

The Montague Reporter

Year 23 – No. 11

FEBRUARY 13, 2025

\$2

editor@montaguereporter.org

THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

montaguereporter.org

SCENE REPORT

Wendell Curve Launches Fifteen Cars Off Track



ISAIAH MANUEL PHOTO

A local railfan had a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to document the derailment.

By SARAH ROBERTSON

WENDELL—A train enthusiast and videographer from Leominster was likely the only person to witness the train derailment on Farley Road Tuesday afternoon.

“It’s by far the craziest thing I have ever seen while being track-side, that’s for sure,” Isaiah Manuel told the *Montague Reporter*. “In those moments it takes your brain a couple seconds to catch up with what is happening.”

Manuel, a camera operator and senior at Fitchburg State University, said he used his day off from work to travel west and watch a train he knew would be chugging

through town. He was taking a video of Genesee & Wyoming’s Berkshire and Eastern train as it crossed Farley Road when he heard, and then saw, train cars behind him piling up off the tracks.

“While I’m watching it get closer, I was also trying to make sure I’m not going to get hit,” Manuel said. “I didn’t want this to be the last video I ever take.”

No injuries were reported, and no hazardous materials were released into the environment as a result of the incident, which occurred around 3:45 p.m. on Tuesday, according to the Leverett police department, which covers

see **CURVE** page A6

Input Sought On Climate Preparedness ‘Seed Project’

BY LILIAN AUTLER

MONTAGUE – As the town prepares to move into the next phase of the state’s Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) 2.0 planning process, it is seeking input from residents on three proposed “seed” projects that could help strengthen the community against the effects of climate change. Montague has been allocated \$50,000 to fund a 12-month project that will address priorities identified by the community.

The state Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) initiated the original MVP in 2017, and launched MVP 2.0 as a parallel program in 2023 in an effort to better involve groups deemed especially vulnerable to the impacts of climate change – including seniors, renters, people with disabilities, low-income households, and those who work outdoors – in setting local priorities.

The MVP 2.0 process and tools help towns identify root causes of social vulnerability, and what it will take to build more resilience. In August 2023 Montague was selected to participate in the new program and received a grant of \$95,000 – an initial \$45,000 to identify local priorities, and \$50,000 to implement a chosen “seed” project.

Over the past year, the town’s “MVP 2.0 core team,” which includes residents, local organizations, and municipal staff, surveyed

see **SEED** page A5

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD Town Hall Bombshells: Top Assessor, Clerk Depart

By JEFF SINGLETON

“I do have a couple of other personnel board-related topics that were not anticipated,” town administrator Walter Ramsey announced at the Montague selectboard’s Monday night meeting. “Earlier today, the board and I received a letter of resignation from town clerk Kathern ‘Beanie’ Pierce. She’s right now planning to work through Tuesday, February 18, and then take accumulated paid time off.”

Ramsey then announced the impending retirement of director of assessing Karen Tonelli. He said Tonelli had been planning to retire “for some time,” but had “finally zeroed in on a date and is ready to make it public.” That date is February 28.

These bombshells came in the middle of a short, but eventful,

see **MONTAGUE** page A7

Small Hydro Plant Returns To Haunt Strathmore Demo

By JEFF SINGLETON

TURNERS FALLS – At its meeting Monday the Montague selectboard learned that the project to demolish the former Strathmore Mill complex has hit a snag. A building within the complex owned by a Canadian company, a small hydro plant held up by other structures in the closely interconnected former paper factory, could cost as much as \$10 million to stabilize or reconstruct.

Assistant town administrator Chris Nolan-Zeller noted that since the entire demolition was expected to cost just over \$10 million, “that would be a budget-buster.”

Turners Falls Hydro, LLC, the

company that owns the hydro generation plant within the complex, is one of 85 hydroelectric operators owned by Eagle Creek Renewable Energy, which in turn is owned by Ontario Power Generation, a Canadian crown company. A crown company is owned by the Canadian or provincial government and has a mix of public and commercial objectives.

Turners Falls Hydro has a “water exchange agreement” on the Turners Falls power canal with FirstLight Power – itself a subsidiary of another Canadian crown company, which invests public employee pensions. FirstLight controls the flow of water into the canal, and pays

see **PLANT** page A4



MIKE JACKSON PHOTO

Building 9 of the complex, the only part still privately owned, houses its power turbine.

LEVERETT SELECTBOARD

Selectboard Favors Forest Gift; Field Building Study Chair Bails

By GEORGE BRACE

Five committees showed up to Leverett’s selectboard meeting on Tuesday, either in person or via Zoom, leading to a lengthy meeting. The board held a budget hearing with the finance committee to review a draft FY’26 budget for Leverett Elementary School (LES) and heard discussion of various property issues including a potential land gift, a resident’s request to buy four acres of town land, and the fate of the historic Field library building.

School committee chair Jya Plavin presented a draft LES budget of \$2.36 million, a 4.04% increase over the current year. While this was above the guidance issued to departments of a maximum 2.5% increase, there was little initial pushback from the board or fin com.

Plavin informed the board, however, that contract talks with the teachers’ union are still underway, and that the numbers may shift. This led to a discussion of teacher compensation, and board members

see **LEVERETT** page A6

ERVING SELECTBOARD

\$3 Million Repair Cost Floated For Elementary School Roof; \$200 Million to Rebuild FCTS?

By KEITH WATERS

The Erving selectboard met Monday, February 10 with the school, capital planning, and finance committees to work on the FY’26 budget.

In a brief meeting before the joint meeting, town administrator Bryan Smith presented a request from Verizon for a letter of support for an attempt by the company to win state grant money for increasing internet access. As he pointed

out, however, the request was lacking any detail as to how this would benefit Erving.

Smith and the selectboard recalled a similar request in recent years from Comcast, which did include details of how the funding would help that company extend service to residents of Erving who still do not have broadband internet service at their houses.

Smith said he believes the number of households in town that still

see **ERVING** page A8

GILL-MONTAGUE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

School Police Officer Pulled

By MIKE JACKSON

GILL-MONTAGUE – Tuesday’s Gill-Montague school committee meeting included a hearing on the district’s FY’26 budget, which must be finalized and voted on March 11. Business manager Joanne Blier ran through a short presentation, which included no news since a preliminary budget passed two weeks earlier; due to stagnant state aid and rising insurance and retirement

costs, no new jobs will be created, and two or three may be eliminated.

“Could that money come from someplace else besides positions?” asked elementary librarian Ramona LaTronica.

“There are some other opportunities that we want to be able to explore to keep the positions that we have in the district,” superintendent Brian Beck replied.

“Gill has a fairly significant

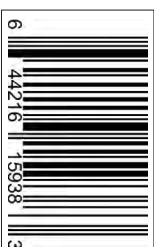
see **GMRSD** page A8

A NET BENEFIT



DAVID HOITT PHOTO

Turners Falls’s Jackson Cogswell drives to the paint against Franklin Tech Eagle defenders Gabe Mota (left) and Dylon Cullen (right) last Friday as Turners senior Caden Williams-Senethavisouk looks on. The Thunder hosted the Eagles on a combined Senior Night and “Coaches V.s. Cancer Night,” a fundraiser for TFHS alumna Jenna Putala who is battling cancer. Thunder prevailed, 47 to 30.



You Following Any of This Trump Stuff?

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The Montague Reporter

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GUEST EDITORIAL

Their Worst Fear

By BERNIE SANDERS

BURLINGTON, VT – I do not often find myself in the habit of thanking Elon Musk, but he has done an exceptional job of demonstrating a point that we have made for years – and that is the fact we live in an oligarchic society in which billionaires dominate not only our politics and the information we consume, but our government and economic lives as well.

That has never been more clear than it is today.

But given the news and attention Mr. Musk has been getting over the last few weeks as he illegally and unconstitutionally dismantles government agencies, I thought it was an appropriate time to ask the question that the media and most politicians don't seem to be asking:

What do he and other multi-billionaires really want? What is their endgame?

In my opinion, what Musk and those around him are aggressively striving for is not novel, it is not complicated, and it is not new. It is what ruling classes throughout history have always wanted and have believed is theirs by right: more power, more control, more wealth. And they don't want ordinary people and democracy getting in their way.

Elon Musk and his fellow oligarchs believe government and laws are simply an impediment to their interests and what they are entitled to.

In pre-revolutionary America, the ruling class governed through the "divine right of kings," the belief that the King of England was an agent of God, not to be questioned. In modern times, the oligarchs believe that as the masters of technology and as "high-IQ individuals," it is their absolute right to rule. In other words, they are our modern-day kings.

And it is not just power. It's incredible wealth. Today, Musk, Bezos and Zuckerberg have a combined worth of \$903 billion, more than the bottom half of American society – 170 million people. Since Trump was elected, unbelievably, their wealth has soared. Elon Musk has become \$138 billion richer, Zuckerberg has become \$49 billion richer, and Bezos has become \$28 billion richer. Add it all up and the three wealthiest men in America have become \$215 billion richer

since Election Day.

Meanwhile, while the very rich become much richer, 60% of Americans live paycheck to paycheck, 85 million are uninsured or under-insured, 25% of seniors are trying to survive on \$15,000 or less, 800,000 are homeless and we have the highest rate of childhood poverty of almost any major country on earth.

Do you think the oligarchs give a damn about these people? Trust me, they don't. Musk's decision to dismember USAID means that thousands of the poorest people around the world will go hungry or die of preventable diseases.

But it's not just abroad. Here in the United States they'll soon be going after the healthcare, nutrition, housing, and educational programs that protect the most vulnerable people in our country – so that Congress can provide huge tax breaks for them and their fellow billionaires. As modern-day kings, who believe they have the absolute right to rule, they will sacrifice, without hesitation, the well-being of working people to protect their privilege.

Further, they will use the enormous media operations they own to deflect attention away from the impact of their policies while they "entertain us to death." They will lie, lie, and lie. They will continue to spend huge amounts of money to buy politicians in both major political parties.

They are waging a war on the working class of this country, and it is a war they are intent on winning.

I am not going to kid you – the problems this country faces right now are serious, and they are not easy to solve. The economy is rigged, our campaign finance system is corrupt, and we are struggling to control climate change – among other issues.

But this is what I do know:

The worst fear of the ruling class in this country is that Americans – Black, White, Latino, urban and rural, gay and straight – come together to demand a government that represents all of us, not just the wealthy few.

Their nightmare is that we will not allow ourselves to be divided up by race, religion, sexual orientation, or country of origin and will, together, have the courage to take them on.

Will it be easy? Of course not.

The ruling class of this country will constantly remind you that they have all the power. They con-

trol the government, they own the media. "You want to take us on? Good luck," they will say. "There's nothing you can do about it."

But our job today is to not forget the great struggles and sacrifices that millions of people have waged over the centuries to create a more democratic, just and humane society:

- Overthrowing the King of England to create a new nation and self-rule. *Impossible.*
- Establishing universal suffrage. *Impossible.*
- Ending slavery and segregation. *Impossible.*
- Granting workers the right to form unions and ending child labor. *Impossible.*
- Giving women control over their own bodies. *Impossible.*
- Passing legislation to establish Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, a minimum wage, clean air and water standards. *Impossible.*

In these difficult times, despair is not an option. We've got to fight back in every way we can.

We have to get involved in the political process – run for office, connect with our local, state and federal legislators, donate to candidates who will fight for the working class of this country. We have to create new channels for communication and information sharing. We have to volunteer not just politically, but to build community locally.

Whatever we can do is what we must do.

Needless to say, I intend to do my part – both inside the Beltway and traveling throughout the country – to stand up for the working class of this country. In the days, weeks, and months ahead, I hope you will join me in that struggle.

Bernie Sanders has served as a United States senator for Vermont since 2007, and as the state's congressman from 1991 to 2007. Before his election to Congress, he was mayor of Burlington.

This editorial was originally published by Z (znetwork.org).



Turners Falls native Jennifer Waryas started her TeaTimes business in 2022, selling custom blends to restaurants and stores, at events, and online at teatimestx.com. Waryas has also been on the Montague finance committee for five years. Each blend has a time stamp for a suggested point in the day when a cuppa might transform the human experience. Try some at the Rendezvous or Great Falls Harvest in Turners Falls.

Letter to the Editors

Giant Conveyor Belts?

Respectfully, I must ask the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP): Are you part of the "Indian boarding school" flow of history, the side that tries to eliminate Native culture, that tries to disallow indigenous voices, or not? Which side? Answer with actions!

Sadly, I find they've tipped their hand in the very first sentence of the *Introduction to Findings*. Apparently attempting a tribute on Page 15: "Rivers are dynamic systems, always changing shape and moving things from their headwaters downstream..."

Well first, MassDEP's words gloss over all the damned downstream flow dam delays. Also glossed over is Northfield Mountain Pumped Storage's (NMPS) "run the river backwards" – *river desecration*. Day after day after day.

Then that sentence ends: "...like giant conveyor belts." Well, in polite words for print, are you ***** kidding me? How about acknowledgment that rivers are ecological systems, that river flow includes lots of life? Maybe even acknowledge rivers as giant living beings.

"Water is Life" is now a part of our cultural flow. A needed contribution from Native voices.

It seems that the fix is in: that MassDEP will not deny the quoted Draft Water Quality Certificate (WQC); that FERC will not be quickly ending the automatic NMPS annual license renewals; that neither agency will take those actions, which

both have good reasons to take, and both have the *valid authority to take*, which together would swiftly end the legality of FirstLight's intolerable NMPS river desecration.

The 117-page Draft WQC has many long, high specificity, legalistic, multiple-clause sentences, maybe a bit like the last one! Perhaps such pain-in-the-butt sentences are needed. But not the sentence I quote, that's a choice. It shows which side MassDEP stands on.

MassDEP has chosen, so far, to stick with the "Indian boarding school" flow of history. We've had way too much of that already! The WQC has hardly any mention of the Tribal Coalition's invaluable input.

I implore the good folks at MassDEP: Find interpretations of laws to bring Tribal Coalition voices forward! With steadfast adherence to the truth, throughout this grueling more than decade long FERC relicensing process, the Nolumbeka Project's wise words have been there. Most often with our Northfield neighbor Joe Graveline's signature at the bottom. Now they are gone. It's outrageous!

For God's sake, for Mother Earth's sake, step definitively out of the "Indian boarding school" flow of history.

Please check out the Connecticut River Defenders' "Help Save The River" ad, and come to GCC next Wednesday the 19th.

Gary Seldon
Greenfield

Published weekly on Thursdays.

Every other week in July and August.
No paper the fourth week of November,
or the final week of December.

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LOCAL BRIEFS

Compiled by NINA ROSSI

The second annual **Arc-a-Palooza** is back at the Shea Theater in Turners Falls this Saturday, February 15 at 7 p.m. This fundraising concert for the United Arc helps provide members of the community with the support they need in the pursuit of inclusion, choice, and independence.

There will be performances by Evelynroze, John Waynelovich, The Bromatics, and Alex Casavant, plus the “Arc-a-pella” group, composed of people supported by the Arc.

Tickets are sliding scale, from \$20 to \$50, and available at sheatheater.org or at the door.

This Saturday, February 15, a new batch of **Artful Ice Shanties** will appear on the grounds of the Retreat Farm in Brattleboro. This marks the fifth year artists and builders have labored to create ice shanties for this contest. Check out photos of past shanties at brattleboromuseum.org.

Among this year’s shanties are a dome-shaped “Cosmic Energy Portal” created by Brattleboro artist Cynthia Parker-Houghton as a place to meditate, and “Yurt John” by Mike Iacona, which features a composting toilet. Check out more whimsical shanties – rainbow tent, a toadstool home, a giant tomato soup can – on view from dawn to dusk until Sunday, February 23. Admission is free, and an awards ceremony will be held Saturday, February 22 at 2 p.m.

Montague Villages will host a Meet & Greet event at the Millers Falls branch library next Tuesday, February 18 from 3 to 5 p.m.

“We aer very much looking forward to working with and serving the people of Millers Falls,” board member Mary Kay Mattiace writes. “Anyone over 18 can volunteer to help provide services, and anyone over 60 can enjoy the services we provide.” The event is open to all Montague residents.

The Brick House Community Resource Center is hosting a **Family Game Night**, including dinner and door prizes, next Thursday, February 20 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. They’ll have games for a wide range of ages, or you can bring your own.

Register at either slangknecht@brickhousecommunity.org or (413) 800-2496 so organizers can plan for enough food. The Brick House is at 24 Third Street in Turners Falls.

The Franklin County Food Council needs input from the community through a brief **survey about our county’s local food system**, and how the Food Council could best support any projects you or your organization are working on. Fill out the survey at bit.ly/fc2survey by next Wednesday, February 19.

The Council describes itself as a group of growers, agency and municipal representatives, food service workers, community members, local food advocates, and others working to promote an equitable, robust, and resilient food system in our county.

Next Thursday, February 20 the Montague Cultural Council is hosting an **event at the Shea Theater** to kick off its 2025 grant year. This “Evening Smorgasbord of Culture in Action,” from 6 to 8 p.m., will include announcements of this year’s

funding recipients as well as presentations and live performances by Cloudbelly, Antenna Cloud Farm, Good Music Makes Good Neighbors, Weathervane Community Arts, the Nolumbeka Project, Música Franklin, Real Live Theater, Alexis Hott, and Customers from Hell.

The Shea lobby will also host a Black History Month exhibit featuring work by contemporary metal artist Kamil Peters, oil painter Noland Anderson, and large-scale portrait artist Meclina Gomes, all former James Weldon Johnson fellows.

The reception is free and open to the public, and light refreshments will be provided.

The Franklin County Solid Waste District has changed its recommendations for **recycling greasy pizza boxes**. Apparently, a 2020 study found that grease on pizza boxes is all right to recycle! Empty your box, scrape off any food bits, and put it in with the rest of your cardboard and paper recycling. If you need guidance about what can or cannot be recycled, check out the “recyclopeda” at recyclesmartma.org.

Nominations are being taken for the **Dakin Humane Society’s Humane Award**. They are looking for individuals who actively improve the lives of animals in need in their

everyday life and treatment of animals. Submit your nomination at dakinhumane.org/humane-awards.

Massachusetts has created a new **state Poet Laureate position**. Over the next few months, Mass Humanities and the Massachusetts Cultural Council will form a nomination committee to review poet laureate applications and pass them on to the governor.

The Poet Laureate will organize and attend events, write original poems for important occasions, and help promote poetry in the schools. They will receive a stipend provided by the Mass Cultural Council. Information about how to apply will be released this spring.

Want to test out your roller derby fantasy with a supportive group? The **Pioneer Valley Roller Derby** is holding two recruitment nights at the YMCA in Greenfield on February 27 and March 6 at 7:15 p.m.

No experience or gear is required, and all genders are welcome to attend one night or both. Register at pioneervalleyrollerderby.com. There are also non-skating roles to fill such as referees for those who don’t wish to roll.

Send your local briefs to editor@montaguereporter.org.



Several More Letters to the Editors!

Union’s Move Was Not Helpful

In your January 2 issue, a former GMRSD school committee member described some of the history that led up to the GMEA’s announcement at the school committee’s public comment on December 17 that its members had taken a “no confidence” vote regarding the district superintendent (reported in the December 19 issue). The writer ended by saying that “GMEA [was left with] no outlet but public comment to address the School Committee with what are possibly, or probably, legitimate concerns that need School Committee attention.”

I have been thinking about this, and I believe that there was definitely another, better, way to have handled this.

According to the GMEA, the concerns had been ongoing for several years, and its statement referenced “comprehensive data” collected from its members,” but there was no mention of efforts to resolve those concerns with the superintendent.

It seems to me that the GMEA should have started by taking its members’ concerns to the superintendent, documenting both the concerns and its efforts to resolve them. If those efforts did not lead to a satisfactory result, the GMEA should have contacted the school committee, presented its documentation, and asked for a meeting to discuss the situation.

Since GMRSD policies require that staff concerns be communicated to the school committee through the superintendent, the GMEA should have made clear in their request that they had tried to work

with the superintendent but had not been successful. That would have allowed the school committee to put the GMEA on their agenda, and there could have been a full discussion among the GMEA, the school committee, and the superintendent. All parties could have had their say, and there would have been the possibility that the issues might at least start to be resolved.

Only if they were rebuffed by the school committee should they have resorted to public comment – or perhaps a press release – to voice their concerns.

As it was, GMEA went to public comment first. The school committee was caught unprepared, and according to the rules there was no opportunity for discussion. The result was headlines that the GMEA members have no confidence in the superintendent, but only vague descriptions as to why. The superintendent was publicly criticized but was not allowed to respond, and the public got the message that there’s big trouble between the superintendent and the staff, but no further information.

How was any of that helpful?

Reportedly, since that time there have been efforts to revive a Joint Labor-Management Committee, which seems like a good development. I hope that we hear more about this going forward, not least because the reputation of GMRSD has been damaged – unnecessarily, in my view – and because it can hopefully still be repaired.

Michael Naughton
Millers Falls

Column Misgendered

I’m a big fan of the *Montague Reporter*, but I was unimpressed to read transphobic writing in it last week in Chip Ainsworth’s column “FBI Visits South Deerfield.” In the blink of an eye, Ainsworth deadnames Riley Jane English and – without clarification – includes two quotes with incorrect pronouns from town and police officials.

If we can even put aside the fact that Ainsworth’s idea for this piece

is elbowing English’s ex-cop neighbor for the local chatter, we’d get to the baseline expectation that editors afford trans subjects equal personhood. Editors, don’t let increasingly blatant transphobia seep into our beloved resource. (And if I’m not too greedy, can we get more illuminating coverage of this story?)

Marie Bloomgarden
Turners Falls

The Case for Winserts

In last week’s *Reporter*, Maureen Pollock’s Letter to the Editor highlighted a survey of residents asking which of three options would be best for meeting Montague’s needs. I was delighted to see the third one, Project C, “piloting a winter window insert program for community buildings.”

I was on the team that pioneered these plastic window inserts in Rockland, Maine, called The Window Dressers back in 2012. They have been so successful that they are now active in the three northern New England states, doing community builds every fall.

These programs benefit the community on many levels. On the most basic level, old leaky windows in old houses become tight and insulated, and the living space is therefore much more comfortable. Heating costs are drastically reduced, for a minimal investment, which also means that households are left with more money in their budgets, which helps to support the local economy. And with less fuel being burned, our Town’s carbon footprint is greatly reduced.

Also, since these older houses with leaky windows tend to be

occupied largely by lower-income members of the community, it also helps to benefit our more vulnerable neighbors.

Further, the benefits can be spread out across the five villages, as opposed to focusing in on only one or just a few locations.

In addition, the technology has already been developed and refined to create a highly efficient production process, and my contacts at Window Dressers tell me they are eager to assist new communities to sponsor their own community builds.

And finally, having a *community build* does just what it sounds like – it helps to build community, foster resilience, and strengthen self-reliance among those who participate and who are benefited.

For all these reasons, I am hoping that some readers who may not yet have voted will go to www.surveymonkey.com/r/seedprojects or vote at one of several locations around town before the February 19 deadline, and vote for your preferred project, preferably Project C.

Karun Das
Montague Center

Deny the Certificate

I and many that I speak to are deeply disappointed by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection’s (DEP’s) decision to approve the draft Water Quality Certificate (WQC) for FirstLight Power for the next 50 years, for many reasons. I urge readers to join the effort to tell DEP to deny the certificate by coming to the public hearing on February 19.

As our environment, ecology, and biodiversity are being attacked by our government and industry in so many ways, we ask you to support this action, either in person or by registering for the online Zoom.

We urge you to send written comments to DEP about their draft certification at www.mass.gov/forms/contact-us-firstlight-401-water-quality-certification-wqc. You can adapt points from *CtRiverDefenders.org* to assist you.

Federal, state, and local agencies charged to protect the river for the public good are instead complicit with FirstLight’s continuing destruction of the river. The company’s enormous wealth and its greenwashing language have cast a net over our environmental protection agencies – as well as the Maura Healey administration, including Climate Chief Melissa Hoffer.

We ask that the DEP stop the issuance of WQC in an effort to deny FirstLight its ability to continue harming the environment.

At the very least, we ask that FirstLight not be allowed to monitor itself – we do not want the fox guarding the chicken coop.

Miriam Kurland
Williamsburg

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NOTES FROM THE GILL SELECTBOARD

Historical Commission Awarded More Elbow Room

By KATE SAVAGE

In Monday's brief meeting, the Gill selectboard encouraged the town's historical commission to expand into additional space at the Riverside municipal building. Previously, two of the three rooms in the building were used by the Four Winds School. The school closed last year.

"In the last 15 or 20 years we've been given lots of donations of lots of different kinds, and we have done our best to display them," said Kit Carpenter, chair of the historical commission. "We are pretty much out of space in the southwest room."

In a letter to the board, the commission wrote that with more space they could host events, offer activities for elementary school students, and expand their displays on natural history, past and present indigenous culture, industrial development, farming, and more.

The selectboard not only agreed, but encouraged them to go further. Selectboard chair Greg Snedeker suggested taking time to envision ways the entire building and surrounding property could best serve the commission and the wider community. "It's an opportunity right now," he said. "So don't necessarily think about costs: think about the great value you can add to the community."

"I would love to see it used," said selectboard member Randy Crochier, "because I'm a huge advocate for 'If we're not going to be using it, we need to be getting rid of it.'"

Crochier recommended holding a selectboard meeting at the Riverside building in April to further discuss plans.

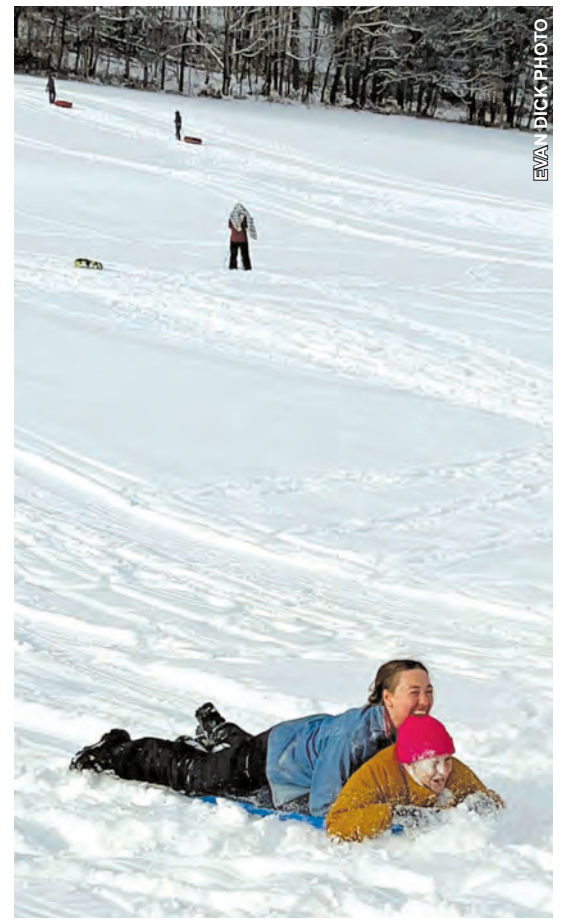
Other Business

Police sergeant John Richardson announced there is still space available in the "Stop the Bleed" class he and fire chief William Kimball are teaching next Saturday, February 22 from 6 to 7 p.m. at the fire station training room. Participants will learn how to respond to traumatic bleeding, which "remains the number one cause of preventable death," said Richardson.

The class is free, and Gill residents will be given priority if too many register, but all are welcome. Those interested in attending should email Richardson at jrichardson@gillmass.org.

Selectboard member Charles Garbiel thanked Flagg Farm for hosting a town sledding activity on Sunday. "It was a great thing for the kids and the adults, to get some fresh air and get in the snow," he said.

Prior to the public portion of the meeting, the selectboard met in a closed executive session to discuss the police chief's contract.



The public was invited to sled at Flagg Farm on Sunday.

PLANT from page A1

Turners Falls Hydro not to use any of its water for power generation whenever the canal flow is below a specific level, namely 15,000 cubic feet per second (cfs).

The agreement is beneficial to both companies: when the flow in the canal is below that level, Turners Falls Hydro gets paid for doing nothing, and its share of water allows FirstLight to generate more power – and receive more revenue – at Cabot Station at the canal's end. The larger company then reimburses the smaller company for half the electricity it produces using that water share.

The exchange is apparently in effect the majority of the time: according to a 2019 *Montague Reporter* investigation, in 2014 and 2015 Turners Falls Hydro was reimbursed by FirstLight for over four times as much electricity as it actually produced at the Strathmore. When the small turbine is operating, it uses 288 cfs of water.

FirstLight is in the late stages of renewing its federal license to operate the canal and Cabot Station, and its application includes a concession of allowing more water to remain in the river. If approved, this suggests that in the coming decades less water would enter the canal, and the Turners Falls Hydro turbine would therefore run even more infrequently.

Throughout the discussion on Monday night, the smaller hydro plant was referred to as "Eagle Creek" because, according to town administrator Walter Ramsey, all negotiations about the future of the building have been with that parent company. The building housing the turbine, which once generated power used by the paper mill, was legally separated from the rest of the complex in 2001, and remained under private ownership after the town took over the Strathmore in 2011 for delinquent tax payments.

The town has been aware for a number of years that a near-total demolition of the former mill would cause the building housing the turbine to collapse. A 2018 demolition and abatement design project came to an inglorious end after the design firm Tighe & Bond informed the selectboard that its plan to demolish nine of the 11 Strathmore buildings would cost the town an additional \$50,000 in design expenses alone.

Designs unveiled in 2023 for a broader "Canal District" by another firm, Dietz & Company Architects, advocated a total Strathmore teardown but left the hydro plant somehow standing alone and in good condition.

Montague has secured funding for the demolition, now the agreed-upon plan, from a number of sources: a

\$4,920,400 Brownfields grant from the federal Environmental Protection Agency, a \$5,000,000 earmark from the state Department of Conservation and Recreation, and a \$132,700 site-readiness grant from the agency MassDevelopment. These grants were celebrated enthusiastically last summer at a rally across the canal from the complex, though the fate of the hydro plant was not mentioned.

With this money now on the table, more detailed plans are under way. One complication Nolan-Zeller reported on Monday concerns the disused pedestrian bridge over the canal, connecting the mills with the downtown neighborhood in front of Keith Apartments, originally built as housing for paper mill workers.

The bridge is owned by FirstLight, Nolan-Zeller said, but it also carries utility lines owned by the town, and these contain asbestos. The town is therefore responsible for abating the asbestos before the power company can demolish the bridge, which must happen before the mill complex can be demolished.

Nolan-Zeller did not say how much this work is estimated to cost, but he noted that "the town does have a funding source" to cover it: "There's a \$250,000 settlement between the town and FirstLight regarding that footbridge from years ago that we feel would be the best

possible course of action for moving forward."


The selectboard heard this update without taking action.

As for the buildings, Tighe & Bond has been estimating the cost to the town of either stabilizing the existing structure around the power turbine or building a new one for Eagle Creek. Nolan-Zeller revealed on Monday that the first option was pegged at around \$7 million and the latter at \$10 million, nearly as much as the expected price tag for the demolition of the entire complex.

"We are currently reevaluating how we can move the project forward," said Nolan-Zeller. "Walter and I have been in talks with Eagle Creek and their stakeholders regarding how we can come to a mutually beneficial resolution."

Selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz said that removing the demolition of the complex's freestanding Building 11 from the demolition plans might be considered.

"It's good to hear from Rich that we have a little bit of flexibility in looking at different options," said Ramsey. "We're trying to look at different options we have on our table, and changing the scope is one of them."

Mike Jackson contributed additional reporting. 

Reportback: 'Community-Building' Potluck Draws a Crowd

By SHARON DUNN

LEVERETT – Leverett residents numbering 80 gathered at the Mount Toby Meetinghouse on Saturday, February 8, to break bread and hear news of six ongoing Leverett projects. The newly-formed grassroots Leverett Together hosted the event, billed as "Building Community in Leverett in a Time of Uncertainty."

Steve Weiss described the non-profit Leverett Educational Foundation, which raises much-needed supplemental funds for the elementary school. Library director Hannah Paessel introduced new landscaping plans that include spaces for gathering. Cynthia Baldwin spoke



SUBMITTED PHOTO

The potluck crowd listened to Leverett Library director Hannah Paessel describe plans for a pocket park with community spaces on the library grounds.

about the North Leverett Sawmill's and community spaces, and Jacob Park updated the gathering about

the new Amherst-Leverett Alliance and the status of the Kittredge estate development. Leverett Village Cop's ongoing improvements were described by Martin Pittman, and Seth Seeger announced that the LeverettConnects listserv now has over 900 subscribers.

The array of dishes was bountiful, and was accompanied by music by Ron Meck of Shutesbury. The intergenerational gathering included young families. Emcee Tom Wolff, a longtime community organizer, invited attendees to brainstorm for future community events, and ideas were collected for consideration. Leverett Together will be planning future community events.

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SEED from page A1

and interviewed residents to understand the key factors affecting their resilience to climate-related challenges. Three top priorities emerged from this process to guide the project: food access, home energy efficiency, and “community-based resilience initiatives.”

“We’re at ‘Let’s survey for the billionth time,’ but it’s also the last time,” said core team member Jenna Weld, a resident and co-chair of the regional Communities That Care Coalition’s Parent and Family Engagement Group. “There are lots of surveys, it gets overwhelming. A lot of times people feel like, ‘Oh another survey, and we won’t see results’... We’ve listened, we’ve taken notes, we’ve heard what’s important to you. These surveys are very important for us – every answer on the survey is being heard.”

Over time, the team learned which kinds of outreach were most effective. For example, not many community members attended a public meeting at the Shea Theater in October.

“It worked better when we went directly to talk to different groups – Latino residents, Lake Pleasant residents, the senior center, the meal site at the church,” said Jimena de Pareja, a core team member who works in the Gill-Montague schools and at the Heartwing Center.

“The focus group with Spanish-speaking residents at the Heartwing Center was very successful – about 25 people came,” she continued. “People trust Heartwing, they already have a connection. People felt good, because it was the first time the town had asked for their opinion. They felt included and valued.”

After identifying food access, home energy efficiency, and “community-based resilience initiatives” as Montague’s top priorities, the team consulted with local, county, and regional organizations – community garden managers, the Turners Falls Water District superintendent, the Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust, the Montague energy committee, regional experts on window inserts, community kitchen organizers, the Franklin County Regional Housing & Redevelopment Authority – to get their perspectives about which specific projects would be the most feasible and impactful.

“I wanted to get ground truth on these project ideas,” said Montague town planner Maureen Pollock, “so I suggested having a stakeholder meeting with food access organizations that are directly supporting our most vulnerable populations to get their input about the projects we’ve identified: What are we missing? What is doable? We also reached out to organizations focused on housing and energy efficiency. It was a great way to bring together folks from around the region who may not have met in this way before.”

Montague Must Choose

The core team landed on three projects that met the criteria they felt were essential: that they can use the full \$50,000; that the money will make a meaningful difference to the future of the work; that it would positively impact low-income people, and other populations most vulnerable to climate impacts; that they are visible, tangible projects that will engage community members; that they can be completed in 12 months; and that they would not overburden the town.

At this point, residents are asked to give feedback on the three options:

“Project A” would expand and improve on the town’s community gardens. The funds would be used to improve the function of the existing gardens in downtown Turners Falls – at L and Fourth streets, at L and Third streets, and at Unity Park – by purchasing tools and improving site designs and infrastructure. They would also help explore residents’ interest and options for new community gardens, or orchards, in Montague’s other four villages.

This project aims to promote residents’ self-sufficiency and access to fresh produce, support urban cooling and stormwater management, and contribute to community connectedness and a sense of place.

“Project B” would develop a community commercial kitchen next to the Finders Collective’s free store in downtown Turners Falls. The funds would go toward planning, repair, and equipment to turn the former 2nd Street Bakery space on Fourth Street into a shared commercial food and herb-almism kitchen.

The project proposes to use the kitchen to provide a free weekly hot meal, an accessible incubator space that can be rented by local food and herbal medicine businesses, and a venue for cooking and herbal workshops, classes, and events.

The goal is to improve food and medicine access for local residents, create job opportunities and economic growth, and foster community connection.

“Project C” would pilot a winter window insert program for homes in Montague. Window inserts are double-layer heavy-duty plastic-wrapped wooden frames with foam around the edge that allows the inserts to slide into window sills and seal with friction. Custom-made inserts better insulate windows in winter, as well as in summer for buildings using air conditioning.

The funds would be used to organize “community builds” for Montague homeowners and renters to create these inserts together. The project would focus on creating systems and a volunteer base that could potentially continue the program in the future, and aims to lower residents’ energy bills, benefit the environment through reduced energy use, offer an easy home-improvement option for renters, and foster connection among volunteers.

Further Opportunities

Only one of these three proposals can be implemented with MVP 2.0 funds over the next year. However, core team members emphasized that this round of funding is just a start, and is not necessarily the last opportunity to develop these projects.

“All the seed project ideas have merit,” Pollock affirmed. “The planning department will continue to explore ways to support all the projects and help them come to fruition.”

“We’ve heard a lot of other ideas in the community, and we’ve kept note of the things they’ve mentioned,” Weld agreed. “We may not be able to implement all of them through MVP, but there may be other opportunities. The biggest thing for us is to make sure this project is tangible, and people can see it happening.”

All of the core team members contacted by the *Montague Reporter* spoke highly of the MVP 2.0 process overall.

“My takeaway is that this project offers Montague an opportunity for coalition-building on a variety of climate change priorities that serve our whole community, including the most vulnerable populations, so we can continue working together for a resilient and sustainable future,” said Pollock. “I tip my hat to the EEA for creating this program.”

Weld said participating on the core team has been the most fulfilling thing she has done in a long time. “It felt good to have a voice,” she said, “and also to help give voice to other people that often feel voiceless, especially in the climate we’re in now.”

She added that she believes the MVP 2.0 process has opened new channels for communication between town officials and residents. “People had no idea that their voices could be heard, that they were more than just people that live here. When this ends, it’s not the end of the conversation. We’re still listening and willing to find more money to keep building community.”

De Pareja agreed that the process has been very well-organized, with a lot of communication and collaboration. Each phase has included training for the core team, including studying examples of how similar climate-resilience projects have been carried out in other places.

“I’d never been involved in a project like this,” said de Pareja. “We’ve learned a lot.”

The survey is available in English (at right) and Spanish, online or in printed form at various locations, including the Gill-Montague senior center, any of the public libraries, town hall, the Brick House Community Resource Center, and Heartwing Center, formerly known as Montague Catholic Social Ministries. The deadline to submit responses is at midnight next Wednesday, February 19.



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DAVID HOIT PHOTO

Turners Falls’s Freilyn Abarua tries to juke Franklin Tech’s Dylon Cullen during last Friday’s Coaches Vs. Cancer event. We hope to return to our regular high school sports coverage next week – thanks to our readers for your patience!

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CURVE from page A1

the town of Wendell. Fifteen cars were derailed in all. "...[T]he cars were transporting dry goods," the department reported.

Wendell selectboard member Gillian Budine reported on the townwide listserv that 64 households lost power after the accident, but it was restored within two hours.

A video of the derailment Manuel posted to his YouTube page, @IsaiahsTrains, has been viewed over 40,000 times as of press time.

"As soon as it happened I shut off my camera and hopped in my car," he said. "I turned the corner, and that's when I saw the extent of the damage."


Farley Road was closed for several hours while crews worked to remove the railcars blocking the road – and Manuel was stuck there the whole time. A derailed car was blocking the road in one direction, while the rear section of the train, which remained on

the tracks, blocked the crossing in the other. Manuel said he spent the time talking with first responders and neighbors, who shared food and coffee with him.

"I'm all for things out of the ordinary," Manuel said. "It was a good time."

At the scene, Manuel said, it became clear that a broken rail had been the cause of the derailment. Broken rails are common in the winter months due to fluctuating temperatures, he explained, and railroad companies periodically inspect and fix them.

In February 2024, according to *Trains* magazine, a broken rail caused the derailment of 10 Berkshire and Eastern railcars in Valley Falls, New York, two of which fell into the Hoosic River and spilled plastic pellets downstream.

Farley Road remains closed to through traffic as of press time as the cleanup is expected to take several days. 



Freight containers and power lines were strewn across Farley Road after the mishap.

Montague Community Television News

Already Uploaded

By HANNAH BROOKMAN

TURNERS FALLS – MCTV covered Montague's special town meeting on Wednesday evening and it is already up for viewing Thursday morning, as is the Gill-Montague regional school committee meeting from Tuesday night and the Montague selectboard meeting from Monday.

The recent performance of *Mother Tongue* at the Shea is in the editing stages as of press time but will be uploaded this week, so don't forget to keep watching MCTV!

If there is a meeting, event, performance, or happening in the area that you think MCTV should capture, let us know. And if you also have an idea for a show, MCTV is always available to assist in local productions as well. Just reach out!

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The assistance does not need to be repaid.

LEVERETT from page A1

voiced concern that the negotiations are completed in time for town meeting in May and that their outcome keeps in line with the draft budget.

Plavin and Shannon White-Cleveland, superintendent of the elementary school Union 28, responded to concerns over the potential for rising salaries by pointing out that LES has the highest enrollment, smallest staff, and lowest budget of the four elementary schools in the district.

Plavin also argued that competitive salaries were necessary to attract and retain high-quality staff, which in turn leads to LES benefiting financially as more students "choice in" from other towns.

White-Cleveland noted that LES has the "largest swing" of students "choicing in" rather than "choicing out" in the district.

Selectboard member Jed Proujansky said he didn't want to see the budget grow due to an underestimate of salaries, and that if it turns out to be low, the school will need to reduce costs in other areas. He added that looking at the federal government, he was "very scared" that revenue being counted on may not show up.

Union 28 finance director Caitlin Sheridan replied that she would like to come back for another review if the salary negotiations substantially change the estimate.

Among the other line items discussed was an increased expense for assessment programs following low scores in Leverett's most recent Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) test. Plavin, Proujansky, and others said they were not fans of standardized testing, but Plavin said many parents "deeply care" about it and that it is often an important measure for people looking at school choice.

Fin com member Isaiah Robison suggested more faith should be placed in "word of mouth" than standardized tests. "It's about the people," he said.

Proujansky added that when MCAS began, every teacher told him they "know what the kids needed," and that he felt the quality of education, not test scores, draws people.

Chair Tom Hankinson said the selectboard can't decide whether teachers are paid enough, but must take the information it is provided and decide whether to endorse a 4.04% increase in the school budget. He asked the school committee to keep the board informed of the status of the negotiations. If they are not completed in time for the May 3 town meeting, a special town meeting will be needed to approve either the entire school budget or just the salary section.

Closing the discussion, Plavin lauded the "amazing leadership" at the school since a crisis last spring, and said the changes that have taken place since then feel "really solid." This drew a round of applause.

Town Forest

Following the recommendation of an *ad hoc* study committee, the board voted unanimously to include on the town meeting warrant a pro-

posed gift from former resident Bruce Spencer of 147 acres of land on North Leverett Road known as the "Two Brothers Woodlot."

The study committee handed in a 30-page report recommending the acceptance of the land for the purpose of creating a "town forest," and offered to provide guided tours for the public before the vote. Members noted that if the gift is accepted, state regulations require a three-member governing entity to be formed, but said they already had four volunteers.

Spencer spent 41 years working as a forester in the Quabbin forest district, retiring as chief forester in 2006. He has managed the woodlot as a personal project since the 1970s, and is offering it out of gratitude for his time in Leverett and because he believes it will be a valuable educational, recreational, and preservation resource.

One question the committee flagged concerned a bridge which provides access to the property. Resident Bob Sieruta said a bridge had the potential to become a money pit, though he was not aware of its current condition.

Hankinson described the structure as a "damn sturdy bridge."

Highway superintendent Matt Boucher said he would "drive a loaded truck over it," but agreed that the formalities of it becoming a state-regulated bridge did raise questions.

One committee member commented that the land is "a jewel of a forest – I've never seen anything like it."

Hankinson said he was "sold on the vision of this being a managed forest, a teaching forest, to the extent that volunteers would be interested in maintaining it," and that he felt the enthusiasm he has seen from residents would ensure that happens.

Field Building

Another *ad hoc* committee, this one to study the future of the Field Memorial Library building, was scheduled to present its "final report" on Tuesday, but the majority of its 11 members felt they were not quite done with their work.

The committee had been tasked with coming up with a plan for the historic, town-owned building, which has been in disrepair for many years and is deteriorating. Member Anne Ferguson said the group was given a "complicated mandate" to find out what residents want to do with the property after a motion to sell it was tabled by town meeting in 2022, but that there was "real dissension" on how to proceed.

Member Maureen Ippolito accused chair Richard Nathorst of "dragging his feet" on the task of arranging for an architectural assessment, to be commissioned with Community Preservation Act funding, which members said was necessary before they could hold public forums to gather residents' opinions.

Nathorst said he had solicited bids for the assessment, but had been busy with other town projects and was not able to follow through on hiring out the job. He added that his sense was that town officials had no desire to pay for

maintenance of the property, and that his personal recommendation was that Leverett either dispose of it at a public auction or "seriously consider simply razing the building."

Other committee members said they felt differently, and by the end of the lengthy discussion, Nathorst ended up resigning from the committee. The remaining members said they would press on and complete their original charge.

Sieruta commented that he felt there should be "no hard feelings" on the committee's work to date, saying that "sometimes things just don't work out." The committee agreed to report back to the board with a status report in one month.

Four Strategic Acres

Several people commented on an email inquiry from a resident about purchasing a four-acre parcel of land-locked town property on the Sunderland town line.

Town administrator Marjorie McGinnis noted that if the town wanted to sell the land, the decision would need to be made at town meeting, and the parcel put up for public auction.

Sieruta questioned the townspeople's desire to sell town land, but suggested that if they wanted to get rid of this particular parcel, it could be given "to the Indians." Eva Gibavic, agreeing, suggested it could go to the Nipmuck people, who own property nearby.

A neighbor of the property, participating via Zoom, accused the interested buyer of having "foul intentions," and said he would be interested in buying it himself in order to "keep peace in the area."


The selectboard decided that further research was needed.

Other Business

Proujansky advocated for the potential benefits of single-payer healthcare, and asked his fellow board members to support bills currently before the state legislature seeking to implement such a system in Massachusetts.


He argued that a state-managed comprehensive system would be "straightforward and cleaner" than the current health insurance system, providing better coverage at reduced cost through simplification, streamlining, and eliminating the cost of profit. He estimated savings to the town of Leverett at \$380,000 per year.

Fin com member Nancy Grossman agreed, saying the savings would be "spectacular" and noting that town meeting had voted to support single-payer healthcare in the past. She and Proujansky volunteered to form a committee to study the matter and report back.

The board set a hearing date of March 25 for the town budget, and on the recommendation of the personnel board joined the fin com in approving a 3% cost-of-living adjustment for town employees. The board also approved a number of hiring and compensation recommendations, including adding a "navigator" position at the Council on Aging to help coordinate access to services for elders. 

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MONTAGUE from page A1

meeting at which it was also revealed that the price of stabilizing a small, privately owned hydroelectric plant in the Strathmore complex could cost nearly as much as the planned demolition of the complex itself (see article, Page A1); the board recommended closing a gap in next year's town operating budget by dipping into so-called "excess [taxing] capacity"; and Clean Water Facility (CWF) superintendent Chelsey Little shared a proposal to have the CWF serve as a "hub" for a regional urine recycling program.

In announcing Pierce's resignation, Ramsey noted that during her 14-year tenure with the town she had worked her way from health department inspector to assistant town clerk, and then to town clerk when former clerk Deb Bourbeau retired. The clerk has also changed from an elected to an appointed position.

Ramsey went on to say that Pierce was "a valued member of our team," and that "she'll be missed at town hall."

He called the town clerk position a "challenging role... you're the steward of public record processes, and responsible for implementing elections." The latter work has expanded considerably in recent years with the implementation of early and absentee voting, and the clerk's office and staff have expanded in response, including with the addition of an assistant clerk.

"It's a hard business," Ramsey said. "They're kind of the guardians of the democratic process."

Ramsey made similar comments about Tonelli who has served as director of assessing for over nine years. He called her job "a thankless service – even when it's done equitably and fairly, it still leaves businesses and individuals aggrieved." He described Tonelli as a "consummate professional, and respected among her peers."

Ramsey said he would come back to the board, which next meets February 24, with a "transition strategy" for the two departments. "Fortunately," he said, "in both cases we have really good assistants in those positions that are going to help us get through those transitions." The assessing department does not have an official assistant director, but an assessing technician performs many support functions.

The board also authorized Ramsey to negotiate a contract with treasurer-collector Eileen Seymour, whose term as an elected treasurer will end in May as a result of the town's recent decision to make the position appointed.

Nothing Major Left

Ramsey requested authority to submit comments on behalf of the town to the state Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) about the draft water quality certificate required under the federal relicensing process for FirstLight Power Company. The comments are due on February 24, the date of the board's next meeting.

Ramsey said he had reviewed the draft certificate with the assistance of the Franklin Regional Council of Governments and noted that a large portion deals with issues covered under the "Flows and Fish Passage" settlement agreement, which Montague and other stakeholders signed in 2023, which prohibits the town from commenting on those portions.

"When we look at what's left, really there's nothing major as it relates directly to Montague," he told the board.

Ramsey said MassDEP is calling for a higher "minimum flow" to be maintained above the dam than FirstLight has proposed, which would support more recreational use in line with the town's input, and a "no wake zone" for boaters between Barton Cove and the Schuetzen Verein property to reduce erosion. Although expressing doubts that these measures could be enforced, Ramsey called the proposals "all good things."

The board voted to authorize him to submit comments to MassDEP "that are generally supportive of the water quality certificate."

Budget Balanced

Ramsey reviewed a preliminary town operating budget for the next fiscal year, to be considered at the annual town meeting in May, and the board voted to send it to the finance committee for further consideration.

The proposal eliminates a \$69,000 projected deficit, primarily by rejecting or reducing a number of department requests. The most notable of these are not expanding Avenue A planter maintenance by the public works department; funding that department's "discretionary fund" at a lower level than normal; reducing the town's payments for electric vehicle charging stations, a result of a new rate agreement with Eversource; postponing the creation of a new adult services coordinator job at the libraries; and reducing the amount set aside in the general stabilization fund.

The proposal did accept a request from the Council on Aging for a new part-time assistant director.

The operating budget stands at \$12.75 million as presented, and Ramsey cited a total "town budget" of \$30.5 million which includes the separate Clean Water Facility and municipal airport budgets, plus assessments to the two regional school districts.

The approved budget reduces the town's "excess capacity" – the amount under the Proposition 2½ levy limit it chooses not to tax – by about \$55,000, leaving the untaxed sum at about \$1.1 million.

This approved budget also slightly reduces the amount of so-called "excess capacity" – the amount the town chooses not to tax which it would be allowed under the Proposition 2½ levy limit – by approximately \$55,000, leaving the untaxed sum at about \$1.1 million. This change has the effect of increasing Montague's assessment to the Gill-Montague school district, and therefore that of Gill as well.

Precious Bodily Fluids

Little, the CWF superintendent, told the board she is considering a proposal by the Brattleboro, Vermont-based Rich Earth Institute to make the Montague waste treatment plant a "hub for collecting urine."

Showing a picture on the Zoom screen of a "central drop-off station," she explained that the urine would be "treated, and then used by

local farmers." The Institute is currently implementing a grant-funded feasibility study of expanding its operations into Franklin County.

Kuklewicz asked whether they would install the collection site at the CWF, "or put a little building up."

Little said the Institute recently built a collection station, "like an outhouse," in Bellows Falls, and hired a hauler to take the urine away for treatment. "We would just collect it," she clarified.

Cemetery commission chair Judith Lorei said she had been contributing urine to the Institute's facility in Vermont, and felt "it would be great" to have a more local opportunity to donate.

"Keep us posted," said Kuklewicz. "I don't think you need anything more from us."

Little presented the board an update on the sewage flow from Millers Falls to the Erving treatment plant which processes the village's waste. In recent years the flow to Erving has greatly exceeded the amount allowed under the base contract between the two towns, challenging the plant's capacity and requiring Montague to pay large "overage" fees.

Last spring the public works department discovered and redirected several sources of infiltration of surface water into lateral sewer pipes that run under Route 63. But the total flow to Erving for the 2024 calendar year – and the overage fee in the next fiscal year's budget – remained high.

Little presented data of average daily flow to the Erving plant that showed a huge decline in the eight months after the laterals were redirected. The flow averaged 173,284 gallons per day from January through April and 74,331 from May through December. This left the total volume for the year well above the annual limit, but Little said the lower rate should be within the limit, the equivalent of about 90,000 gallons per day, if it continues.

"If we can keep these numbers – and that obviously depends on multiple factors, [like] the weather, if anything else goes wrong with the collection system... it looks like, keep your fingers crossed, we don't have an overage for calendar year 2025," she said. "That would be great."

"I'm sure that pleases Erving, because it was a real strain on their system," said Kuklewicz.

Other Business

The board accepted the resignation of Jo-Anne Prescott from the cemetery commission, and then voted to appoint Jamie Simpson to replace her.

At the end of the meeting, a somewhat confusing discussion was held on local implementation of the HERO Act, a state law that allows towns to exempt the property taxes of veterans to a variety of degrees ranging from 20% to 100%, but which provides no reimbursement for the lost revenue.

Kuklewicz asked what the percentages meant. "That's a portion of their property value?" he asked. "A portion of their tax?" Ramsey read a narrative explaining the possible exemptions, and asked if it made sense. "No," Kuklewicz replied.

Everyone agreed to invite "Karen" in to explain the exemption, a reference to Tonelli, who is retiring at the end of the month.

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

Here's the way it was on February 12, 2015: News from the Montague Reporter's archive.

Cigarette Purchase Age Rises to 21

On January 21, Montague's board of health voted unanimously to raise the age for purchasing tobacco products from 18 to 21, and to ban the sale of most flavored tobacco products except menthol and mint. There was general community support for this change, but some retail businesses expressed concern over how it would affect them.

According to Montague director of public health Gina McNeely, the *American Journal of Medicine* stated in its November 2014 edition that the young adult brain is more susceptible to nic-

otine addiction than that of older adults. What those in public health are learning indicates that individuals who begin smoking at a younger age are more likely to become addicted.

No Trojan Horse

On February 11 the Erving selectboard approved the conservation commission's decision to accept the 50-acre Mackin parcel on Poplar Mountain and signed the donation agreement with the Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust.

At its February 4 meeting the board had questioned Mount Grace's motives for conserving the land, suggesting that the land trust wanted to use the conservation agreement to hinder construction of Kinder Morgan's New England Direct natural gas pipeline.

20 YEARS AGO

Here's the way it was on February 10, 2005: News from the Montague Reporter's archive.

Botched U-Turn Costs Gill 31 Benjies

Gill has received a bill for repairs to one of its police cruisers, damaged on Route 2 in a twilight accident during heavy rain on November 28.

Reserve officer Adam Sokolovsky, who was attempting to pull a U-turn to pursue a speeding

vehicle, had activated the cruiser's flashing lights but did not give sufficient time for James Hays of Orange to slow down to avoid colliding with the front of the cruiser.

The insurance adjuster found Sokolovsky to be more than 50% at fault, and awarded a sum of \$2,137.50 to Hays. The town's deductible for the cruiser repair is \$1,000; the selectboard recommended that amount be taken from the NMH annual payment in lieu of taxes (\$10,000) fund.

150 YEARS AGO

Here's the way it was on February 10, 1875: News from the Turners Falls Reporter archives.

Turners Falls and Vicinity

Remember your pretty girl with a valentine.

Rumor has it that no less than six well-known young men are booked for that blissful state not known as single blessedness.

If thermometers were made longer, we'd all freeze to death. When the mercury rises to zero, we imagine we are in Florida (on the Hoosac mountain) and if it goes above that a degree, the farmers talk about spring coming in early.

The financial success of the young men's ball is assured, and should the weather be favorable it will be the most numerous attended ball ever given in Turners Falls. Park Wise alone has sold over thirty tickets, principally to the business and professional men of Greenfield.

W.P. Crocker, civil engineer, is fitting up an office in the Farren House.

The first annual ball of the Gambirinus Club took place at Schuler Hall, on Monday evening, and was

well attended.

George C. Lougee has opened a dry goods store on the corner of L and Third streets, and will no doubt secure a fair share of trade.

There is some talk of changing the name of Riverside, on account of there being two or three other places in the State bearing the same name, causing much mail matter to be missent. If they will have patience till the bridge is built, we will be able to accommodate them with a post-office on this side of the river.

The society with a continued story for a name should send an agent over to Riverside, to look around. There resides a man whose first name is A.C. Lewis, and the brutal manner in which he has treated his cattle during the winter is the subject of common talk. The cattle have often been a whole day without food or water and have been saved from starvation time and again by the neighbors, who brought fodder and took care of them. The best punishment for such a man would be to tie him up in a stall.

Get your smoked glass ready. Eclipse of the sun, Sept. 29th.



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ERVING from page A1

lack broadband service is down to about 20. The board liked the idea of completing the broadband rollout and also having some competition in that market, but given the lack of details, decided not to sign a letter of support for Verizon.

The bulk of the joint meeting was focused on FY'26 budget requests from the schools.

Elementary school Union 28 superintendent Shannon White-Cleveland and finance director Caitlin Sheridan presented the budget requests for Erving elementary school. The operating budget remained close to what it has been for the last two years, about \$3,800,000, with the caveat that salaries, which comprise about three-quarters of the operating expenses, are still in negotiation.

In addition to operating expenses, the school is requesting \$250,000 in capital expenses: \$50,000 for window blinds, and \$200,000 to begin the process of planning needed replacements of both the roof and the HVAC system by hiring an OPM and designer.

The Erving school committee is seeking the town's support for a statement of interest for a Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) grant for these capital expenses. The roof is largely 30 years old, with portions that are only 25 years old. This puts it at the younger end of the grant's 25-year criteria, and the committee pointed out that many schools with older roofs may be applying for the same grant.

The school committee and Bryan Smith clarified that the \$200,000 is only to start planning the project.

Selectboard chair Jacob Smith threw out \$3,000,000 as a possible cost for the entire project. The deadline for submitting a statement of interest is March 21.

Finance committee chair Debra Smith expressed support for the statement. Jacob Smith said he wanted more time to read the material and think about it, and suggested that since the deadline was more than a month away, the board could hold off on voting on the matter.

Talk of a New Tech School

Franklin County Technical School (FCTS) business manager Russ Kaubris and Jackie Boyden, Erving's representative on the FCTS school committee, presented the tech school budget. FCTS serves Erving and 18 other Franklin County towns, and its proposed operating budget for FY'26 for FCTS is about \$18,165,000, a 5.2% increase from the current year.

Thirty-one students from Erving attend the tech school, which is requesting \$589,309 from the town. Kaubris said FCTS aims to only raise requests to towns by 3% per year, but could not hit that goal this year, particularly given a 20% increase in health insurance costs.

FCTS is also looking at large-scale capital expenditures in the future, possibly to include a tear-down and entire replacement, and has set aside \$1,800,000 for an OPM and designer. Kaubris and Boyden recommended getting a statement of interest written and funding the OPM as a way to show the state the district is ready to do business, as it puts the school in a better light for a grant.

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SWANSON'S
FABRICS

GMRSD from page A1

assessment [increase] that they're facing this year, and that creates challenges," he warned.

Union president Heidi Schmidt asked if positions currently filled by consultants were kept in the budget as vacancies. Blier assured her that they were. Beck said that if any staff are to be laid off, "we'd make sure we have a conversation with those individuals" before March 11.

The committee voted to keep Gill-Montague a school choice district. "We are already beginning to get school-choice-in applications," Beck reported. The administration tallies open slots based on staffing ratios, gives siblings of district students priority, and fills any remaining seats by lottery. Fourth grade, he said, is already full.

The board studying the feasibility of joining Gill and Montague with Leyden, Bernardston, Northfield, and Warwick in a new district is still drafting an agreement, and Gill-Montague's lawyers, Dupere Law Firm, asked if they are wanted for a review of the document, given that they also represent Pioneer Valley and the break-away Warwick schools. The committee approved them.

"Is there a time frame that something's going to finally be presented?" member Wendy Thompson asked.

Gill member Bill Tomb, who serves on the six-town board, said the current phase "started late, in the fall... I expect that by June or July, the results of that would be coming to us." If ratified by the towns, Tomb said, any new district would still be "a couple years out."

Tuesday's meeting opened with a presentation by John and Chase, two students in Mrs. Lapan's fifth-grade class at Sheffield Elementary, which has been serving as the school's first cohort of "Lion Leaders" under a new role-modeling program. The presenters explained the responsibilities held by Lion Leaders - ensuring hallway

safeway, running a drive for a food pantry, wearing sashes - and were joined by five classmates to receive certificates from principal Kerry Heathwaite for their service.

"That was awesome," Thompson said as the students and their families left the room. "We need more of that." Beck reported that Montague police chief Chris Williams has pulled school police officer Dan Miner from the schools for the rest of the year to relieve "extreme staffing pressure" in his department. Montague member Carol Jacobs asked whether Miner - and the comfort dog Mack - would still have "any involvement."

"There's a lot of work that all of the first responders in town do with us," said Beck. "I'm hopeful that Dan might still be able to finish his Reading with Mack over the course of the year at the elementary schools."

Beck announced the hire of staff member Abigail Pease as food service director, noting that she had already been filling in since the departure of the prior director.

Thompson, Tomb, and Gill member Jim DeLorenzo were appointed to negotiate a new contract with custodians, represented by the United Food and Commercial Workers. The three-year contract expires in June.

This year's recipients of the Earl McGraw Uplift Awards, one high school student and one staff member seen to embody the late assistant principal's legacy of kindness and positivity, were announced Tuesday: senior Khiarieliex Huertas-Hernandez, the student rep to the school committee, and special ed teacher Crystal McNary. Beck read lengthy tributes to both awardees.

Oakes, Thompson, and Montague member Heather Katsoulis are serving terms that expire this spring, and another Montague seat has remained vacant for months. Nomination papers for candidates will soon be made available at the district office.

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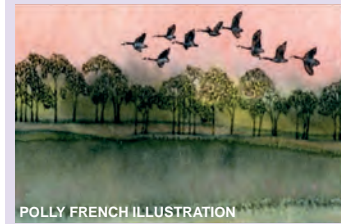
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WEST ALONG THE RIVER

THE ZEN OF A FEBRUARY MORNING

*East, west, north, south
everything is all right,
everything is all right or not all
right,
only for me, everything is all right.*

– a favorite Zen quote of
Christopher Sawyer-Lauçanno,
by Quingliang

By DAVID BRULE

THE FLAT, ERVINGSIDE – Last night before bed, I stood in the old kitchen. The new snow falling outside the five windows brightened the room. I looked out one window then another, watching as the row of hemlocks disappeared beneath the gathering whiteness. I thought of the sparrows and cardinals tucked away under the snow-covered branches.

“This is more like it,” I said to no one in particular. But sometimes, on a snowy night, you can’t be quiet enough.

The wise dog lifted his head a bit as if to say that I should just go lie down and sleep. He must have heard that phrase a hundred times from me.

The cookstove ticked contentedly as the fire died down.

I had been dancing that afternoon to the driving chants and water drum of the Mashpee Wampanoag. The steady beat of stamping feet still pounded out the rhythm of the stomp dance, the hoots and whoops of joy the dancers shared still rang in my ears in the silence.

But now, the following morning, I’m outdoors again with dog, coffee, and pen ready to record the events of the day, or write down a good turn of the phrase by the visiting poets sitting with me: Billy Collins, Gary Snyder, Issa, Basho. Along with the priceless lines from

Chris Sawyer-Lauçanno.
Snow falls on a page of his last slender volume, a posthumous gift to those who were there at his remembrance going-away party in early January.

Wherever he is now, I’m sure the poet approves of the image of the pure and purifying snow falling on the lines he’s written, his poems in my hand. In exchange, he gives me a few lines of calm wisdom to start this report from a Zen February morning.

The new snow still falling has cleansed the air. Ah Chris, you’d have to agree, there’s nothing in the world like a hot cup of coffee and a morning’s snow.

Time is falling away, the glacier is returning.

I do suddenly feel a twinge of regret for the little junco who gave up his life just yesterday. He was one of two dozen juncos staying with us this winter. Good thing I didn’t give him a name, but among juncos he surely must have had one.

The deadly scene played out a few yards away from where I sit in my heritage Adirondack chair.

A fierce little sharp-shinned hawk took away our junco friend. He’s now transformed into fuel and energy for the predator, keeping that lethal little hunter going for a while longer this season of the starving moon.

Our junco-whose-name-cannot-be-known is now turned into life-giving energy that will in turn lead to the birth of another sharp-shinned hatchling, to be brought forth a few months hence in a nest somewhere high up in a hemlock tree on Mineral Mountain.

Nature recycles with sometimes deadly efficiency.

The follies of the world beyond see **WEST ALONG** page B3

RECIPES

Naturally Color-Coded Dishes

By CLAIRE HOPLEY

LEVERETT – Holidays now come color-coded. We currently have red and pink cupcakes and shiny red boxes of candy for Valentine’s. Soon the cupcakes will flaunt swirly emerald top-knots to announce Saint Patrick’s. Yellow will follow for Easter.

It’s easy to spot the inspiration of these emblematic colors in Easter’s baby chicks and daffodils, Ireland’s green landscapes, and Valentine’s throbbing hearts. So easy that these and other holiday food colors seem natural. In fact, coloring food is a human invention with a long and changing history.

Medieval cooks in aristocratic households tinted food yellow with saffron, green with spinach juice, and red with sandalwood. They made meat look golden by brushing it with egg yolk.

Such colors delighted the eye; more importantly, colorful food showed that their employers could afford pricey ingredients such as saffron or sandalwood. They weren’t usually linked to holidays.

Later cooks also liked showcasing their skills with colors, but using them to celebrate holidays seems to have been a 19th-century idea.

Pizza Margarita topped with red tomato sauce, white mozzarella, and fresh green basil leaves has the colors of the Italian flag. Stories of its origin vary, but agree that it highlights Italian unification in 1861.

Mexico’s red, white, and green flag is celebrated by eating *chilis en nogada* to honor the Mexican declaration of independence on September 15, 1810. This deliciously moreish dish features poblano chilis filled with a ground meat mixture, tucked under a pale walnut sauce dotted with red pomegranate seeds and green parsley.

Similarly, our red-white-and-blue flag is honored



HOPLEY PHOTO

Woo your Valentine with this appropriately colorful passion fruit and strawberry meringue.

with white-frosted cakes decorated with raspberry or strawberry stars and blueberry stripes on Presidents’ Day and July 4.

Even when not creating dishes evoking the national flag, 19th-century cooks loved colorful food. Fannie see **RECIPES** page B8

REFLECTION

Becoming Sober
And Honoring My Brother

By CHAD KLAIBER, SR.

GREENFIELD – This is a story about my experience as a brother of a person who was unhoused and had a substance use disorder that caused him to pass away in 2021.

My brother was one of the most generous people that I’ve ever known; he would have given his shirt off his back no matter what he was going through, even if he didn’t have it to give away. To this day, his death hurts me and my parents so much that I’ve tried five times to overdose to be with him. Every time, people saved me, just like the song “Save Me” by Jelly Roll, which is one of the songs that my brother always listened to. My brother’s death has influenced me to become sober.

When my brother was alive, we spent most of our time together. If he called me, I would always

be there for him, and when we did drugs together I made sure that he was safe. I would make sure he lived and nothing happened to him that was in my control, but when I went to jail in 2020 until 2022, I wasn’t around. He did drugs and my cousin never made sure that he was safe under his house when he moved to New Hampshire to try to get off the drugs.

In 2021, my mother had called the jail and asked if I was sitting down. I told her “yes,” and the thoughts that were running through my mind was that my grandmother had passed away, but I was wrong. She told me that my brother had passed away.

Drug use controls people’s lives. I can attest to this because I lived this reality with my brother. For years, I was under the control of an addiction that I hated and loved. I hated doing the drugs, but I loved

the feeling.

When I got started with this I had to get enough drugs to last me and my brother the night. At first, it wasn’t that much, and then our habits got to the point where I was spending thousands of dollars a week for us to be able to get us through half a week. We did things to support our habits including stealing from people, ripping people off, and me having a full-time job so I could buy different drugs. We planned to move and have better for ourselves, but it never helped when we did drugs all day every day.

Now, trying to be sober while being incarcerated all over again, I am sitting here writing this paper to show people how bad addiction gets, and to share my plans for how I am going to get it right and honor my brother, Kevin F. Klaiber, after my three-year sentence.

see **BROTHER** page B4



KEVIN BRULE PHOTO

Blue jay (*Cyanocitta cristata*) and cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) on the author’s dogwood.

Pet of the Week



CARMODY COLLAGE

'LUNA'

Luna is a gentle, independent Siamese and domestic shorthair mix who enjoys her quiet time, but does well with children. She's not the most playful, but with the right home and a little patience, she's sure to open up and show her sweet side.

Luna appreciates a cozy spot by the window and enjoys being near people on her own terms. She will thrive in a calm, loving home where she can feel safe and comfortable. If you're looking for a low-maintenance companion who enjoys her space but will warm up with time and care, Luna might be perfect!

Change is hard for this cat. She will be very nervous when you first

bring her home. You will need to set up a room with a litter box, food, and water. It will take days for her to become comfortable and confident in the new home. She will be going home with a behavior plan that will need to be followed in order for everyone to transition successfully.

If you're ready to adopt now and want to learn more about, meet, or adopt this pet, you can start the process by coming to the Dakin Humane Society in Springfield during our open adoption hours, Tuesdays through Saturdays from 12:30 to 3 p.m., or calling us at (413) 781-4000, or visiting www.dakinhumane.org.



'How Can I Help, What Do I Need, What Keeps Me From Asking?'

By LEE WICKS

MONTAGUE CENTER – My email inbox seems to be flooded with ads and alarming news teasers these days, so it felt wonderful to receive good news from Helen Gibson-Ugucioni, president of Montague Villages. She said, "Montague Villages has nearly 100 members and 38 of those members are volunteers willing to help older adults in our community."

To date, 30 service requests have been completed.

For those who are not familiar with Montague Villages, it's a non-profit organization that matches volunteers with individuals over 60 in Montague who need a little bit of help to remain comfortable in their homes. If you haven't yet joined and want to learn more, go to the website at www.montague-villages.org. You can become a member, a volunteer, or both, learn about the organization's history, and read some additional testimonials from delighted neighbors.

When I first got involved in the planning stages of Montague Villages, I thought of it as a practical solution to the ongoing difficulty of finding people for small jobs, like getting on a ladder to change a smoke alarm battery or finding someone to drive you to a medical appointment. It is all that, and it's also a whole lot more.

The organization offers an opportunity to connect with neighbors, experience the goodness in people, and be part of something positive that improves daily life for those in need. Montague Villages can be an emotional lifeline for people who are feeling discouraged or isolated in our troubled world. There is no downside. It's affirming and inspiring.

It's also good to connect with your own self, silence the clutter in your mind, the voice that whispers what you should be doing, and quietly ask *what do I want to do, how*

can I help, what do I need, what keeps me from asking?

After doing that, some people realize they need more than they can give, and they join as members, not volunteers. And that is fine! Members have no obligation to volunteer, and some volunteers are too young to become members. There are volunteers who are years from needing help, yet are willing to invest some of their free time to help their community, knowing they can grow old here in comfort and security when they need assistance. There are also volunteers in their 80s doing what they can.

The beauty of volunteering for Montague Villages is that there are no set hours, and no required weekly schedules. It's not like when I volunteered at a food pantry and people were depending on me to be there every Tuesday no matter what. Montague Villages volunteers are always free to turn down a request when the dispatcher calls. Volunteers set their own limits based on time, skills, interests, and energy.

I'm the kind of driver who stays home in snow, fog, heavy rain, or a hint of ice, so I can't help people with transportation – and if I liked light housework, my own home would be a lot cleaner. I don't have a lot of energy these days, either. I get beaten down by the day's headlines and hide in mystery novels, but I can make check-in calls to people who live alone.

This is a cold and lonely time of year. There's too much ice to safely walk. Our usual neighborly encounters have ceased until spring. A daily "Hi, how are you?" call can keep us connected, and provide peace of mind. It's a good place to start.

Recent service requests from Montague Villages have included transportation to medical appointments, to shopping, and to Life-Path's office in Greenfield; picking up ordered groceries; call-in safety checks; respite care for caregivers;

fixing a broken door hinge; picking up boxes of items that a member wanted to donate to the Survival Center; helping to take out and return trash containers; completing some light yard work for a member who hurt her back; helping to take air conditioners out of windows before winter; providing pet care, and more.

And here's what some members have said about the services they received:

"I want to thank Montague Villages and the wonderful gentleman volunteer who repaired my sister's door. He did a great job! I am grateful your organization is now up and running. I made one call about the issue and one of the vetted volunteers arrived a few days later and solved the problem. It was a great relief to know the volunteer was local and well known. Everyone has been so kind and understanding."

Another wrote, "My Volunteer was very prompt and competent. Conversation started easily as if we already knew each other. She offered to attend my SHINE meeting with me but only if I wanted her to. She did and was helpful as she was already familiar with something I had not known of. Very generous with her time, a great representative for Montague Villages."

Maybe those testimonials will inspire you to get involved. Maybe just knowing Montague Villages has grown from an idea to a very present reality will bring a smile.

I read that the Town of Montague got a needed grant to address traffic and safety in Montague Center. A quick check of the Gill-Montague senior center website showed all the great programs Roberta Potter, director of the Council on Aging, continues to provide.

Elders can thrive in this town, with a little help from their neighbors. Visit the Montague Villages website often to learn about news and events.

Senior Center Activities FEBRUARY 17 THROUGH 21

GILL and MONTAGUE

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

Monday 2/17

- 10:15 a.m. Aerobics
- 11 a.m. Chair Exercise
- 1 p.m. Kitchen Club
- 6 p.m. Cemetery Commission

Tuesday 2/18

- 9 a.m. Chair Yoga
- 10 a.m. Grandparents Raising Teens
- 11 a.m. Money Matters
- 3 p.m. Tai Chi
- 9 a.m. Veterans' Agent
- 10:15 a.m. Aerobics
- 11 a.m. Chair Exercise
- 11:45 a.m. Friends' Meetings
- 12 p.m. Bring Your Lunch Bingo
- 1 p.m. Mobile Food Bank
- 4 p.m. Mat Yoga

Thursday 2/20

- 1 p.m. Pitch
- 3:30 Volunteer Training

Friday 2/21

- 10:15 a.m. Aerobics
- 11 a.m. Chair Exercise
- 2 p.m. Chair Dance

WENDELL

Foot care clinic is the first Wednesday of each month. The

next clinic is March 5. Call Katie Nolan at (978) 544-2306 for information or appointments.

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

ERVING

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

Monday 2/17

Closed for the Holiday

Tuesday 2/18

- 9 a.m. Stretch & Balance
- 10 a.m. Line Dancing
- 11 a.m. Social Stringer

Wednesday 2/19

- 9 a.m. Interval Training
- 10 a.m. Chair Aerobics
- 11:30 a.m. Bingo

Thursday 2/20

- 9 a.m. Barre Fusion
- 10 a.m. Pilates Flow

Friday 2/21

- 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Quilting, Open Sew

LEVERETT

Chair Yoga classes are held Wednesdays at 10 a.m., hybrid, at the town hall and on Zoom. Foot care clinics are the third Tuesday of each month. Luncheons are the fourth Friday at town hall.

Please check the town newsletter or Leverett Connects listserve for more info.

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ARTIST PROFILE

Jay Martin: Phoenix Rising

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

GREENFIELD – I found Jay Martin’s art at an event going on near the Hawks & Reed Performing Arts Center in Greenfield. This guy’s artwork is very interesting, to say the least.

Martin told me that he has been doing this work for three years, and is self-taught. “I’ve sold over 250 pieces,” he said. The events he has sold them at have included auctions in New York and Connecticut.

He also has a store to his name, Phoenix Rising, where he sells his art including hand-customized jeans. The store is at 5 Old South Street in downtown Northampton. Martin describes his art as “being Jackson Pollock drip-style on them.” He also states there are some geometric art and abstract faces on the jeans he customizes.

I would say one style of these is Jackson Pollock-like, but it resembles tie dye to me as well, which I like very much. I also learned that a piece, in his words, “might take me a half hour – some might take me a month.”

He told me his store does well when it comes to selling his art, and that galleries including the Adult Center in Longmeadow have displayed his work. The name of the auction house that sold his work is Swank Auctions in West Hartford.



Some of Martin’s Basquiat-influenced paintings show faces.

Another place that has been helpful in selling his art, according to him, is an Instagram page.

An image of a pair of jeans on the Phoenix Rising Facebook page is my proof that some of the customized jeans do, in fact, resemble Jackson Pollack’s art. But it also makes the clothes look very cool in my eyes. I also found myself attracted to the abstract faces and geometric art he mentioned when it comes to his styles of art. His art is not boring to look at. I wouldn’t have been attracted to covering him in the first place if it was. You can see this for yourself when seeing the art with this article.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

‘Psychosis’ On Fourth; Popcorn Burned; Rabbit Hill Salted; Civilian Car Chase; Transformers Blown; Footprints In Snow

Monday, 2/3

8:27 a.m. 911 caller from Fifth Street states she was advised by another resident in the building that someone had an apartment door that was partially open, but still chain-locked. Caller states male has a history of seizures. Officer advises entry made into apartment door; nobody inside apartment. Attempted calling number associated with involved male; unable to make contact at this time. Officer advises no damage done to door; chain lock was removed to make entry into dwelling, and door has been resecured at this time. 10:33 a.m. Caller requesting call back from animal control officer regarding bird flu, inquiring if it has been reported in our area. Caller states she walks down Migratory Way all the time near Cabot Woods with her dog, and she saw two dead geese and another one on the ice that was suffering until a hawk took it away. Caller concerned for spread of bird flu to other animals as well. Message left for ACO to call MPD. 3:14 p.m. 911 caller reports an individual in psychosis is outside scream-

ing and yelling at people on Fourth Street and just got into someone’s face. Officer advises contact made; no issues; no one on scene reports feeling threatened by the individual. Did not really want to talk to the officer. 3:59 p.m. Caller reporting that multiple locations on Fourth Street do not shovel the sidewalk after snowstorms; they are apartment buildings, and the landlords don’t take care of it. States he calls about this every year. Report taken. 4:24 p.m. Eversource reporting low-hanging cable wires in I Street area. While on the phone, he reported someone was harassing him. Officer advised. Determined to be a Comcast wire, low-hanging and a traffic hazard. Comcast states everyone went home and they will send someone in the morning; low-priority call. Officer requesting DPW for barricade. 5:13 p.m. Caller believes a man is yelling, screaming, and walking up and down Fourth Street, saying he owns this fucking land. 911 caller states same man is looking in car windows, knocking on people’s doors, and screaming at them. (Related to 3:14 p.m. call.) Officers spoke to male party again. States he will go inside for the night. Denies harassing people and looking into vehicles. 5:24 p.m. Caller from Hillside Avenue reports that there are footprints leading up to the door of the condemned house next to her and the door has been kicked open. Officer advised. Entry made; everything seems fine; requesting board of health be contacted for unsecured door. 5:48 p.m. Caller from Fourth Street states she just got home and a party came up to her and was looking in her vehicle. She told him to get away. Would like an officer to check it out. Related to earlier calls. Voluntary transport to hospital.

advises clearing school; someone burned popcorn in the microwave. 12:53 p.m. Employee of Rendezvous states people are dumping illegally, and he thinks he knows who it is. Spoke to caller. Would like on record at this time. Caller will contact the suspected party and tell them not to do it again. Report taken. 7:36 p.m. Caller from Hillside Avenue reporting a possible break-in at a vacant house across the street; advises there is an open door. Caller states they called this in two days ago as well, but the door is back open. Officer advises house checked, nobody found; they have secured the door the best they could. 8:58 p.m. Greenfield PD requests MPD check a Laurel Lane address for a female party for whom they have probable cause for arrest. A 30-year-old Greenfield woman was arrested on probable cause for an outside agency. Custody transferred to GPD. 10:35 p.m. Caller from East Main Street reports her neighbor is playing his music really loud again. Unable to get anyone to open secured outer door at involved address. From pe-ri-ometer, all was quiet.

8:56 p.m. Control received a call that a blue sedan blowing coolant has pulled over in the area of Wendell and Montague roads; could possibly be a road hazard. Caller states they were trying to call their parents. Control advises that Leverett will also check the Wendell side. All units tied up on a prior call. Officer drove all the way up Wendell Road to the state forest; unable to locate. **Saturday, 2/8** 1 a.m. Caller from Burnett Street reports that the same kids who have shown up at his house before came back about five minutes ago, but left once they saw the caller in the window. Caller states they are driving a dark red sedan; he does not know who they are. Caller was told a possible name and states he is currently driving around to see if he can find the car. Advised caller to call right away if they show up again so MPD can identify the parties. Caller called back at 1:12 a.m. advising he is behind the vehicle now trying to get a plate number. The car is going at a high rate of speed near the Elks. Advised they are now heading towards Aubuchon, then L Street, Sheffield, and Scotty’s. Caller lost sight of vehicle near Kostanski’s Funeral Home. Units advised. Caller called back and said the vehicle is down near Nouria now; units advised. Caller followed vehicle giving updates on locations. Last seen heading onto bridge leading to Power Street. At 1:28 a.m., officer advised he has the vehicle pulled over on Power Street. Second unit en route. Officer advises units clear; requesting incident number. 10:51 p.m. 911 caller from Unity Street reports that four transformers have blown in the area. Transferred to Shelburne Control. Officers advised. Second caller reporting same. **Sunday, 2/9** 12:08 p.m. Caller advises that several items such as light bulbs, light fixtures, and security cameras have gone missing from the Bookmill property. Investigated. 3:02 p.m. 911 caller advises that a Toyota pickup truck struck the side of their car and then sped off. They are following it. Truck has pulled into the parking lot of the Montague Village Store. Caller has pulled in as well. Report taken. 8:39 p.m. Burglar alarm at Harvey’s; back kitchen door. Keyholder contacted; incorrect passcode given. Footprints in snow leading to/from door. Door is locked at this time. Attempted to contact keyholder; number listed in file is for the business.

Thursday, 2/6

11:36 a.m. Caller from East Main Street reports that her neighbor’s carbon monoxide detector has been going off since 4 a.m.; she called the landlord, who stated that they can’t get there for a while. Caller states the apartment is vacant. Transferred to FD. 12:26 p.m. Caller reports that his vehicle is in a snowbank on West Chestnut Hill Road; advises AAA is coming, ETA 1.5 hours. Report taken. 1:58 p.m. Caller reporting vehicle into guardrail on Turnpike Road near Walnut Street. No injuries. Officer advises operator will call for roadside assistance, and requests DPW sand and salt Rabbit Hill area. DPW notified. Officer advises vehicle was able to back down the hill. 5:09 p.m. Report of a car that has backed into a FRTA bus on Avenue A.

Friday, 2/7

12:46 a.m. Caller from Cumberland Farms states she is working by herself and a vehicle has been parked outside the store for 10 minutes with a female just pacing back and forth in the parking lot. Caller called back and stated the female finally came into the store and was not off to the side of the road. No police response needed. 3:30 p.m. Caller looking to have fire personnel help him change a battery in a smoke detector that is chirping. Shelburne Control contacted.

Tuesday, 2/4

9:42 a.m. Message in general mailbox from a party who states his EBT benefits were stolen from him. Advised of options. 12:06 p.m. 911 caller reports her family stole her dog and gave it to someone on the third floor. Officer advises caller has not had or seen the dog since 2017. 5:11 p.m. 911 caller states she was rear-ended at West Main and Federal Streets; states no injuries, smoke, or fluids. Vehicles have pulled off to the side of the road. Citation issued.

Wednesday, 2/5

11:33 a.m. Fire alarm sounding at Turners Falls High School. Transferred to Shelburne Control. School resource officer



KEVIN BRULE PHOTO

A sharp-shinned hawk (Accipiter striatus) with the remains of a dark-eyed junco (Junco hyemalis).

understanding.

There is a privacy in a snowy morning. I’ll spend some more time watching the snow fall, and reach my own conclusions.

Inside, the family stirs. Time for me to go back in, to the kitchen, to put some Sunday morning bacon in the pan on the stove on this moderately momentous morning.



WEST ALONG from page B1

fall away on a morning like this, bringing poetry to the day, bringing a respite from worry. The cares of tomorrow can wait until this snow-bound day is done.

Politics, for the time being, suspended in snow.

A line of ducks wings through the line of snow, they too are faintly white.

On a barren branch a jet-black crow surveys the yard.

It’s my snow, I think, it’s what I wanted, and the weight of shoveling it lightens.

Last night snowy, how many times did the snow plow go by?

For some reason, off the roof, there are long and short icicles.

The dog came out to sniff the snow, and he ended up listening to the birds.

Again and again, he shows me how deep is the snow.

Finally coming to lie down awhile, this snow-dog leans into my hand, and I touch his deep fur. He and I are at least smart enough to be out this morning with our heads up in the bright snowy air.

Yet I am stroking the dog’s head and writing this down, which means I’m calmly flying in the face of the Buddhist advice to do only one thing at a time, as Billy Collins reminds me.

Innumerable snowflakes land on the porch. I put down my pen to count some.

As I am lost in such thoughts, the cup on the arm of the chair grows cold.

So whether it’s snowing or not, it’s sure to be enormously complex. There’s a lot going on out here, and I’m lucky on the whole to see and write it down. But there’s a lot about it that is beyond

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BROTHER from page B1

With my sobriety I have learned so much more about myself, as in how to vouch for myself for things that I need, and how to control my anger to a certain point. I started to learn how to love someone and actually care for them and her children like they were mine. By learning about myself I'm able to love myself for who I am and understand that things are not always going to go my way and I have to accept that.

Staying sober for me is to live for my brother and have the life he can't. I'm tired of doing drugs and living life to die, so now I want to live life to live. I am choosing to do this for me because I'm willing to do the work and go through something that feels uncomfortable, but I know it will make me happy. Being and staying sober will also give me a shot to have a relationship with my own daughter.

In summary, I want to make sure people are aware of how drugs can take someone's life in all different, mysterious, tangible, and intangible ways. For drugs, people will go through all trials and tribulations to get what they need to stay high.

There were a lot of people at my brother's funeral that I didn't even know he knew. Living in the drug life and being homeless, he made a lot of connections with different people. I was there through some of his journey, but it became clear that so many other people who had experienced similar things to him were also there. Drug addiction is a big and hidden problem. Many people do not understand what people go through just to feel normal while on drugs, the shit you

have to deal with and the problems that come with it.

Today, I am back to being incarcerated and I am enjoying the sober life, but sometimes I reminisce on the days of my brother and I drinking, smoking and doing drugs. By being in jail, I am more clear-headed. I am now able to work on my future and I have the opportunity to get out and enjoy a life of sobriety while working for things that I want without having drugs control me.

I have realized that my relationships are more valuable than doing drugs. Even though I pushed people away when I was doing drugs, they still saw the bigger picture: me being sober, and having a future.

If you know someone in this situation and are trying to help them get off of the drugs, it's better if they do it around you so in case things go wrong, you are there to save them, unlike what happened to my brother. So thanks mom, Uncle Mike, Missy, Chrysta, and Eric for the things you have done to make sure I was safe even if I didn't want your help in that time period.

This article first appeared in The Light, a newsletter by Franklin County Jail and House of Correction (FCSO) residents.

Some of the writers join The Light already devoted to writing, while others discover love for writing through their participation. The students engage in process-oriented work to create stories and art, including personal essays, op-eds, recipes, poems, research articles, and other explorations of interest to them and their peers, coalescing into a new issue every eight to 10 weeks.



EVENT ANNOUNCEMENTS

Free Family Game Night!

TURNERS FALLS – Next Thursday, February 20 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., the Brick House Community Resource Center is hosting a Family Game Night, including dinner and door prizes!

We'll have board games for a wide range of ages, but feel free to

bring your own if you like.

Please register with Stacey at either slangknecht@brickhousecommunity.org or (413) 800-2496 so that we can plan for enough food for everyone.

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

NMH: The 21st Annual Benefit Concert for LifePath

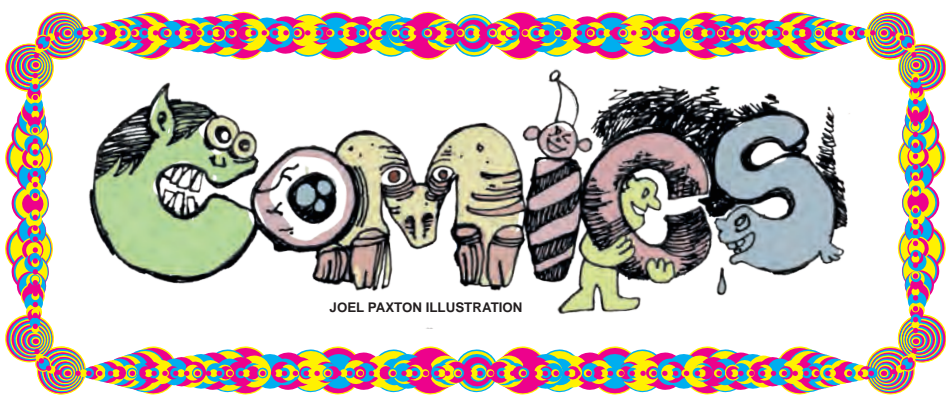
GILL – The Northfield Mount Hermon (NMH) music program proudly supports LifePath by presenting a concert at the Rhodes Arts Center on the NMH campus next Sunday, February 23 at 3 p.m.

Members of the NMH Orchestra, Concert Band, and Jazz Ensemble are delighted to present this fundraising concert to help raise money for the many valuable programs that LifePath provides. We invite everyone to attend. Light refreshments will be provided free of charge.

Musical selections will come from the standard repertoire for or-

chestra, band, and jazz ensemble, including Colonel Bogey March – audience members may recognize this from the movie *The Bridge on the River Kwai* – scenes from *Swan Lake* by Tchaikovsky; "When the Saints Go Marching In;" and Romanian folk dances by Bartok.

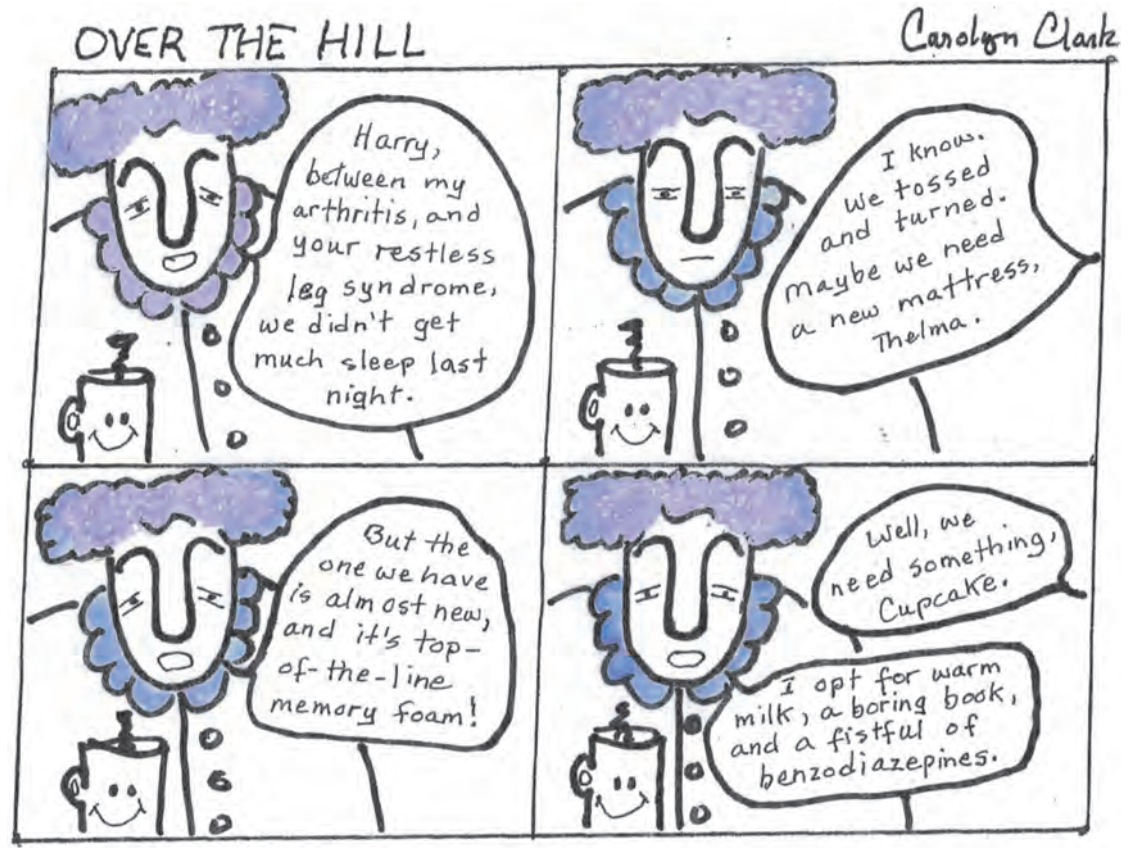
LifePath is grateful to Steven Bathory-Peeler, orchestra and band concert director; Ron Smith, director of music programs, and the instrumental staff and students, for continuing to make the needs of LifePath a priority with this benefit concert.



JOEL PAXTON ILLUSTRATION



SUZETTE SNOW-COBB ILLUSTRATION



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the
poetry
page

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 Janel Nockleby. Readers
are invited to send poems to
the *Montague Reporter* by email at:
poetry@montaguereporter.org
(Please note we are no longer
accepting mailed submissions.)

Our February Poetry Page

Stet

We stand at the stove
wrestling our sweaters
in search of sleeves.
Let's go before we start
to sweat, you say.
I should have made soup,
I say, and left it to simmer.
You tell me in Norway, they say
this is "koselig." They ski
and love their stoves and snow.
Your eyes smart
and my throat is sore
from the smoke.
The cat sneezes.
We've been inside since
I don't know when. You say
"cozy" is what Americans say
but it's not the same.
I say they both sound so smug
but you think I said "snug"
and you smile.

— Corwin Ericson
Wendell

Not bees

Maybe they were wasps
I didn't get a good look
as they were in my hair

I stepped on a nest probably

They were a long time coming

How many hikes had we gone on without
any bees ever?

That is, we saw bees but they did not see us
as enemies. We kept walking, they kept
gathering pollen or making honey or
wax. They minded their own beeswax.

All told, hundreds of miles over the years.
Many years.

Until the Moose Run trail, we were fine
with bees in a reciprocal sort of way, an unwritten pact.

Moose Run wound back and forth like an Italian road;
eventually we got to the beach, hot, tired
but still secure in our relationship with trees
and bugs. To get back we went by the fire tower

only something big and angry streamed up into my hair, my neck
my hands, I screamed and Blair came back, his hands
in my hair and he yelled *Run*, so I ran and he yelled *Keep running* —

we lost the trail and had to find it again further down.

At the road we compared stings, Blair's on his hands, mine
on my wrist, swelling, and on my neck, which I can't see,
which I need to see, which I finally photograph, twisting.

Weeks later, sitting at an outside fiddle practice, I jump up,
hand to my neck, necklace. It's my necklace pinching,
I explain to the fiddlers who have jumped up, staring at me,
and they say, *Man you're traumatized.*

You tell me to get to the bees faster
when I don't want to get to the bees at all.

— Janet Bowdan
Northampton

Gratitude to the hairdressers

(for Patrick & Sicca & the guys at Hero's)

because we expect them to change our lives with a snip
here a cut there
because we unburden ourselves on them, near strangers
close confidantes, and while we leave lighter, they
have to sweep everything up into a heap of discarded curls
because when they won't usually cut children's hair, they'll cut
our children's hair
because our children are their children
because they let us into their lives too
because their children are also ours and we want them to do well
because we need them to tell us what movies to watch and whether
the new mochi donut place up the road is worth trying
because like musicians they need their hands to create art
because when it's too hot we want them to cut it all off
and then hate it
because when it's too humid we hate it, why won't it curl
the way it did under their hands
because when we look up products ourselves the search suggests
"what is the holy grail"
because when they've given us moisturizing masques and creams
and deep conditioners and spritzed us and we're good to go
we go home and wash it out because it doesn't look like us
but then someone says they love it what have we done with it
because we remember when we couldn't get our hair cut
because they mixed up colors and home delivered them
because they tried to cut our hair when we were all wearing masks and
couldn't tell what half our face looked like
because they rolled their eyes when they saw our efforts at trimming
and then fixed it
because sometimes when we go to them, we go home with a challah
their partner baked
because when my father went for a beard trimming with a photo
of the Sean Connery beard he wanted, they gave him a Sean Connery beard
and a whiskey
and he was happy as a clam
because no one else can do this
because they put their hands on our heads
look at us in the mirror and ask what we want

— Janet Bowdan
Northampton

Contributors' Notes

Corwin Ericson is the author of the novel *Swell*, and *Checked Out OK*, a book-length found poem in the form of police reports. He lives in Wendell.

Janet Bowdan grew up in South Hadley and lives in Northampton with her husband, their son, and a chinchilla. She teaches English at Western New England University.



WRITING THE LAND

The Poetry Page is supported by
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EVENTS

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 13

Brick House, Turners Falls: Workshop with Everything Computers. For parents and caregivers to learn how to protect kids on the internet. To register or for more information, contact Stacey at slangknecht@brickhousecommunity.org or (413) 800-2496. 10:30 a.m. Free.

Northfield Mountain, Northfield: Monthly Hike. With snowshoes or microspikes, depending on conditions. Registration at www.bookeo.com/northfield is required. 1 p.m. Free.

Leverett Public Library, Leverett: Workshop, Tea Towel Printing. Register at leverettlibrary@gmail.com. 4:30 p.m. Free.

Greenfield Garden Cinemas, Greenfield: Silent auction and screening, Ghost (1990), benefit for Artspace Community Clay. 6:30 p.m. \$.

Northfield Mount Hermon School, Gill: NMH Dance Company Winter Concert. Seats must be reserved. 7 p.m. Free.

The Drake, Amherst: Fai Laci, Skruple, Grand View Point. 8 p.m. \$.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 14

Canalside Rail Trail, Turners Falls: Nice & Easy Walk. Geared for seniors, but open to all. Meet at the Great Falls Discovery Center. 1 p.m. Free.

St. Kaz, Turners Falls: Valentines at St. Kaz: Records, Gumbo, and Booze. 6 p.m. \$.

Leverett Village Co-op, Leverett: Same Old Blues. 6 p.m. Free.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: Story Circle, on the theme

"forever friends." Participants share life stories without interruption, with a debriefing at the end. 6 p.m. Free.

Montague Common Hall, Montague Center: Montague Square Dance, with *Devilish Mary's House Band* and caller *Grace Clements*. Jammers welcome. Families welcome for circle dances and beginner squares, 6:30 p.m.; regular squares, 8 p.m. By donation.

Northfield Mount Hermon School, Gill: NMH Dance Company Winter Concert. Seats must be reserved. 7 p.m. Free.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: Cinemastorm, movie double feature: *Quick Change* (1990) and *Collateral* (2004). Refreshments and trivia. 7 p.m. Free.

Deja Brew, Wendell: Valentine's Day with Lady Pop. 7 p.m. No cover.

Floodwater Brewing, Shelburne Falls: Psychedelic Farm Girls (formerly *She Said*). 7 p.m. No cover.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: Id M Theftable, Shea Mowat, Owen Manure, Jeff Gallagher. 8 p.m. No cover.

Warwick Town Hall, Warwick: Zydeco Connection, playing a mix of zydeco, two-steps, waltzes, boogie woogie, and more. Pizza begins 6 p.m., \$; music at 7 p.m., by donation.

Shutesbury Athletic Club: Golden Repair. 8 p.m. No cover.

The Drake, Amherst: Fleshwater. 8 p.m. \$

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: Owsley's Owls, Jay Faires. 8 p.m. \$.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 15

Northfield Senior Center,



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Zydeco Connection play the Warwick Town Hall this Friday, the last of this season's Wooden Fender events hosted by the Warwick Cultural Council. Reasonably priced pizza dinner begins at 6 p.m., with music and dancing starting at 7 p.m.

Northfield: Junior Firefighters Chili Cookoff. 10:30 a.m. By donation.

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: Snowflakes in the Great Hall. Make your own unique snowflake art, with simple paper or gel-printing techniques. Materials provided. Ages 6 and up. Drop in from 1 to 3 p.m. Free.

New Salem Library, New Salem: Workshop, Shiatsu With Friends.

Have fun connecting with acu-points. No experience required. 1 p.m. Free.

Northfield Mount Hermon School, Gill: NMH Dance Company Winter Concert. Seats must be reserved. 2 and 6:30 p.m. Free.

Brewery at Four Star Farms, Northfield: Helen Hummel. 5 p.m. No cover.

Great Falls Market, Turners Falls: Presentation: Raising the Voices from Cuba. 6 p.m. Free.

Prescott Tavern, Hampshire College, Amherst: Liberate, Split Half, Intrusive, Crucial Point, Subordinate, Buried With Your Words, Dishpit, Posthumous Obsession. All ages. 5:30 p.m. \$.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: Arc-A-Palooza feat. Evelynroze, The Bromantics, John Wayneovich, Alex Casavant. Benefit for United Arc. 6:30 p.m. \$.

Pioneer Valley Brewery, Turners Falls: BluGroove. 7 p.m. No cover.

Element Brewing, Millers Falls: Trae Sheehan. 7 p.m. No cover.

Mount Toby Friends Meetinghouse, Leverett: Pamela Means. 7 p.m. \$.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: The Suitcase Junket, Cloudbelly. 7 p.m. \$.

Iron Horse, Northampton: The Bad Plus. 7 p.m. \$.

Cold Spring Hollow, Belchertown: Jeff Coyne, Tomatoverse, Pleaser, Anka Raczynska. 7 p.m. \$.

Nova Arts, Keene: The Greys, Tumbletoads. 7 p.m. \$.

Full Moon Coffeehouse, Wendell: Do It Now! 7:30 p.m. \$.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: Twang Club Honkey Tonk Heartbreak. 8 p.m. No cover.

The Drake, Amherst: Oh He Dead, ViRG. 8 p.m. \$.

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Feb 18th Short Film Sprint! 6:30-8:30 \$15	Feb 20th STILL LIFE SOCIAL CLUB 6-8PM \$10	EVERY FRIDAY MAKE OUR MERCH! 3-5PM Free
Feb 22 COLLAGE CLUB! 1-3PM \$10	Feb 26 OPEN MIC FOR WRITERS! 7-9PM \$10	Feb 27 Figure drawing 6-8PM \$15
March 1st Vision Mapping 1-3PM \$15	March 2 Writing Workshop with Stella Corso 4-6PM \$40	Tuesdays in March Expressive Arts Shindig 6:30-9PM \$15
March 5 Risograph Mini Zine Workshop 5-8PM \$60	March 6 Still Life Social 6-8PM \$10	March 8 Simple Darning Workshop 1-3PM \$15
March 9th Quilting 101 Part 2 (3 week series) 3:30-6PM \$155	March 12 Make a Marionette! (4 week series) 6-8PM \$225	March 13 Needle Felt Penguin! 12-3PM \$35

Find tickets and details at LOOKYHEREGREENFIELD.COM

EXHIBITS

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: Atomic Dog: What I did to beat the blues, paintings by Ryan McGinn, through April.

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: A First-Class Machine Shop, local history exhibit with images, text, maps, and artifacts, through February 22; *Deep Roots: A History of Agriculture in the Connecticut River,* on display in the hallway.

Montague Center Library: Auto Partitas, mixed-media triptychs based on automotive parts by Nina Rossi, through February.

Sawmill River Arts, Montague Center: Small Works Show and Sale, through February 24. Guest artist Jacqueline Strauss will show her soft sculpture creatures at the gallery during February and March.

Rhodes Art Center, Northfield Mount Hermon: Faculty Art Exhibit, works by NMH teachers Steve Allison, YeJin Han, Charley Neisner, Bill Roberts, Jamie

Rourke, and Mona Seno, all working artists outside of the classroom, through March 6. Email jrourke@nmhschool.org to arrange a visit.

Greenfield Library, Greenfield: Clouds in Shades of Grey, black and white photographs of clouds by Paul Jablon, through February.

Artspace Gallery, Greenfield: Forward, a community art exhibit exploring evolution, change, and movement, with work by 37 local artists. Through February 28.

South Gallery, Greenfield Community College, Greenfield: Zamharir (torture for the naked eyes), mixed-media works by Iranian artist Nima Nikakhlagh. Through February 25; gallery talk next Wednesday, February 19 at 12 p.m.

Leverett Crafts & Arts, Leverett: Leverett Elementary School Art Exhibit, works by students at the school, last showing this weekend.

Leverett Library, Leverett: Botanical Photography, by Marilyn London-Ewing, through February.

Gallery A3, Amherst: Depth be Depth,

work by Daniel Feldman, through March 1.

Shelburne Arts Coop, Shelburne Falls: Wouldn't It Be Lovely, group show by member artists, through February.

D'Amour Museum, Springfield: Look Again: Portraits of Daring Women, woodcut and collage prints by Leverett artist Julie Lapping Rivera celebrating the achievements of women who defied the status quo, through February.

CALLS FOR ARTISTS

Tiny Art Show Kits are available for pickup at the **Wendell Free Library** now until March 1. Pick up a 4" by 4" canvas – and paints, if needed – at the library for an exhibit in the Herrick Room at the library opening on March 8 with a reception from 11 a.m. to noon. The show will remain up through April.

Waterway Arts at 102 Avenue A in Turners Falls is looking for artists working in media traditionally seen as "craft" to participate in a group show in May. Apply and get more information at tinyurl.com/waterwayapp.

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CALENDAR



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SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 16

Town Hall, Northfield: *Northfield Recreation Snowman Contest*. 9 a.m. Free.

Northfield Mountain, Northfield: *Family campfire*. S'mores, sledding, face painting, more. 1 to 4 p.m. Free.

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *A Bridge Too Far*. What about building new bridges in Gilded Age Turners Falls drove neighbors, and whole towns, against each other? Join DCR staff as they piece together questions affecting Montague's five villages in the 1800s. 2 p.m. Free.

Bombyx Center, Florence: *Lucy Kaplansky, John Gorka, Patty Larkin, Cliff Eberhardt*. 7 p.m. \$.

Parlor Room, Northampton: *Tim Eriksen*. 7:30 p.m. \$

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 17

Buckley Recital Hall, Amherst College, Amherst: *Nadia Shpachenko*, pianist, playing Chopin and contemporary Ukrainian composers. 5 p.m. Free.

Greenfield Garden Cinemas, Greenfield: Screening, *Dark Victory* (1939), with introduction by local film and theater historian Jonathan A. Boschen. 6:30 p.m. \$.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: Open Mic with *Jim McRae*. 8:30 p.m. No cover.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 18

Greenfield Public Library, Greenfield: *Lights, Camera, Action: Make a Movie in a Day!* Youth ages 8 to 18 are invited to the library to make a movie using a list of scavenger-hunt-style prompts. Facilitated by Greenfield Community Television's Bella Levavi. Final products will be entered in GCTV's annual film contest. Registration at www.tinyurl.com/MovieInADay required. Pizza served. 1 p.m. Free.

New Salem Public Library, New Salem: *Winter Quabbin Walk*, two hours of light to moderate hiking with Nick and Valerie Wisniewski of the Walnut Hill Tracking & Nature Center. 2 p.m. Free.

Millers Falls Library, Millers Falls: *Montague Villages Meet & Greet*. 3 p.m. Free.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 19

Greenfield Community College, Greenfield: Gallery talk, mixed-media works by Iranian artist *Nima Nikakhlagh*. 12 p.m. Free.

Greenfield Public Library, Greenfield: *Personal Growth Book Group Kick-off Meetup*. 6:30 p.m. Free.

No Fun, Troy, NY: *Thus Love, Laveda, Closebye*. 7 p.m. \$

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

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *Dawn Landes, The Pinkerton Raid, Sandy Bailey*. 8 p.m. \$.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 20

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Montague Cultural Council 2025 Kick-Off*. With *Cloudbelly*, Antenna Cloud Farm, Good Music Makes Good Neighbors, Weathervane Community Arts, RiverCulture, the Nolumbeka Project, Musica Franklin, Real Live Theater, live sculpture and painting, and more. Refreshments and cash bar. 6 p.m. Free.



The original suspension bridge between Turners Falls and Riverside was a surprisingly difficult sell at the time. Local bridge lore and gossip abound in "A Bridge Too Far," a presentation at the Great Falls Discovery Center this Sunday afternoon at 2 p.m.

11 Montague Avenue, Lake Pleasant: *Tea and Crumpet Society*, reading group. 6:30 p.m. By donation.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: *Open Stage performance*. Similar to an open mic, artists share theater, dance, music, spoken word, magic, puppetry, circus, comedy, and more, in any stage of development. Five-minute limit per act. 6:30 p.m. sign-up, 7 p.m. show. By donation.

Minimum Security Mist Chalet, Holyoke: *Noise Nomads, Rear Window, Impure Luck, Phemale*. 7 p.m. \$.

Hutghi's, Westfield: *Don't Go Outside, String Head, Marine Life, Tiger Moth*. 5:30 p.m. \$.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: Local authors showcase with *Paul Richmond, La Wanza Lett-Brewington, Joshua Michael Stewart, Joanne Hayes & Budge Hyde, Maria Williams, and Lindy Whiton*. 6 p.m. Free.

Jones Library, Amherst: *Film & Gender, Criticize, Farewell Sarathael, Letters of Marque*. 7 p.m. \$.

Academy of Music, Northampton: *Mike Birbiglia*. 7 p.m. \$.

Iron Horse, Northampton: *Max Creek*. 7 p.m. \$.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Little Lies, Fleetwood Mac tribute*. 8 p.m. \$.

The Drake, Amherst: *Rebirth Brass Band*. 8 p.m. \$.

Marigold, Easthampton: *The Classics, Club Casualties, Deja Carr (stand-up)*. 8:30 p.m. \$.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Olivia Nied*. 9:30 p.m. No cover.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 23

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *French-Breton open jam session*. 2:30 p.m. Free.

Iron Horse, Northampton: *Lonesome Brothers*. 7 p.m. \$.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Major Stars, Mibble, Bulle, Initiate Explosion, Sister Xmas*. 8 p.m. No cover.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 24

Cold Spring Hollow, Belchertown: *Fred Cracklin, Rhubarb Duo, Pearl Sugar, Throwaway*. 7 p.m. \$.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 25

GCC Main Campus, Greenfield: Workshop, *Defeating Humanity's Greatest Fear: Public Speaking*. 4 p.m. \$.

Leverett Public Library, Leverett: *Game Night*. 6:30 p.m. Free.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 26

Iron Horse, Northampton: *Eli "Paperboy" Reed*. 7 p.m. \$.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Jesse Carr Trio*. 8 p.m. No cover.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 27

LAVA Center, Greenfield: *Jazz jam, open session, with Two For Jazz*. 6 p.m. By donation.

Northampton Center for the Arts, Northampton: *Matthew Shipp*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

Parlor Room, Northampton: *Marie Siou*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28

Montague Center Library, Montague Center: *Montague Villages Meet & Greet*. 10 a.m. Free.

Canalside Rail Trail, Turners Falls: *Nice & Easy Walk*. Geared for seniors, but open to all. Meet at the Great Falls Discovery Center. 1 p.m. Free.

Looky Here, Greenfield: *Kids' Art Reception*. 5 p.m. Free.

Wendell Free Library, Wendell: Book reading, Sylvia Wetherby, *Ophelia*. Snacks, music, craft. 5:30 p.m. Free.

Leverett Village Co-op, Leverett: *Rattlesnake Gutter Gutter Snipes*. 6 p.m. Free.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *2 Car Garage*. 6 p.m. No cover.

Pioneer Valley Brewery, Turners Falls: *Jimmy Just Quit*. 7 p.m. No cover.

De La Luz Soundstage, Holyoke: *Lisa Fischer*. 7 p.m. \$.

Northampton Center for the Arts, Northampton: *Greg Burk*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

MASS MoCA, North Adams: *Dave Guy*. 8 p.m. \$.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Bluegrass and Beyond*. 9:30 p.m. No cover.

SATURDAY, MARCH 1

Brattleboro Food Co-op, Brattleboro: *Bread Fest*, celebrating local bread with an amateur baking competition, demos and tabling, and a talk and book signing by Jonathan Stevens, author of *The Hungry Ghost Bread Book*. 12 p.m. Free.

CitySpace, Easthampton: *Bluegrass jam session*. 4 p.m. Free.

TUESDAY, MARCH 4

Amherst Cinema, Amherst: Screening, *Four Winters: A Story of Jewish Partisan Resistance and Bravery in WWII*, with director Julia Mintz to answer questions. 7 p.m. \$.

FRIDAY, MARCH 7

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Suzanne Vega*. 8 p.m. \$\$.

SATURDAY, MARCH 8

Retreat Farm, Brattleboro: *Thus Love, Everwhat Brass Band*. 5 p.m. \$.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 12

Greenfield Public Library, Greenfield: *Death Café*. Part of a series on death and dying. 5:30 p.m. Free.

SATURDAY, MARCH 15

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Mud Season* feat. *The Dave Bulley Band, Bow Thayer, Pre-Emption Road, Chica Fuego, Lee Toten, Valerie Newman, Space Bar*, and more. 12 p.m. \$.

FRIDAY, MARCH 28

Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center, Great Barrington: *José González*. 8 p.m. \$\$

TUESDAY, APRIL 8

Nova Arts, Keene: *mssv, Landowner*. 7 p.m. \$

FRIDAY, MAY 9

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Roomful of Blues, Dave Keller*. 8 p.m. \$.

SATURDAY, MAY 17

Colonial Theater, Keene: *Steven Malkmus, Mirah*. 7 p.m. \$.

THURSDAY, JUNE 19

The Drake, Amherst: *Mikaela Davis*. 8 p.m. \$.

TUESDAY, JULY 15

Tree House Brewing, Deerfield: *Dinosaur Jr., Snail Mail, Easy Action*. Tickets on sale this Friday. 6:30 p.m. \$.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 30

Tree House Brewing, Deerfield: *Drive-By Truckers, Deer Tick, Thelma & The Sleaze*. Tickets on sale this Friday. 6 p.m. \$.

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RECIPES from page B1

Merritt Farmer, author of the 1896 runaway bestseller *The Boston Cooking School Cookbook*, enjoyed nothing better than prettifying her dishes with color. For her “Harvard Salad,” she told readers to chop sweetbreads, cucumbers, and celery, pack them into baskets made from lemons, and then “[p]are round red radishes as thinly as pos-

sible and finely chop the parings” to make a topping the color of Harvard’s emblematic crimson.

Such garnishes were Farmer’s trademark. Her Valentine’s cake was made in a ring pan. Frosted and decorated with piped hearts, it was served with a vase of flowers in the central hole. For a magazine article she created a pink Valentine’s menu of “Lover’s Sandwiches” and

“Heart’s-Ache Pudding,” made in heart-shaped molds.

Food magazines still sometimes feature a whole meal of Valentine reds and pinks. With year-round supplies of red fruits and vegetables, it’s easy for us to pull this off. Tomatoes, red peppers, strawberries, raspberries, and watermelon are in every supermarket, even in February.

Crimson cranberries have disappeared, but you can still find them frozen or canned. And serve-yourself deli bars have pepperdew peppers – vividly scarlet, and conveniently heart-shaped.

Of course, you can use red food coloring to dye food for Valentine’s. But while the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) certifies the safety of artificial colors, some turn out to be not as benign as once thought. Red 3 is one such. It gives maraschino cherries and red licorices their color, and has been common in candies, desserts, and beverages since 1969. But it was banned starting January 15 because it is a cancer risk.

Luckily, there is no need to mess with dodgy artificial colors for Valentines. Here’s a group of naturally red dishes you can make for the ones you love.



SWORDFISH PLAKE

This favorite Greek fish dish has a tasty red blanket of tomatoes and onions. Other firm fish, such as monkfish or halibut, can be used.



HOPLEY PHOTOS

- 2 pieces swordfish, 6 to 8 oz. each
- 2 lemons
- salt and pepper
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 1 large onion, peeled and thinly sliced
- 3 or 4 large tomatoes, peeled and diced
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 tsp. dried oregano
- 1 small cinnamon stick

Wash and dry the fish. Squeeze the juice of one lemon on top, and leave for an hour.

Meanwhile, heat the oil in a pan large enough to hold the

fish in a single layer. Cook the onion slices in it for 5 to 6 minutes.

Add the tomatoes, garlic, bay leaves, oregano, cinnamon stick, and a little salt, and cook gently for another 8 to 10 minutes.

Salt and pepper the fish. Move the tomato mixture to one side to make room for the fish, then spoon the mixture on top of it. Cover and cook gently for 8 to 10 minutes or until the fish is opaque all through. Serve hot, garnished with the bay leaves and the remaining lemon cut in wedges.

Serves 2.

PASSION FRUIT AND BERRY MERINGUE

Passion fruit are dark and look too battered to be good, but they are filled with a perfumed, seedy mush that adds a magical flavor to desserts. If you can’t find them, omit them.

- 4 egg whites
- pinch of salt
- 1 cup sugar
- ½ tsp. cream of tartar
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 12 strawberries, or 25 raspberries
- 2 or 3 passion fruit
- 1 cup heavy cream, whipped
- ½ cup pomegranate seeds or watermelon bits
- a few love hearts, heart-shaped chocolates, or small cookies

Make this meringue in whatever shape best suits the plate you will serve it on. Line a baking tray with parchment and trace the shape you want on it, or trace small shapes for individual servings. Set aside. Turn the oven to 300 degrees.

Put the egg whites and salt into a large bowl, and beat them with an electric mixer until they form peaks. Now beat in a tablespoon of sugar until it has dissolved – about three minutes. You should not be able to feel any crunch. Add the cream of tartar and vanilla.

Reserve one tablespoon of

sugar for the topping, but add the rest a tablespoon at a time, letting each addition dissolve before adding another. You will end up with a smooth, thick, shiny mass.

Spread the egg mixture onto the shape you traced. Bake for 30 minutes. Turn off the oven, but leave the meringue inside for another hour. Remove the meringue and let it cool. You can make it several hours beforehand, but don’t decorate it until a few minutes before serving.

If using strawberries, 10 minutes before decorating, quarter them and toss them with the reserved tablespoon of sugar. Halve the passion fruit and scatter the interior over the meringue. Next add dollops of whipped cream and spread them.

Scatter on the sugared strawberries or raspberries, and add the pomegranate seeds or watermelon. Use the love hearts or small heart-shaped cookies or chocolates to decorate.

Serves 4.

STUFFED PEPPERDEWS

- 2 to 3 Tbsp. Boursin, or other herb-flavored cheese
- 1 Tbsp. milk
- 1 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
- 12 pepperdew peppers
- 1 or 2 torn parsley leaves

In small bowl, mash the cheese with the milk and Worcestershire sauce. Using your smallest teaspoon or a knife point, fill each pepperdew with the mixture.

Wipe the excess from the outside of the peppers with a damp paper towel, and set them upright in a small dish. Toss on bits of parsley.

Serves 2 to 3, with drinks. You can easily multiply the recipe to serve more.



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Amanda Gorman, *The Hill We Climb*

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