH 31

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Rubblebucket*. \$. 7 p.m.

SATURDAY, APRIL 6

Belltower Records, North Adams: *Kohoutek, Heavenly Bodies, Wendy Eisenberg, Erica Dawn Lyle*. \$. 6 p.m.

SATURDAY, MAY 4

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Sarah Jarosz*. \$. 8 p.m.

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MADHOUSE from page B1

“There’s a lot of guidance on how to make art and how to make music academia, but not as much in terms of how to make that into a sustainable career, or a sustainable part of your life.”

He found his answer within his coursework, as a fortuitously-timed entrepreneurship class became the flashpoint for a new endeavor. “That’s what made me think about [the problem] in terms of a gap in the market,” he explained: “What’s the social-entrepreneurial solution to this issue?”

Using his own experience as a musician in the early stages of a career, Williams landed on one simple, but poignant, idea. After doing market research interviews among his peers at Hampshire and in the broader region, his hunch was confirmed: “Community was one of the biggest throughlines that came up again and again,” he said. “How do you build that community, and reach other people to collaborate with and learn from?”

Although digital tools that aim to foster



“Community was one of the biggest throughlines that came up again and again,” said Jackson Williams, of the research that led him and his colleague Charlotte Treiber to launch Madhouse Multi-Arts. “How do you build that community, and reach other people to collaborate with and learn from?”

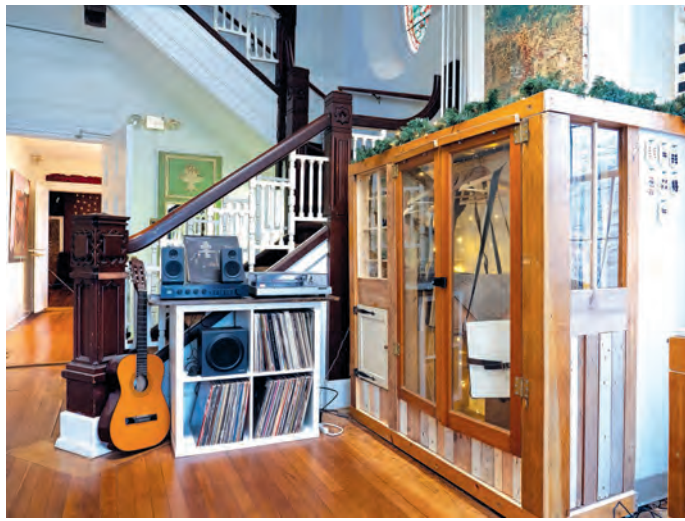
this kind of community exist, such as the online Arts Hub of Western Mass, Williams chose to go the brick-and-mortar route. “Places are where community begins,” he says.

What spawned from the imaginations of Williams and Treiber today stands not only as an ode to patchwork architecture, but as a successful business venture. The three-story Victorian house on Greenfield’s Main Street has been receiving a flood of interest from the local community – all 10 of its personal artist studios are booked up, and there’s a competitive waiting list.

“I wanted a space that would have workspace for creatives, that would be the business element of the space,” Williams said. “We would create our bottom line by renting art studios to local artists at affordable rates, which are really hard to find in the market still.”

As with most artists, for Williams and Treiber it’s not all about the money. Although Madhouse focused on building towards financial stability, its bottom line is also about social contribution. “It’s important for any social entrepreneur to start in a community that they really know,” Williams reflected. “Startups will go where the business is, and there’s this disconnect – yes, they might have an interesting product, but they don’t really know who they’re selling to. And a lot of times, that’s what leads to gentrification, and issues like that. I think it’s important that people have some connection to the community that they’re trying to start up in, and if there’s any community I feel like I have a connection to it’s western Mass.”

With the artist studios creating buzz, Williams and Treiber still had their eyes on developing a more collaborative and communal space, and they’ve now taken a step in



Downstairs in the Main Street Victorian.

that direction by opening up the Madhouse Makerspace.

“It’s a shared workspace, so it’s more affordable than the personal art studios – it’s more accessible to people in multiple ways,” Williams told the *Reporter*. “It’s a shared space that creates this opportunity for people to meet each other while they work, and inspire each other with what they’re creating.”

The makerspace will also be available to rent out for local artists holding classes or workshops: “That educational element is an important part of the original vision – teaching the arts, and teaching the more business elements, like how do you market your art?”

Madhouse seeks to be a place where artists can build off one another and create collective momentum. “We really try to put it out there that the arts are an ecosystem,” Williams said. “If you’re a musician, eventually you’re going to need an album cover, and maybe you want to talk to a visual artist about that. There’s a connection there, between these different disciplines... We’re at our best when we work together. That’s the message we try

to get across with Madhouse, in terms of the ‘Multi-Arts’ aspect of it.”

Another recent addition to the ever-expanding list of uses of the building is an art gallery. Williams said he envisions it helping build community as artists display their wares within the building itself. “We have a lot of wall space that we want to fill up,” he told me. “I think it’s going to expand as more creatives reach out to us, and we bring other people in, to have more of a variety of work from different people in the community in the gallery and throughout the makerspace as well.”

Madhouse’s creators aren’t done yet – they are eying improvements such as soundproof rehearsal studio, one of the original issues that struck Williams in the formation stages of the project, in order to allow local musicians to circumvent expensive studio sessions.

“We’re bringing music into what we’re doing here a little bit more,” he said. “Having a soundproof room would be a really great next step.”

With the addition of the collective makerspace and gallery, Williams told me he feels Madhouse’s mission is coming to fruition. For their next ideas, he and Treiber once again turn to the community.

“We really want to hear from you,” he emphasized. “If you have stuff you want to sell in our gallery, if you have knowledge about soundproofing or ideas about the potential rehearsal space, we would love to talk to you about possibilities there. We’re really just looking for more people to bring into this process, and enhance what we’re doing.”

The Madhouse is located at 479 Main Street in Greenfield, and you can find them online at madhousemultiarts.com.



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