

The Montague Reporter

Towns Consider Options After Breach, Outage of Emergency Alert System



Last week’s snowstorm found many area towns without CodeRED, a popular public notification service that has been disabled since a November cyberattack.

By MIKE JACKSON

FRANKLIN COUNTY – A public notification system known as CodeRED used by municipalities across the country stopped working last month, leaving local officials unable to update residents about roadwork and last week’s snowstorm. CodeRED’s owner is now setting up all of its customers on a new platform, but concerns about the company’s reliability – and the news

that the system was taken down by a ransomware attack, compromising user data – is causing many to investigate alternatives. “The Code Red system was hacked a couple weeks ago and the system has been out of service since that time,” Leverett’s selectboard and town administrator, Margie McGinnis, said in a written announcement on December 3. “The town has become aware that data in

see **OUTAGE** page A6

GILL-MONTAGUE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Public Volunteers Sought For Super Hiring Committee

By MIKE JACKSON

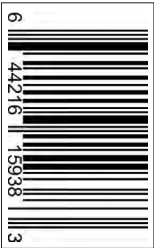
GILL-MONTAGUE – The regional school committee edited and approved a “district profile” Tuesday night that will be sent far and wide to prospective superintendents, then voted to form a 15-member screening committee. Three of the seats on the committee will be reserved for parents or guardians of students in the district, and another three for “community members or civic leaders from Gill,

Montague, or Erving.” Interested parties are urged to apply. Tracy Novick of the Massachusetts Association of School Committees, who is managing the superintendent search on behalf of the district, attended Tuesday night’s school committee meeting seeking final input on the district profile and the screening group’s composition. Novick said a community survey had received 81 responses, and that

see **GMRSD** page A6



Clumps of snow clog the interstices of a local shrub attractively.



Escalating Geopolitical Tensions (For Fun And Profit)	
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ERVING SELECTBOARD

Residential Tax Up 7.4% As Mountain Collects Major Abatement

By KATIE NOLAN

Erving’s FY’26 residential property tax rate will increase by 7.4% over last year, on top of rising home valuations. Meeting jointly with the board of assessors on Monday night, the selectboard approved a 65% “minimum residential factor” (MRF) at the town’s tax classification hearing. The residential tax rate will increase from \$9.31 to \$9.58 per thousand dollars of property value, while the commercial and industrial rate will increase from \$15.60 to \$16.14 per thousand dollars. Under this MRF, commercial and industrial property owners – primarily FirstLight Power Resources, Inc, which owns the Northfield Mountain pumped-storage project – are expected to pay 86% of all property taxes owed to the town. The split rate shifts the burden away from residential owners to commercial or industrial owners. Assessor Daniel Hammock observed that residential property values had increased, which will further increase homeowner real estate taxes. According to principal assessor

see **ERVING** page A4

LEVERETT SELECTBOARD

Firefighters Thanked for Mutual Aid at Amherst Blaze

By GEORGE BRACE

At their meeting on Tuesday, Leverett’s selectboard heard a report on the fire department’s mutual aid response to a large fire in North Amherst last month, and a request to assist residents in learning more about Eversource’s “smart-meter” upgrade program, among other business. The board received a letter from Amherst thanking the town and its fire department for the mutual aid response to a fire on November 7 which completely destroyed a five-story apartment building and displaced roughly 230 residents. Lieutenant Jeremy Rice, one of five firefighters from Leverett who were among the first on the scene, began his report on the incident by saying it was “one of the biggest fires in the area in a very long time,”

see **LEVERETT** page A8

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Millers Sewer Infiltration Seemingly Reined In

By JEFF SINGLETON

“Eighty-five thousand dollars? That’s real money,” Montague selectboard chair Matt Lord said on Monday after Clean Water Facility superintendent Chelsey Little explained the potential savings to the town in eliminating its “overage” payments to Erving, where sewage from Millers Falls is treated. Montague has a contract with

Erving that assesses the sewage it sends at a basic price up to a certain annual volume, but over the past few years it has significantly exceeded that limit due to excess rainwater flowing into the system. The high price of the extra treatment has had an impact on the town’s total “inflow and infiltration” (I&I) costs, which are funded by taxes. At its Monday night meeting the

see **MONTAGUE** page A7

DISPATCH

Turning Out the Vote In Clarksville, Tennessee



Tennessee Congressional candidate Aflyn Behn (left), who exceeded expectations last week in a special election watched nationwide, with our correspondent.

By DAVID DETMOLD

CLARKSVILLE, TN – The contrast between the candidates running in the December 2 special election in the Seventh Congressional District of Tennessee was stark. Matt Van Epps, West Point grad and former Commissioner of Tennessee’s Department of General Services, running with the endorsement of President Donald Trump, supported by \$1.7 million in spending from the Trump-affiliated MAGA Inc. super-PAC, stood for cutting red tape to help businesses thrive, unleashing the potential of cryptocurrency and

artificial intelligence, eliminating more red tape to reform the Veterans Administration, finishing the southern border wall, protecting farmers – as his website put it – from “attacks from the far left,” preventing “biological men” from competing in women’s sports, protecting the unborn, ensuring Israel “has what it needs to defend itself,” and advancing the president’s America First Agenda. His opponent, 36-year old Aflyn Behn, former healthcare community organizer for the Tennessee Justice Center and state legislator representing a Nashville district,

see **DISPATCH** page A5

WENDELL SELECTBOARD

Bridge Cash Sought Before Return of Warm Weather

By JOSH HEINEMANN

Two neighboring selectboards, New Salem’s and Erving’s, along with both towns’ top administrators and Erving’s road boss, came to the Wendell selectboard’s December 3 meeting with road issues to discuss. The New Salem officials – town coordinator Emily Hill, selectboard chair Sue Cloutier, and selectboard member Mailande DeWitt – came to discuss the ownership, maintenance, and repair of a section of

road long understood to be in New Salem, but recently found to lie within Wendell. Hill said the long-term solution preferred by the state Department of Transportation (MassDOT) is for Wendell to sell the 0.6-mile section of road to New Salem. A sale will take time, and does nothing for the coming snow. Though Hill said MassDOT does not like towns getting paid for doing road work in other towns,

see **WENDELL** page A4

TURNERS FALLS AND VICINITY.

Compiled by MIKE JACKSON

It has gotten bitterly **cold!**

We wish all of our readers who might observe the holiday a **very happy Hanukkah**, which begins this Sunday evening.

Montague Reporter distribution manager Nina Rossi asked me to pass this memo on to our readers:

“Home delivery subscribers may receive their papers later than expected while darkness comes so early and the weather is extremely cold. Please be patient, and make sure that paths are cleared for our carriers – if they can’t reach your mailbox or doorstep, they will have to toss the paper as near to it as they can.

“And tipping is very much appreciated by your hard-working newspaper delivery person!”

And, in fact, **this week is the darkest these afternoons get.** Charts for the *Reporter’s* office at latitude 42.6064° N show the sun setting last Friday, December 5 at 4:16 p.m., and then essentially at the same time for seven more days. Finally, this Saturday, December 13, our life-giving orb will wait to set until 4:17 p.m.

The winter solstice, with its barely nine hours of daylight, comes soon afterwards, at 10:03 a.m. on Sunday, December 21.

And even after *that* – due to complex factors involving the intertwining trajectories of these spinning astral bodies through the deep and thoughtless void of space – the sun will actually continue rising later each *morning*. For the nine-day stretch from December 30 to January 7, it will arrive each day at approximately 7:20 a.m., until Wednesday, January 8 when it’ll start to peek over our horizon at 7:19 a.m.

After that it’s straight on ‘til summer, and the 15-and-a-half-hour summer solstice light.

(Big thanks to editorial assistant Maggie Sadoway for this research!)

Leverett Democratic Town Committee chair Tim Shores let us know that an **info session on rural school**

advocacy in Massachusetts will be held this Saturday, December 13 at 1 p.m. at the Leverett Library.

Members of Rural Schools MA (www.ruralschoolsma.org) will give a presentation, and state representative Natalie Blais and “possibly” state senator Jo Comerford will be in attendance. “All are welcome,” Mr. Shores emphasizes.

Two separate fires in Holyoke last week displaced nearly 100 families. The community could really use some extra help from the broader region, and that includes from here.

There are various ways to help but one of the most visible spots for donation is the grassroots family resource center Enlace De Familias – they have an online donation link up via Zeffy, which you can reach via www.tinyurl.com/EnlaceFires.

Our Events Calendar (*Pages B8 and B9*) is exploding with holiday shop-portunities: this Friday and Saturday, a **Holiday Craft Fair** in Wendell; on Friday, **It’s A Wonderful Night** in downtown Turners; on Saturday, a **Yule Bazaar** at Harvest, a **Holiday Store and Open Studios** at Leverett Crafts & Arts, a **Winter Market** with good live music down in Easthampton... and all sorts of other cute craft workshops and seasonal gatherings. Even more next week-end! We live among abundance.

Ed Markey, one of our very own US Senators from Massachusetts, has been vocally critical of Amazon’s Ring “doorbell” cameras for several years, and is speaking up about the cameras’ new feature released this week: **facial recognition technology**.

In response to inquiries Markey sent the company in his role as a member of the Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee, Amazon “revealed that Ring’s privacy protections only apply to device owners and not members of the public,” the senator’s office announced on Wednesday.

In other words, tagged biometric scans from the cameras, millions of which face outward toward America’s public streets, may be stored indefinitely by their owners without the filmed individuals’ consent.

Anyone seeking to request that their data be deleted – delivery drivers, for example – does have a legal right to do so, but would theoretically have to request it of every Ring owner on their route, or in their neighborhood.

“This is a giant step toward a dystopian future where Americans cannot leave their homes without being tracked and surveilled,” Markey said. “By releasing this feature during the holiday season, Amazon is forcing delivery drivers, including its own drivers, to potentially surrender their biometric data each time they drop off a package. This reckless expansion of facial recognition technology isn’t innovation – it’s a privacy crisis.”

Furthermore, Markey noted, 2,723 law enforcement agencies and counting now participate in a program that gathers Ring imagery. Though agencies are not supposed to be able to reach out directly through the software to request footage from owners, and are instead expected to wait until it is volunteered to them, in October *Ars Technica* reported on a key workaround: the 5,000 agencies that use Flock Safety software may request Ring footage *through Flock*, or alternately through its rival surveillance platform Axon.

Again, please tip your carriers....

Speaking of the continuously tightening nexus of automated surveillance, our government is apparently planning to start asking all visitors to the country to first hand over **five years’ worth of their social media history** for review.

And though our leader is engaging this week in a particularly spit-flecked run of xenophobia targeting specific countries from the global South such as Somalia, this would even apply to people coming from countries in our visa waiver program, such as the United Kingdom, France, and Israel.

Do you have a five-year social media history on hand that you would be willing to share with a Customs auditor next time you plan to travel internationally? If that sounds a little *annoying* to you, then this policy will definitely negatively impact tourism...

And even if you are a US citizen

December 12, 13, & 14

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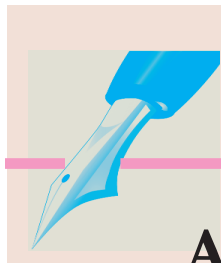
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Another Letter to the Editors

A Different Take on *Swamped*

I read David Detmold’s review of the play *Swamped!*, which debuted in Wendell, with interest. I have a very different take on the play.

I felt the play was filled with negative stereotypes and tropes involving LGBTQ people.

It started pretty early on, with references to one character going to Provincetown to explore their gender identity. A dated and offensive word for gay people was used to describe people living in P’Town, which I found quite unnecessary. The person exploring their identity

returns from P’Town, downtrodden and crying, saying it was a “mean” place, which advances the negative stereotype that gay communities are inherently unwelcoming, dangerous, or otherwise unsafe.

In the end of the play, another main character decides they will not transition – take their pills – if an insensitive character does not commit suicide with pills, advancing a common trope that queer identity is conditional, burdensome to others, and that marginalized characters should self-sacrifice.

I was equally surprised by some

of the listed sponsors of this play, including Greenfield Savings Bank, as well, of course, the Wendell Meetinghouse sponsoring it.

This is not about liking or disliking the play, so much as it is about sponsoring institutions being conscious of messages dealing with marginalized communities because harmful stereotypes can have real world impact. Art is subjective, but we can simultaneously support art while rejecting stereotypes.

Sincerely,

Ray DiDonato Wendell

and don’t plan international travel, guess what? You may *still* be expected to fork over your social media history to Customs and Border Protection. Last month Samuel Tunick, a musician and activist in Atlanta, Georgia, was indicted by a grand jury and arrested on a charge of destruction of evidence for **deleting the data on his own phone**.

Tunick was reportedly pulled over for a tail light violation, then handcuffed and detained by the FBI and Homeland Security. CBP agents – for reasons they have not publicly disclosed – wanted to see Tunick’s Google Pixel device, and were furious to discover he had wiped it.

Tunick wasn’t charged with any other crime, mind you – his purported offense was simply deleting his own data on his own device.

Don’t forget that we have **new shirts in!** Blue with *The Montague Reporter*, the image of our nameplate, in white lettering. Very understated. Yours for \$20 to \$40.

We’re also still in the midst of our annual **Writers’ Fund appeal**. If you have anything extra to give this year, please consider us on your list. You can donate at www.montaguereporter.org – find the link that says “Donate” in the menu, and let us know it’s for the Writers’ fund – or by sending back one of the envelopes we tried to send everywhere last month. If you didn’t

get an envelope, we can provide one.

The Writers’ Fund is money earmarked to pay writers, photographers, editors, etc., the most endangered section of our small and profitless budget.

Early heads-up: After next week’s edition, the *Montague Reporter* will be taking our final break week of the calendar year – there will be no paper on December 25, a Thursday.

Additionally, this means that the **January 1 holiday also falls on a Thursday**, and we have learned that printing services are not available at our printer that day. As of this week we are unsure whether that week’s paper will be printed Wednesday, December 31 or Friday, January 2. Some carriers may also not be available to work for us on the holiday if we do print on the Wednesday. Please be prepared to exercise some more of the aforementioned patience!

The last time December 25 and January 1 both fell on Thursdays was at the end of 2014.

We had a different printer then, and because of the difficult holiday schedule, that New Year’s Day we ended up putting out what would become the first of our four famous special historical editions.

Something to keep in mind.

Send your little bits of news to editor@montaguereporter.org.

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RECYCLE

PAPER

Week of December 15 in Montague



more info? call: 863-2054

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Case No. ST - 2025 - CV - 00292
ACTION FOR
DEBT FORECLOSURE OF LIEN
AND BREACH OF CONTRACT

CAPTAIN'S COMMAND AT BLUEBEARD'S BEACH CLUB OWNERS' ASSOCIATION, INC.,
Plaintiff,
vs.
TERRI SEVENE CAPUCCI, MICHAEL SEVENE, JAMES C. SEVENE, JR., and "JOHN DOE" being all unknown heirs, Successors, and assigns of Barbara L. Sevene claiming a right, title, lien, estate or interest in Week Number 10 in Villa Unit Number 225 in Captain's Command at Bluebeard's Beach Club, an Interval Ownership Condominium, Defendants.

SUMMONS

To: "John Doe", being all unknown heirs, successors and assigns of Barbara L. Sevene and all persons claiming a right title, lien, estate or interest in Week Number 10 in Villa Unit Number 225 in Captain's Command at Bluebeard's Beach Club, an Interval Ownership Condominium, Parcel Nos. 100-A, 100-B, and 100-C together with easements "A" and "B" on Parcel 100- REM No. 4 Estate Frenchman's Bay Quarter, Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands.

Within the time limited by law (see note below) you are hereby required to appear before this Court and answer to a complaint filed against you in this action and in case of your failure to appear or answer, judgment by default will be taken against you as demanded in the Complaint, for

DEBT AND FORECLOSURE OF LIEN
AND BREACH OF CONTRACT.

PURSUANT TO COURT ORDER FOR SERVICE BY PUBLICATION ENTERED BY HON. JUDGE SIGRID M. TEJO ON NOVEMBER 4TH, 2025.

Witness my hand and the Seal of this Court this 5th day of November, 2025.

TAMARA CHARLES
Clerk of the Court

By: Donna D. Donovan, Court Clerk Supervisor

Richard H. Dollison, Esq.,
Attorney for Plaintiff
Law Offices of Richard H. Dollison, P.C.
5143 Palm Passage, Ste. B28/29
P.O. Box 6135
St. Thomas, U.S.V.I. 00804

NOTE: This defendant, if served personally, is required to file his/her answer or other defenses with the Clerk of this Court, and to serve a copy thereof upon the plaintiff's attorney within twenty one (21) days after service of this summons, excluding the date of service. The defendant, if served by publication or by personal service outside of the jurisdiction, is required to file his/her answer or other defense with the Clerk of this Court within thirty (30) days after the completion of the period of publication or personal service outside of the jurisdiction, and to serve a copy thereof upon the attorney for the plaintiff, and in the case of any form of mailing requiring a signed receipt, within 30 days from the date of receipt as indicated by the signed receipt.

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ERVING from page A1

Jacqueline Boyden, the housing market in Erving is strong. “We have some homes approaching the one million mark,” she said. However, Boyden said, there was a decrease in the Northfield Mountain Project’s valuation.

The selectboard also approved the assessors’ recommended “small commercial” exemption, which they estimate will apply to about 10 local small businesses, and will result in exemptions totaling \$3,191.

The selectboard, board of assessors, and finance committee also held an 80-minute executive session on Monday to discuss strategy for litigation with FirstLight Power and Northfield Mountain LLC.

FirstLight had previously appealed Erving’s assessed value for the Northfield Mountain Project for the 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022 fiscal years. In October, the state Appellate Tax Board ruled that while Erving’s assessment for 2019 was fair, it had overvalued the pumped-storage project FY’20 through FY’22, and owed the company abatements totaling \$2.35 million.

Personnel

In a memo dated December 6, Bryan Smith asked the selectboard to decide how many hours per week were needed for IT support, and to revise the IT support job description.

Selectboard chair Jacob Smith was hired as the town’s part-time IT support in 2014, and in 2016, Boyden was appointed IT coordinator to help coordinate departmental IT needs. Bryan Smith wrote that the town’s current IT needs are more complicated than they were in 2014.

On Monday, selectboard members James Loynd and William Bembury voted to establish the IT support position at 19 hours per

week, “until further analysis of the needs can be completed.” Jacob Smith recused himself from the deliberations.

The board reviewed the Community Services Cadet job description, and scheduled a further review for their next meeting. The cadet program allows individuals to work for the police department and develop their skills and knowledge while they wait for a full-time police academy slot.

The board appointed Bembury, Bryan Smith, and town accountant Deborah Mero to the assistant town accountant screening committee.

Other Business

The selectboard reviewed a draft agreement with ERSECO, the Erving Industries subsidiary that operates the Erving Center wastewater treatment plant (POTW#2), over planned upgrades to the plant for a second time. Town administrator Bryan Smith said he would send the upgrade plans to board members this week, in preparation for a meeting with ERSECO on December 22.

The board reviewed the draft Open Space and Recreation Plan, and decided to solicit feedback from residents, boards, and committees and finalize the plan in January.

The board authorized the senior services department to accept a New Salem Academy grant of \$4,650 for a performance by Drumatix at Erving Elementary School, and an art class at the Erving Senior Community Center.

The police department was authorized to apply for a grant from the Patrick Leahy Bulletproof Vest Partnership for purchasing three bulletproof vests.

The board voted to designate several books held by the museum committee as surplus property.



WENDELL from page A1

Wendell highway commission chair Phil Delorey said work exchanges do happen when roads do not conform with town lines, and that towns even trade machines for small jobs.

Hill said warm-weather maintenance of the road costs roughly \$500 a year, and that plowing snow costs less. The two selectboards agreed that it makes sense for New Salem to plow that stretch of road when they plow on either side of it, and that Wendell will do maintenance in warmer weather. New Salem can pay the difference in costs annually.

The Erving officials came to discuss the Farley Road bridge, which connects their town with Wendell. The original repair estimate for that bridge was for replacing its pressure-treated wood decking and underlaying pressure-treated wood supports. In the fall, when the old wood was removed, it was revealed that the structure wanted a more involved repair. Work stopped, with the bridge closed to traffic.

Erving selectboard member William Bembury was in the room as the meeting opened. He waited quietly until the other Erving selectboard members came – chair Jacob Smith and member James Loynd – as well as town administrator Bryan Smith, highway supervisor Glenn McCrory, and by Zoom, Keith Nelson, senior project manager for Gill Engineering, the firm overseeing the bridge project.

Nelson listed repairs the bridge needs in terms of their priority: those needing repair within six months; those needing repair within two years; and those to be done with complete cleaning and painting of the structure.

Cleaning and painting will be expensive, Nelson warned, because of the containment required over the Millers River.

The estimated cost for the most immediate repairs – replacing anchor bolts on the Erving side and a sole plate on the Wendell side – is under \$20,000, and Nelson said he thought that might be covered by the contingency included in the original \$348,020 grant budget, if it has not already been used.

Delorey said the Wendell highway department has \$300,000 extra this year because a contractor, Warner Brothers, was not able to do paving the town was expecting. Erving can meet its half of the relatively small expense. Bryan Smith said MassDOT will accept plans whether the work is to be done all at once, or done in phases.

Removing the wood deck for later repairs and then putting it back will add \$140,000 to any repair cost. McCrory said the planking and support wood were removed from the site and stored under a tarp at the Erving highway garage.

The two boards discussed different ways to get the bridge open. Work is harder in winter, and neither town has earmarked additional money for the bridge. Delorey pointed out that work was stopped until spring anyway.

Both boards agreed there is time to start looking for additional funds, and to meet again after the holiday crush has passed. Nelson said he would organize proposals and possibilities for their next joint meeting.

McCrory invited Wendell board members to Erving to see the streetlights. “There is a beautiful moon,” said Wendell selectboard chair Laurie DiDonato.

Other Business

With the consent of Wendell’s finance committee, the selectboard approved hiring a temporary plow driver at \$28.40 an hour. They appointed Sarah Robertson to the kitchen com-

mittee and Penny Delorey to the board of registrars. Phil Delorey said he will find out what the latter job entails over dinner.

Community grant money was found to allow the town to pay a planning board clerk \$25 a week through the end of FY’26, so the selectboard approved that spending.

Historical commission member Lisa Hoag asked for money to buy the commission a file cabinet so its members will no longer have to keep records at their homes. The commission has no budget line in the town’s operating budget, and if town meeting authorizes money for FY’27 it may not be used to repay money spent in FY’26.

DiDonato said Hoag should contact the fin com and get a budget line in the next budget cycle. Historical commission members agreed to use their own money for the file cabinet.

Selectboard member Adam Feltman said a person he spoke with from the state’s Green Communities program told him Wendell has exhausted its first round of Green Communities grants. If the town submits a comprehensive assessment of town buildings and an energy reduction plan for them, it will be entered in a lottery for more grants.

Feltman said he thought Swift River School, which is within Wendell’s borders, might be a good place to look for possible energy savings. He said schools tend to spend money on students.

Fire chief Matt O’Donnell told the board that Lake Wyola is being drawn down for dam repairs, leaving the Shutesbury fire department without a northern water source, and Wendell without a southern one. He asked for authority to use McAvoy’s Pond as a water source for both towns, though he admitted that in an emergency, a fire department may use a water source as they see the need.



Montague Community Television News

Meetings & Marionettes

By HANNAH BROOKMAN

TURNERS FALLS – Meetings, marionettes, and local author Dustin Spear have all appeared to bring some cheer to the MCTV Vimeo page. Watch our videos, old and new, on Channel 9 or online whenever is convenient for you.

Find these videos and even more on Montague Community Television’s Vimeo page, which you can find linked through our website, *Montaguenv.org*, by clicking the “Videos” tab. There you can find

folders directing you to all of our archived Montague and Gill select-board meetings, past and present.

If you would like to make a video, or if you know of an event that should be filmed, let us know. You can come by the station at 34 Second Street in Turners Falls to talk with Dean or Deirdre, Mondays through Fridays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. You can email us at *infomontaguenv@gmail.com* or even call us up at (413) 863-9200.

And if you see us out there filming, say hi!

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Fuel Assistance Resumes

GREENFIELD – Community Action Pioneer Valley (CAPV) announced last week that federal Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) funding has been released, allowing the Fuel Assistance program to resume full operations after weeks of serving only heat emergencies.

CAPV can now pay for non-emergency fuel deliveries and utility usage, and can provide additional emergency deliveries for clients who have benefits remaining. Benefits received by each household vary based on factors such as heating source, housing type, household size, and income. Further information can be found at *www.mass.gov/info-details/learn-about-home-energy-assistance-heap*.

CAPV has received over 6,100 applications to date. (In 2024, the program served 7,379 households.) The notification process could not begin until December 3, as CAPV

was not permitted to process this information under emergency restrictions. Staff will begin sending letters of approval this week. Due to the volume of applications it may take several weeks before staff are able to notify applicants.


Notices will be sent by mail, and applicants can check their status through the automated system at (413) 774-2310, currently the most efficient option.

“We recognize this delay has caused a major hardship for many,” said CAPV executive director Lev BenEzra. “During the shutdown, CAPV was forced to reduce hours and furlough some of our Fuel Assistance staff because of the lack of funding. All staff returned to the office this week...”

For more information or to apply for Fuel Assistance, contact (413) 774-2310 or *fuelassistance@communityaction.us*, or see CAPV’s website, *www.communityaction.us*.

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DISPATCH from page A1

ran with \$1 million in backing from the Democratic House Majority PAC. She advocated restoring cuts to Medicare and Medicaid, funding rural hospitals, bringing back breakfast programs for students in public schools, repairing highways, defending free speech, and a “workers-first economy that creates good-paying jobs with benefits.”

Van Epps and Behn emerged from crowded primaries on October 7 to run in the last special election for Congress of 2025. The election was called to fill the vacancy left when Rep. Mark Green retired in July for a private-sector job after voting to pass Trump’s Big Beautiful Bill.

The Tennessee 7th looked like a safe seat for Republicans. In 2024, Trump won it by 22 points. Mark Green cruised to victory by 21 points. In 2022, Republicans in the state legislature had carved up the Democratic bastion of Nashville into three meandering rural-dominated districts, including this one, planning to keep eight of Tennessee’s nine Congressional seats safely Republican forever.

Despite the long odds, I drove down to Nashville. I figured there might be a chance, with Democrats feeling bullish after recent gains, to catch the Republicans sleeping off the effects of too much tryptophan after the long Thanksgiving weekend.

I drove 16 hours on Friday, then found my way to Democratic headquarters in Clarksville, the seat of Montgomery County, on the Kentucky border. There I teamed up with a Black mother of two daughters named Marquetta Broady and a young white guy from Knoxville named Alex, who said he’d voted for Trump three times before jumping ship to work for Aftyn.

We hit the streets in a working class neighborhood Marquetta called “Off-Crossland.” Marquetta drove, Alex navigated, and I knocked on the doors of voters identified as likely to vote for Aftyn Behn.

The data was bad. Many of the identified voters had moved away, or were solid in support for Van Epps. One man shooed me off his porch, flicking his fingers at me. “I hate everything that woman stands for. Get that trash off my porch!”

Often, teenagers would answer the door. They would take Behn’s leaflet reluctantly, as if I were handing them a leaking water balloon. They were noncommittal about their parents’ whereabouts, their willingness to pass the leaflet along, their age, their ability to vote, or their interest in the whole notion of voting.

I began going rogue and handing out leaflets to anybody I saw on the street.

I began going rogue and handing out leaflets to anybody I saw on the street. “She’s in favor of school breakfast programs...” I would lead with that. “So students won’t starve in Social Studies.”

We were working through a neighborhood of small, lightly constructed, single-story homes of a type no longer found much in Montague. We might have called them starter homes once. Ethnically, the neighborhoods off Crossland Avenue are a mix of Black, White, Latino, and East Asian households. Not

to stereotype, just to state an obvious truth: the people who came to the door most receptive to the Democrat’s pitch were Black women, first and foremost, the backbone of the Democratic Party.

Clarksville is a sprawling city of 189,000, home to steadily expanding Fort Campbell and the Army’s Air Assault Division. Once a major tobacco center, it boasted shoe manufacturers and is still home to foundries that made munitions during the Civil War. Tire manufacturing is part of Clarksville’s economy. Amazon and FedEx have distribution centers there. Austin Peay State University is a downtown anchor, and there is a small, vital arts sector with bookstores, record shops, local breweries, and restaurants clustered around Franklin Street and the Cumberland River.

Rosa said door-to-door canvassing would be better suited to building a broad base for next year’s midterms. But in a short, low-turnout special election, the best path to victory would be to “turn out our people.”

On Saturday, there were never more than 30 people canvassing for Behn in Clarksville. That number dropped steadily as the day wore on. By evening I begged Rosa Ponce, the calm, competent coordinator of the Clarksville Behn campaign, to give me a large stack of fliers to distribute door to door in a likely-looking neighborhood northwest of the university.

Rosa told me the best strategy was to turn out people identified by phone bank volunteers from around the country as likely to vote for Behn. I was certainly willing to knock on those doors, and to ask those voters if they had a plan to vote. But I preferred to also leave fliers at every house in between, and to hand leaflets to anyone I encountered along the way.

“These are excellent leaflets,” I argued. “What’s the downside?”

Rosa said door-to-door canvassing would be better suited to building a broad base for next year’s midterms. But in a short, low-turnout special election, the best path to victory would be to “turn out our people.”

The Behn campaign had been buoyed by a recent Emerson College poll showing the Democrat trailing Van Epps by just two percentage points.

But on the ground, that level of support was hard to find. I walked door to door off College and Poston Streets, a neighborhood dedicated as the Beloved Community of two civil rights activists, Otis Lee Martin and Virginia Martin-Hatcher, who had opened a famous eatery there, Virginia’s Café. It was too early on a Sunday to knock on doors, but some people came out when they saw me coming. One elderly Black woman, wearing a bathrobe that could not have given her much comfort from the cold, said folks at her church needed rides to the polls, and I showed her how to make that request.

At 10 o’clock, Rosa gave me another route to drive, and addresses of supporters to contact. I promised to find all those addresses, if she would give me an extra 150 leaflets

to leave on the doorsteps of all the houses in between.

The first person who came to the door in that slightly upscale Dover Road area looked after me with a puzzled expression and said, “This is a Republican neighborhood.” I encouraged him to read Aftyn’s flier and see what she was standing for. Later, I wanted to tell him if all his neighbors were Republicans, a lot of them were planning to defect.

A few blocks away, one woman told me, “I wouldn’t vote for that Doofus,” referring to Van Epps, and she was not alone in that sentiment.

Van Epps’s large signs stood here and there, on public land, or in front of the grandest homes. Behn’s small signs were found on the lawns of smaller houses.

At 1:30 I met a dwindling band of canvassers and teamed up with another driver, an Army veteran named Chris who had been wounded multiple times during tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. He drove a battered blue pickup. Our first stop was a gated community, where we pulled off a complicated tactical operation to gain access on a Sunday afternoon. We followed with hit-and-run visits to targeted addresses in apartment complexes and senior citizens’ centers in proximity to the Army base.

Compliments of the owner, a Behn supporter, I stayed that night in a luxurious bed and breakfast next door to the fire station in the historic downtown. It was a big step up from the colorful A&W Motel on Madison where I’d shared a room with a family of cockroaches the night before.

Early Monday, while the temperature hovered around 22 degrees, I tried to convince the young barista serving me hot chocolate to vote for Aftyn. “I’m not educated enough to vote,” she told me, sincerely.

My fingers numb, I worked my way door to door in that same humble district off Crossland where I’d first gone on Saturday. The sun rose above the hills. I talked to a young Black woman scrolling on her phone, waiting in her car for a friend, and told her about the upcoming vote.

I told her about the issues Aftyn was running on. “She’s in a tough race,” I told her. “She could win by one vote and it could be yours.”

Without missing a beat, she said proudly, “It will be!”

At 10:30, back at the canvassers’ meetup, I found only Rosa with one volunteer who’d flown over from England. I took another batch of fliers and went back out, canvassing a promising neighborhood off Greenwood Avenue and surrounding side streets, stately old mansions intermixed with modest homes. This was Aftyn country, with lawn signs like “In This House We Believe in Science,” next door to lawn signs advertising witches’ covens.

It was Election Day eve, and the campaign had the feel of a twin prop airplane taxiing down the runway unable to get airborne. Then Aftyn showed up to rally the troops at an impromptu press conference in Veterans Plaza. A small crowd of admirers gathered to watch her thrust and parry with the national media, who were intently focused on her longshot campaign. I listened with growing admiration to the candidate. I’d known next to nothing about her when I traveled south.

With his typical flair for a scornful sobriquet, Trump had tagged her as “AOC from Tennessee,” but she did not back down from her

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TOWN OF WARWICK ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS PUBLIC HEARING

The Warwick Zoning Board of Appeals will hold a **public hearing on Tuesday, December 30, 2025 at 6:00 p.m.** in the Warwick Town Hall to consider an application for a Special Permit submitted by **Deborah Gresock**.

The petitioner proposes to **demolish and reconstruct a dwelling on a slightly different footprint at 19 and 20 South Holden Road, Warwick**, on Moores Pond. The property consists of **pre-existing non-conforming lots**, and the proposed project requires ZBA review under the Warwick Zoning Bylaw provisions governing alterations or reconstruction of non-conforming structures.

The application and supporting materials are available for public inspection at the Town Clerk’s Office during regular business hours. Any person interested or wishing to be heard should appear at the time and place stated above.

Warwick MA Zoning Board of Appeals

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proud, progressive stance. Asked to comment on the Republicans’ smear campaign against her – she hates country music, she hates Nashville, she’s crazy, she’s transgender, she’s a former Girl Scout! – Behn replied calmly, “They don’t have anything good to say about their own campaign. All they can do is attack me. We need to focus on what truly matters to Tennesseans: lowering costs, fixing roads, feeding kids, and funding hospitals.”

I left the plaza with 200 more fliers, and less than two hours before dark. I worked a neighborhood near Golf Club Lane, where the houses were far apart. I met a grey-haired couple standing in their yard talking with a grizzled friend in a butter-nut hoodie. All three denounced the national Democrats, Obama, and Biden, and said their administrations had been disastrous for Tennessee. They hated the corrupt Democrats, they told me, but they hated the Republicans even more. They had voted for Aftyn.

I passed out my last leaflets in the gathering dusk, and hit the road for home. The following evening, I heard the unsurprising news. Behn lost to Van Epps by single digits, moving the district 13% toward the left compared to 2024.

Democrats found solace in the fact that about 50 House Republicans won their seats last year by less than 13 points. If the momentum Behn demonstrated in the Tennessee 7th can be duplicated by more Democratic candidates in the 2026 midterms, Republicans’ razor-thin majority in Congress might crumble.

In her concession speech, Behn vowed to run again next November and win. I believe she might. This time, I’ll try to fill my car with friends from home to help.

I noticed a small tidbit in the *Nashville Banner* the next day. The election evening watch party had started well for the Behn campaign when news came in that she had won in Clarksville with 50.8% of the vote. With only a few dozen people out canvassing in the fifth-largest city in Tennessee on the weekend before an important election, a few more helping hands can make a difference.

David Detmold is the founding editor of The Montague Reporter. He lives on Fourth Street.





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OUTAGE from page A1

the system has been stolen and may be republished or reused by the hackers.... If you used the same password for your resident Code Red account as you used for any other personal or business accounts, please change the passwords to those other accounts immediately.”

Many subscribers of the CodeRED system, owned by the security company OnSolve, signed up to receive notifications from a town or other organization without setting up personal accounts. The software allowed users to simply enter phone numbers and email addresses.

“When you went to the signup page, the first thing you were greeted with was, ‘Do you want to create an account?’” Gill town administrator Ray Purington explained to the *Reporter*. “And what I told people was, ‘Say no – you don’t need another username and password in your life!’”

Purington said Gill has used the notification service since 2017, primarily to communicate about changes in the trash and recycling schedule, “location-sensitive rabid animal alerts” and a major road washout on Route 2.

“You have the ability to either do an ‘all-call,’ or you could draw an area on the map,” Purington said. The town has spent \$1,500 per year for the service, and since September had been working on switching into a new version of the software. He said he had not been notified of a data breach in November, but was satisfied with the company’s service.

The new system, he said, requires all users to set up accounts with passwords.

In July 2024, OnSolve was acquired by GardaWorld, a Canadian security conglomerate with \$5.3 billion in annual revenue according to its own reporting. In its public announcement, GardaWorld described its new acquisition as “leading provider of critical event management and MassCom services, including risk intelligence, mass notifications, incident management and travel risk management solutions,” and stated that it would become part of its Crisis24 platform, a “pioneer in synergizing human and AI-driven analysis and expertise to produce relevant, hyperlocal and real-time risk management solutions.”

Since 2022, according to previous GardaWorld bulletins, Crisis24 has been in a “long-term strategic partnership” with Palantir Technologies, Inc., a publicly traded intelligence and defense contractor. The Crisis24 platform runs on Palantir’s Foundry operating system, which in exchange can leverage the platform’s “unparalleled expertise and depth of knowledge in crisis management and intelligence.”

The day before Thanksgiving, GardaWorld disclosed that on November 10, an “organized cybercriminal group” had attacked the OnSolve CodeRED platform, which the company decommissioned, and that “[a]ll customers have since transitioned to the new CodeRED by Crisis24,” which “resides in a non-compromised, separate environment that has been subjected to a comprehensive security audit.”

According to the information security publication *Bleeping Computer*, a gang known as INC Ransom took responsibility for the breach, published screenshots on a leak site to prove it had acquired the user

data, and “[a]fter allegedly failing to receive a ransom payment, the threat actors say they are now selling the data stolen during the attack.”

In a blog at *Malwarebytes*, malware intelligence researcher Pieter Arntz wrote that the gang had rejected an offer of \$150,000 from Crisis24.

McGinnis, the Leverett town administrator, said Leverett has not discussed switching notification vendors. The town uses the system three or four times a month, she said, though “in the last month, when it’s been down,” she would have used it to update residents on the Dudleyville Road drainage project and a closure at Leverett Elementary due to a heating system failure.

The town, she said, is switching to the new CodeRED product, but the company is “slowly populating” the previous user data, and as of Monday no Leverett residents had been added.

Before CodeRED, she said, the town used Blackboard Connect for sending notifications to publicly available contacts. When that data was imported into CodeRED in 2020, residents had an option to set up an account and personalize their notification priorities, or receive notifications by multiple methods in a sequence.

Wendell town coordinator Kelly Tyler said that at the moment, her town is also planning to stick with Crisis24’s products, and has moved all of its data over to the company’s new platform.

“No final decision has been made about staying or going,” she said, “but we want to look at the data that’s been updated.”

When asked for comment on municipalities seeking new vendors after the breach, Purington commented that they were “fortunate to have that kind of bandwidth.”

“I’ve got a platform that has worked well, the pricing has remained unchanged for eight years, and I’m hopeful it’s going to remain unchanged for next period as well,” he said. He told the *Reporter* that he was currently negotiating Gill’s renewal rate with the company.

At Monday’s Montague selectboard meeting, town administrator Walter Ramsey announced that the emergency warning system has been out of commission since November 10. As a consequence, he said, during last week’s snowstorm many residents were unprepared to move their cars from the street – particularly in downtown Turners Falls, which is not subject to the townwide winter parking ban except during a declared weather emergency.

Ramsey said that while CodeRED’s owner had provided the new program, “about two-thirds of the customers that had signed up” were not successfully imported, and he was skeptical that it would be easy to rebuild the user base.

“People will have to sign up using an email address, and they’ll also have to put in a password,” he told the board. “We feel like it’s too much of a barrier for our residents who want to be able to get this program.”

Montague, he said, is now looking at alternative services, including one that many other communities in the area are using called Rave Alert.

“It’s easy for people to sign up, it’s user-friendly on the town’s end for us putting the messages out... and it’s about half the cost of the

GMRSD from page A1

based on this feedback, she recommended the search focus on finding a candidate who will “ground themselves in the district,” has a “demonstrated history of working with educators,” and “[p]rioritizes open and regular communication with families and the larger community,” among other criteria.

“I’ve seen a lot of different leaders in my time in this town,” said Steve Ellis, a Montague school committee member who formerly worked as the town administrator. “We need someone who can speak to Montague’s town meeting – and who can speak to all of the other constituencies – in a way that is engaging and compelling.”

Novick brought a draft of the written materials that will advertise the position. One item from the list of qualifications sparked the most discussion.

“Where it says, ‘Experience as a

Superintendent preferred,’” Montague member Wendy Thompson asked Novick, “is there any way we could just say experience is necessary? We need somebody who has been a superintendent, who knows what they need to do as far as getting the issues that we have in the district straightened out.”

“Tracy, do you want to give us your perspective?” school committee chair Jane Oakes asked.

“You would eliminate probably three-quarters of your applicants,” Novick warned. “You will have a very, very small applicant pool.”

“I looked at the salary range here, and I’m like ‘Oh wow, we’re going *there?*’” Ellis commented. The range is given at \$170,000 to \$190,000 per year.

“I’m not saying that that’s a low salary,” Novick said, “I’m saying that... you’re not going to be wooing someone based on salary.”

“You don’t have huge dragons to

slay, in the way that some districts do,” she clarified.

No one moved to make prior experience as a superintendent a requirement, and after some workshopping of the packet’s description of the Gill-Montague area, the committee voted 9-0 to approve the document.

Novick’s draft proposal for the screening group had included two teachers, which the school committee amended to three. Montague member Carol Jacobs, herself a former school superintendent, said she had seen 22-member hiring committees in the past.

The final roster, besides the three parents, three teachers, and three civic leaders, will include two students, a principal, a central office administrator, an administrative assistant, and one other member of “support staff.”

Interested community members should email tnovick@masc.org by January 1 with “Gill-Montague Regional superintendent screening committee” in the subject line. The group will meet January 8, 20, 26, 27, 28, 29, and 30 in the evenings, then recommend final candidates to the school committee.

Other Business

Before the regular public meeting, the school committee convened in an executive session to discuss – according to the agenda – a “complaint against a school committee member, including matters relating to the member’s reputation, character, physical condition, or mental health, rather than professional competence, and/or to discuss any discipline, removal, complaints, or charges.”

A set of 10 updates to the district’s policies were unanimously approved. Policy subcommittee chair Heather Katsoulis explained that the full committee had given the changes a first “reading” in September, and apologized that the batch had “slip[ped] through the cracks” without approval.

The updates were all routine, she said, and generally recommended by MASC.

“We pretty much stick to the recommended wording whenever possible,” Oakes explained.

Ellis, who represents Gill-Montague on the board of directors of the Collaborative for Educational Services (CES), reported on the state of that organization. CES provides districts with shared regional services, specializing in special education, and was seen as responsible last year for the loss of a number of after-school programs, including a longtime program at Sheffield Elementary.

Ellis said he served on CES’s finance committee, as well as its executive director hiring committee. The collaborative made about \$1 million in budget cuts last year, and its former director “resigned by his own volition, but fairly suddenly,” last summer, he explained, but has been “on a break-even trajectory” in the current year and has received 39 applications for the role.

“They’re looking to shield school districts, and the out-of-district programs that they run, from the worst of the economic impacts that they’re experiencing,” Ellis said. “It looks like they’re righting their ship.”

The committee’s next meeting is scheduled for January 13, unless a meeting on December 16 is judged to be necessary. As of press time an agenda had not been posted.



'Tis the Season: Franklin Tech's Sarah Beckwith (right) goes up to the hoop against a Hurricane defender as Franklin Tech hosted Amherst-Pelham Regional High for a pre-season scrimmage on Monday. The Eagles begin their regular season this Thursday, hosting the Eagle Holiday Classic tournament.

CodeRED,” he said.

Resident Ariel Elan asked whether the new service would restore phone alerts, because “that works a lot better for some of us than checking email all the time.” Ramsey responded in the affirmative.

Philip Wonkka, Erving’s fire chief and emergency management director, told the *Reporter* that his town uses the Rave Alert system, and that it sends out alerts by voice, text, or email depending on “how the user sets it up.”

Erving had previously used Blackboard Connect, he said, and switched four or five years ago. “It was a little more expensive,” he said, “but I think the user-friendliness of it on our end was worth it.” According to Wonkka, besides being used for town emergencies, Rave Alert is used by Erving Elementary School to announce delays and cancellations.

One perk, he said, is that users can also sign up to receive local weather data pulled from the Na-

tional Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) website.

Greenfield communications director Jonathan Weber confirmed that his city also uses Rave Alert, but calls its platform “Greenfield Alert.” The system, he said, is under the direction of fire chief Robert Strahan.

At Monday’s meeting in Montague, Walter Ramsey said he hoped to come to the selectboard in a week or two with a proposed contract with Rave Alert, and said the new system could be up and running in a month. As of press time, the CodeRED system is still listed on the town website.

Rave Alert was developed by Rave Mobile Safety, a Framingham-based company which was acquired in 2022 by Motorola Solutions. According to the company website the product is authorized under the Federal Risk and Authorization Management Program (FedRAMP), the US federal government’s cloud data security protocol.



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MONTAGUE from page A1

selectboard also approved an application for funding repairs at the Shea Theater, discussed changes to the job descriptions of the town clerk and her staff, and heard an update on the status of CodeRED alert system, which has been down since a cyberattack in early November (*see article, Page A1*).

Little shared charts comparing rainfall in inches with the rise and fall of the volume of sewage sent to Erving from January through November. The rain did not always appear to correlate well with the sewage, but Little said the total flow to Erving has been 22,469,132 gallons, well under the contractual annual limit of 33,191,000.

Selectboard members seemed pleased, but not overjoyed. “While we’ve made a significant improvement, there still seems to be some room for more I&I investigation,” said member Rich Kuklewicz.

Lord said he was pleased the town was under the limit, but noted that there has been “significant drought” during the past year.

Town administrator Walter Ramsey asked about the impact of the overage on the town budget for the coming fiscal year, FY’27. Unlike other sewer costs, which are typically funded by sewer user fees, I&I is paid for by local taxes, as it is assumed to be caused by the town’s failure to upgrade its infrastructure or the tendency of residents to attach storm drains to the sewer system.

Little said that she and town accountant Angelica Desroches would review the annual data and project the cost of I&I for the entire system, not just for the flow sent to Erving. She said that the original estimates used to calculate the town’s general fund budget had included a “placeholder” of \$136,000, which could now be reduced to \$50,000. She added that it was important to leave some tax revenue in the town’s wastewater enterprise fund, because “it was a dry year, and we could have other issues in the future.”

The board’s modest excitement comes after many twists and turns in the effort to find the origin of the large amount of water pouring into the village’s sewer system. It was originally thought that the main contributors were leaky catch basins, cracked sewer lines, and residents attaching sump pumps to the sewers. Extensive camera investigation by a contractor revealed water flowing into the system from “lateral” pipes on opposite sides of Route 63 as it enters downtown Millers.

After much digging and more camera work, the public works department capped one of the pipes and rerouted another into a storm drain that empties into the Millers River. This seemed to have done the trick, but at the April 2024 meeting at which the news was revealed, then-public works superintendent Tom Bergeron was asked about the ultimate source of the water in those pipes. “We honestly have no idea where they’re coming from,” he responded. “This has been baffling us as well.”

After the overage discussion, Little reviewed her budget request for FY’27. She said she had reduced her operating budget by approximately 4%, but wanted to put on the table a significant staffing increase, adding an assistant mechanic to her department.

The current mechanic, she said, maintains 181 assets, performs 315 preventative maintenance tasks, and responds to the need for 33 emergency repairs on average each year. She said that given the town’s aging infrastructure, the mechanic “struggles to take his personal time off [and] gets really stressed.”

Kuklewicz said that maintaining the treatment plant and sewer system was “critically important,” and urged Little to estimate the cost of overtime or outside contracting that could be avoided with another staff mechanic. “That might help your case,” he said.

“This request isn’t necessarily for the upcoming fiscal year,” Little said. “I just didn’t want it to be the first time that the board heard our need.” No vote was taken on Little’s budget request or staffing proposal.

Cultural Repairs

Josh Goldman and Linda Tardiff of the Shea Theater Arts Center came before the board to request a letter of support for an application to the Massachusetts Cultural Council for a \$100,000 Cultural Facilities Grant.

Goldman said that with the town’s support, the arts nonprofit had already invested just over a million dollars in the facility, which is owned by the town. However, he said, “a number of investments that we made in critical systems, particularly in sound and lighting, are failing.” He also mentioned the need for better access to the stage, and a 100-plus-year-old hemp fly system from which lighting and scenes are hung, which “creates some safety issues.”

In addition to the letter of support, Goldman requested a commitment from the town to approve a \$100,000 match in the upcoming budget year. Assistant town administrator Chris Nolan-Zeller said upgrades to the Shea were on the capital projects list, and the capital improvements committee would be discussing them. He also noted that the state cultural council gives a “16-month grace period after an award is made” for the town to approve the match, presumably at town meeting.

Nolan-Zeller noted that the state cultural council gives a “16-month grace period after an award is made” for the town to approve the \$100,000 match, presumably at town meeting.

Kuklewicz said the costs on the list presented by Goldman were “realistically optimistic.”

Lord asked when the application deadline was. “This Thursday,” Goldman replied.

The board approved the letter of support, and also voted to transfer \$2,380.67 from the Community Development Discretionary Account for emergency HVAC work on the theater’s roof. Selectboard member Marina Goldman did not participate in the discussion or votes.

Democracy’s Burden

The selectboard endorsed changes in the job descriptions of town hall staff related to election activ-

ities. Town clerk Wendy Bogusz presented revised job descriptions for herself, her assistant, and the administrative assistant who works in the selectboard office. The new descriptions raise the weight these staff may need to lift from 30 to 60 pounds, to reflect the weight of boxes full of ballots and polling machines, and mention the need to travel to polling places.

“At election time physical work may be required to handle election materials and equipment” was added at the end of each description. Ramsey noted that the public works department is primarily responsible for moving the machines to the polling stations.

The board approved the changes in Bogusz’s job description, and directed Ramsey to discuss the other two positions with the National Association of Government Employees, which represents them.

Bogusz also proposed revising six fees assessed by her department. The form to declare the intent to marry, required under state law, was raised from \$30 to \$40; the permit to license a dog doubled to \$10 if the animal is spayed or neutered, but rose to \$15 if it is “intact”; business certificates were raised from \$25 to \$30; and raffle permits doubled to \$20.

The cost of making certified copies remains the same, at \$10, and though the price of street lists increased from \$10 to \$15, Bogusz recommended putting them online in the future rather than selling them.

The board voted to increase the fees as suggested, as of January 1.

Other Business

Nolan-Zeller presented a list, requested by the Franklin Regional Council of Governments, of the town’s “priority projects” for grant funding. The top priority, he said, was the Strathmore “cleanup project,” in which the town hopes to demolish as many structures as possible in the former paper mill complex while stabilizing a small hydro plant at its center not owned by the public.

The second priority was the redevelopment of the former Farren Hospital site, perhaps a plan for infrastructure improvements in and around the property, and the third was a plan for improvements in the aging primary-treatment section of the Clean Water Facility.

Without taking a vote, board members said they supported these priorities.

The board voted to accept \$8,400 from the state Department of Environmental Protection for the town recycling program, and heard from Ramsey about an upcoming one-day evaluation by the Urban Land Institute to guide requests for proposals to redevelop the Farren site.

The board discussed the need to find a new emergency public alert system, following the November cyberattack on CodeRED (*see article, Page A1*).

At the request of RiverCulture director Suzanne LoManto, the board approved the use of public property so Santa Claus can visit downtown Turners Falls Friday evening, December 12 and Montague Center the next day. She said that this was the 13th year in a row she had organized the saint’s visitation.

The next selectboard meeting is scheduled for Monday, December 15.



LOOKING BACK:
10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Here’s the way it was on December 10, 2015: News from the Montague Reporter’s archive.

Inaccurate Information

Last week, the Citizens for Farm Animal Protection handed in their petition for a Prevention of Farm Animal Cruelty Act to the Secretary of the Commonwealth, in hopes that it will be included as a statewide ballot question next November.

Brook’s Bend Farm, based in Montague Center, showed support by signing the petition. Clifford Hatch, an owner of Upinngil Farm in Gill, declined to sign, not because he is against more humane treatment of livestock but because he says he feels it singles out certain farms. He explained that although his farm would not be affected, Diemand Farm in Wendell would be – it is the only farm in the state with eggs from caged hens,

which the new law would ban. Owner Peter Diemand said he feels cages are beneficial for keeping the animals safe and preventing disease. “Some of the information going around about chickens in cages is not accurate,” he said.

WiredWest Bombshell

Shortly before the Wendell selectboard met on December 2, the Massachusetts Broadband Institute sent town coordinator Nancy Aldrich an email that essentially shot down the draft operating agreement that WiredWest submitted for towns to authorize in early January.

As the meeting began, selectboard member Jeoffrey Pooser commented that it was as if the floor had been dropped from underneath area broadband committees, which have been working to get a fiber-optic internet system built and operating in western and central Massachusetts.

20 YEARS AGO

Here’s the way it was on December 8, 2005: News from the Montague Reporter’s archive.

MCTV Prevails

Last night, the town of Montague voted to keep the “local” in local cable access television. Four years after the selectboard flouted the will of town meeting by awarding the town’s cable access contract to Greenfield Community Television, town meeting Wednesday evening re-

fused to OK a new contract with GCTV and told the selectboard, in an 80-21 vote, to negotiate a contract instead with Montague Community Cable Inc.

“I think the town seriously considered what its options are, and said very clearly that it wants to stay local,” said town meeting member Emily Brewster.

The vote was a blow to town officials who had withdrawn resources from MCCI, hoping to make Montague a piece of a regional cable network.

150 YEARS AGO

Here’s the way it was on December 8, 1875: News from the Turners Falls Reporter’s archive.

Turners Falls and Vicinity

Jones Brothers will commence shortly to fill their ice houses.

Pat. Sullivan was the first one buried in the new Catholic cemetery.

The last news of William W. Hosmer was to the effect he was fast travelling toward the setting sun.

They say the new bridge can be built for \$700 less than the limit in the building act, passed last winter.

Conductor Miller of the Connecticut River railroad telegraphed to a Greenfield sheriff, Saturday evening, that he had a woman on his train, dressed in men’s clothes, and he wanted the official to be at the station to take her into custody. The officer was on hand, and, sure enough, when the train had arrived at Greenfield, there was among the passengers an individual with long hair, parted in the middle, and a smooth, fair face, that

would have passed anywhere for a female, notwithstanding the fact that she wore a slouched hat, pants and circular coat. The supposed female was escorted to the jail, persisting all the while, in a feminine way, that she did not know why she should be arrested. When the charge was made and she was thrust into a cell, she demanded an examination by a competent physician, and Dr. Deane being called, it was discovered that the mysterious individual had as much right to wear men’s clothes as women’s, and “he” was discharged. Then he of the indefinite sex took the stage for Turners Falls, and arriving at the Farren House, was refused accommodations, Mr. Holden not knowing of the examination which had been made by the authorities at Greenfield, believing him to be a woman in disguise. Constable Morrison took the stranger to his own home, and kept him – or her – till Sunday evening, when he disappeared. He was subsequently discovered in a house on L street, following his profession of fortune-telling. He had plenty of money.



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MONTAGUE REPORTER



KIM BURNS PHOTO

Above: Our October 9 edition went to Maine, where (left to right) MR editorial assistant Maggie Sadovay of Turners Falls, Trudy Ralph of Shelburne, and Joan Pillsbury of Gill learned that a nubble's a knob, while Neddick's a cape. Nubble Lighthouse, built in 1879 with a rope basket for resident access, became fully automated 108 years later, having lost its funding.

Below: The October 2 edition, on the other hand, made it as far as Brussels, Belgium that same week as Joshua Burkett, familiar to our readers as the lead interviewer behind the MR's MONTV/ MUSIK/ MOUNTAIN column (see Page B1), played a European tour. Going somewhere? Take us with you! Send your photos to editor@montaguereporter.org.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

...ON THE ROAD!

LEVERETT from page A1

and that “it felt good to give back to Amherst” in view of the many ambulance calls they make to Leverett.

Rice said the Leverett firefighters arrived with an engine 30 minutes after the call went out, and were soon sent into the burning building by former Leverett fire chief John Ingram, now the fire chief in Belchertown. Selectboard member Tom Hankinson said he had heard an Amherst official refer to the Leverett responders’ role as “an early exploratory team,” one of the more dangerous firefighting jobs.

The group went to the fifth floor, where they met Amherst firefighters looking for the source of the blaze, and were then asked to bring a hose to the sixth floor, where Belchertown firefighters were doing the same thing but were blocked by an impassable metal door.

After 10 minutes, Rice said, the smoke became so thick everyone was withdrawn. Once outside, the Leverett group was assigned as a “rapid intervention team,” he said, tasked with being ready to extract firefighters in trouble. Following that they were asked to provide water from their engine to a ladder truck.

Rice said that the on-scene commander wanted Leverett to continue supplying water by drawing more and transferring it, but the engine didn’t have that capability – a truck with the required equipment, he noted, is in Leverett’s capital plan.

The group was then sent to cover Amherst’s downtown fire station to free up more personnel for the blaze. While at that post, Rice said, they responded to a dorm fire call on the UMass campus. They were released the following morning after 11 hours of duty.

Deputy fire chief Amy Rice, the lieutenant’s mother, said she found it “telling” that the chief of a career fire department had chosen Leverett firefighters for such a dangerous role when others were available, as he knew they had the “expertise and training” to handle the difficult job.

The selectboard also signed a contract Tuesday night making Mike Visniewski Leverett’s new fire chief. Visniewski has served on Leverett’s department for eight years, rising to the rank of lieutenant, and for 11 years as a member of Amherst’s call force.

Sensor Scaries

Resident Pat McGiffin asked the selectboard for help obtaining more information about the potential effects of a new “smart meter” upgrade being implemented by Eversource.

McGiffin said she had not questioned the upgrade project when she received notice from Eversource, but subsequently read an article and heard from friends of possible negative health effects from the units’ use of microwaves and other concerns. She also mentioned privacy concerns, and said she had heard of instances of increased electricity bills after the new meters are installed. She expressed dissatisfaction with the way Eversource presented an “opt-out” option, and its \$34 monthly charge for those who wish to keep their old meters.

McGiffin said that Eversource’s liaison to the town had not responded to her inquiries, and she hoped town officials might have better luck.

“I am not a scientist,” she added, and said that she and other residents need help understanding whether there are real dangers associated with the meters.

Energy committee member Richard Nathhorst said that “the horse has left the barn long ago” on the use of microwaves to read electricity meters remotely, and they have already been in use for 10 years in Leverett. He said that Eversource’s goal is to make more money by

enabling people to shift some household electricity usage to off-peak hours, when it is cheaper, through monitoring the “smart meters.”

Board member Jed Proujansky commented that some of the reports of potential health effects were likely anecdotal, and not scientific, or peer-reviewed information. He suggested that some area residents are “raising an alarm, saying ‘Hey, let’s look at what’s going on!’” He also noted that electricity costs are rising everywhere, and may not be related to the new meters.

Hankinson said he would see what he could find in the scientific literature on the topic.

Loyalty to CodeRED

Town administrator Marjorie McGinnis reported that CodeRED, the emergency alert system used by Leverett and many towns throughout the country, was hacked three weeks ago, and work to repair it was underway but not yet complete. She said that login passwords for the system were stolen, and that anyone who used the same password for CodeRED and other accounts should change it on those other accounts.

Proujansky commented that “it’s not if you get hacked, it’s when you get hacked...,” but that he believes the company’s rebuilt system will be vastly improved. (See article, Page A1.)

Statement Signed

The selectboard signed a document presented by resident Apple Ahearn entitled a “Declaration Defending Our Democracy, The US Constitution, And The Rule of Law.” The document lists and condemns actions of the Trump administration deemed to be in violation of the Constitution and will be distributed to elected officials, calling on them to oppose and overturn those efforts.

Hankinson commented that the document was “very well written,” that he had “no objections whatsoever,” and that he agreed with the message and tenor, “especially the definition of tyranny.” He added that he found the document’s discussion of the separation of powers was highly relevant.

Selectboard chair Patricia Duffy said she also liked the document, and that its historical references jibed well with the country’s coming 250th anniversary.

“If we wait any longer,” Ahearn said as a closing remark, “we’re going to have to add another section.”

Other Business

The selectboard hired two additional on-call snow plow drivers, Ed Chapin and Chris Phillips, and voted to raise the pay rate from \$25 to \$30 per hour for non-CDL drivers and from \$30 to \$35 per hour for CDL drivers. Leverett’s plow drivers had not received a raise since 2019.

The board promoted transfer station attendant Jynx Diers from attendant to supervisor.

McGinnis reported that work on the Dudleyville Road drainage project had stopped for the winter, with the exception of a planned removal of trees, pending a tree hearing on Wednesday night. Nathhorst, a Dudleyville Road resident, said that overall the project is in “pretty good shape,” and said he was “really pleased with the work they’ve done so far.”

The board decided to hold a public hearing to review the engineering firm Tighe & Bond’s design for the Mill Yard bridge project. Abutting residents and highway department superintendent Matt Boucher agreed it was a good idea.

Boucher said that Tighe & Bond had more expertise than he did. “If I had my way,” he added, “I would have put a couple of oak timbers in there.”



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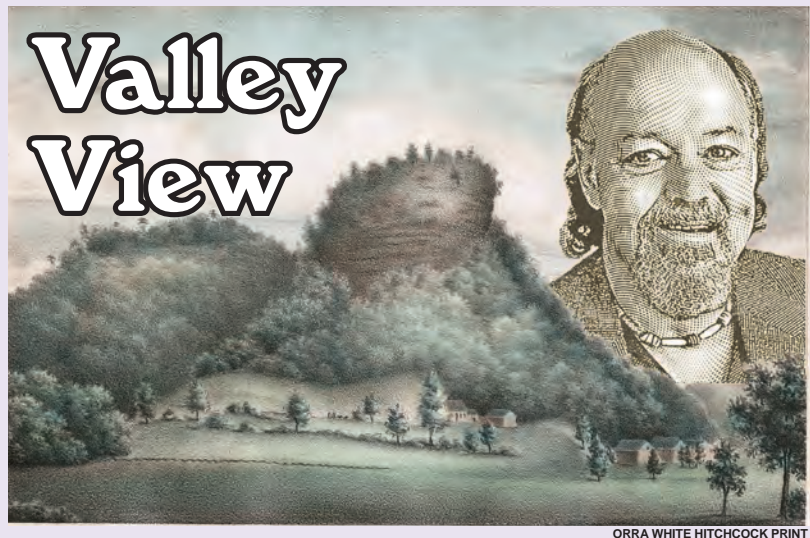
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JULIA HANDSCHUH PHOTO



Valley View

By GARY SANDERSON

GREENFIELD – Some stories just fall into your lap and write themselves – like this bowhunting tale from an old Powertown pal.

The object, squeezed into a large, rectangular, coffin-like wooden box on the bed of Rick Kostanski’s pickup truck, rolled up my upper Greenfield Meadows driveway on the morning after Thanksgiving. It was a beautiful, 10-point, whitetail buck. Bagged as the woods lightened at 7 a.m. on November 25, the carcass was headed to the Corliss butcher shop in Ashfield.

This 5½-year-old, 195-pound, grey-faced bruiser with a rut-swelled neck was a classic Franklin County buck – king of the hill, his typical antler configuration spread wide, brow tines broken from battling fall competitors for receptive females. For my friend, it was the buck of a lifetime. And, even more important from my perspective, its domain had been my neighborhood.

Though I had not seen this deer myself in recent travels, I may have crossed its path as a wobbly, spotted fawn following its mother out of its 2020 nest. I suspect that’s nearly certain. If not, I likely had several sightings of him as an inauspicious, small buck working his way up the neighborhood pecking order, with and without antlers.

I’m going to call Kostanski’s beautiful “racker” a “Sunken Meadow buck” because of where he harvested it with a precision heart-shot from his crossbow. The kill site sits atop a steep ravine overlooking the Green River from high above its east bank, directly across from Sunken Meadow, the floodplain dog-walking grounds I named and often wrote about in my *Greenfield Recorder* column. There I bumped into many deer and a few bears, along with various other wildlife and wonders of nature during my daily romps with my springer spaniel gundogs.

Aware of my intimate connections to his new hunting territory, which he was exploring in response

to a homeowner’s complaints about deer damage to ornamental landscaping and gardens, Kostanski had reached out to me for insight several times this fall. His queries were sometimes accompanied by photos of new bucks that had passed his trail camera. Did they look similar, he’d ask, to any deer I was seeing on my daybreak walks directly across the river?

One of these trail-cam photos showed a fork-horn I had not seen. Another displayed a five- or six-pointer I had probably seen several times in dim dawn light. The third was a trophy racker I knew I had not encountered. A day or two later, the big bruiser’s carcass was hanging in Kostanski’s Deerfield garage.

I did not know Kostanski from my South Deerfield youth. He grew up in Turners Falls and moved to my old hometown as a married adult. I was friends with his father, a well-known Powertown character I affectionately called the Honorable Walter T. Kostanski. A member of my father’s Greatest Generation, Walt was a key member of Coach Earl Worden’s fabled 1942 state-championship Turners Falls High School baseball team before serving in the Navy during World War II. In adulthood, he became an elected official, first as a state rep, then as the longtime Franklin County Registrar of Deeds.

I got to know his son Richard, six or seven years younger than me, on the softball diamond, at ice-fishing outings, and as a companion on open-water fishing trips to Maine’s Rangeley Lakes and Lake Ontario at Sodus Point, New York. I also recall an entertaining and quite productive shad-fishing outing in a bass-boat – I can’t recall whose – anchored along the edge of a migration channel under Sunderland Bridge,

But let us not digress. Back to the present, and the fateful day of Rick’s recent deer kill.

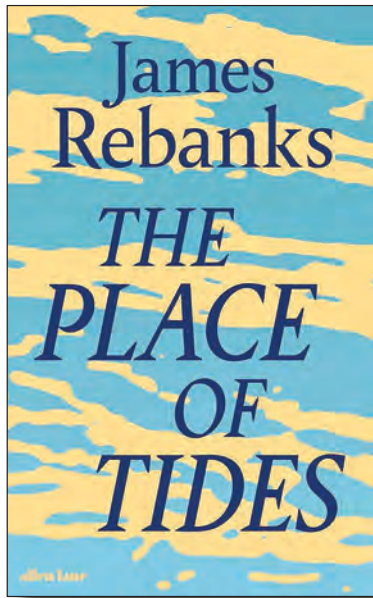
Our successful bowhunter arrived before daybreak and securely positioned himself upon his

see **VALLEY VIEW** page B3

BOOK REVIEWS

At the Edges of the Downy, Furry, Wild

James Rebanks, *The Place of Tides* (Mariner Books, 2024)
Chloe Dalton, *Raising Hare* (Pantheon, 2025)



By DONNA PETERSEN

TURNERS FALLS – Now that most of us have finished digesting our turkey and pumpkin pie, it’s time to gird our loins for the coming cold and dark of winter. Here are two non-fiction books that you may enjoy consuming; they are fulfilling, kinda sweet, and will leave you feeling peacefully sated. At least I hope so.

The Place of Tides is authored by

James Rebanks, an English writer who has penned the acclaimed *The Shepherd’s Life*, *The Shepherd’s View*, and *Pastoral Song*. He works a farm in Cumbria in England’s Lake District with his family, and has written about protecting fragile landscapes from too much love – from tourists, mainly. Reviews of this new book include “a lovely book, almost dreamlike in its lullaby rhythms” (*Washington Post*) and “a quiet memoir of profound change” (*Kirkus Review*).

About ten years before the events in the book, Rebanks was assigned to write a story about a remote archipelago just off the coast of Norway near the Arctic Circle. He arrived on the island of Vega and found himself fascinated by the place, and in particular by one older woman working her trade on the small islands: building and protecting the nests of the eider ducks that come out of the sea to lay their eggs, then gathering the eiderdown the birds left when they and their young return to the sea. Her name was Anna.

Back in England ten years later, Rebanks was going through a rough patch, losing faith in himself, his work, the world; his wife and children suffered his anger and impatience. Feeling unmoored, he felt he had to get away from his farm, from all of it.

Remembering his trip to the Norwegian archipelago and the uniqueness of the place, he wrote to Anna and asked if could come and work the duck season with her. She responded with a yes, and told him to bring work clothes and good boots, and that this would be her last season of the work.

Rebanks arrived at Anna’s home on Vega and during that first night, she shared stories of the generations of prosperous “eiderdown kings” she proudly descended from. They repaired, built, and protected those nests and gathered the valuable down to be made into warm quilts and more.

But that way of life was disappearing in the modern world.

see **BOOKS** page B10

MONTV / MUSIK / MOUNTAIN

Interview by J. BURKETT and TROY CURRY

TURNERS FALLS – This week we have yet another music interview. Matt Moran should be known by at least a few of you music folks out here, for his cool band Slavic Soul Party!, who are great and fun and have played all over, including at a bunch of events around here such as Bärbes In The Woods.

But did you know that along with SSP!, he has

been involved in tons of other acts, and is actually a professional vibraphonist, a teacher, and a great rock drummer?

Check out his music at www.mattmoran.com, and definitely check out Slavic Soul Party!, who are great live, and have a ton of recordings – seven or more albums. They have even been called “New York City’s Official #1 Brass Band.”

MMM: Hey Matt! Who are you, as a musician?

MM: I’m a percussionist, band leader, and educator in New York City. I play vibraphone in the creative music/jazz/new music worlds, and Balkan percussion, often with my brass band Slavic Soul Party!

I’m a weirdo with a huge appreciation for the eternal mystery of music and the ways it helps people. I really love bringing the magic of music and the connections it fosters to incarcerated people, and that’s a big part of my life and work now.

MMM: Any thoughts about your younger-aged music stuff? You were in school band too, right?

MM: The opportunities and exposure we have when we’re young have such an important impact on our development as musicians.

I feel very lucky to have grown up near a university, so that I was able to listen to college radio and go see lots of live shows. That also meant I was near a community music school, where I could study with people who were passionate about music and education – that

see **MUSIK** page B5



85. Matt Moran

Pet of the Week



‘DREXEL’

Meet Drexel, a lively, affectionate, and incredibly friendly cat who brings big dog-like energy everywhere he goes. His previous owners say he’s social, playful, and loves being around his people. Nothing gets Drexel going like snack time. He also loves to play and explore, and would possibly like indoor/outdoor access. Drexel did great with older kids. He has lived with another cat; a confident or playful feline companion would suit him best. If you’re looking for a smart, fun-loving, active cat who will keep

you laughing and loved, Drexel might be your perfect match! Drexel’s \$299 adoption fee includes neutering, vaccinations (you will need to provide boosters), a FeLV blood test, microchipping, treatment of fleas, ticks, and ear mites, a Dakin vet exam, a health certificate, and a free vet exam within 30 days at participating vets. Come in during open adoption hours, Tuesdays through Saturdays from 12:30 to 3 p.m., or call the Dakin Humane Society at (413) 781-4000 or visit www.dakinhumane.org.

Senior Center Activities DECEMBER 15 THROUGH 19

GILL and MONTAGUE
The Gill-Montague Senior Center, 62 Fifth Street, Turners Falls is open Mondays through Fridays from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. For more information, please call 863-9357.
Monday 12/15
10:15 a.m. Aerobics
11 a.m. Chair Exercise
3 p.m. Beginning Yoga
Tuesday 12/16
9 a.m. Chair Yoga
11 a.m. Money Matters
12:30 p.m. Tech Tuesday
3 p.m. Tai Chi
4 p.m. Spanish Lessons
Wednesday 12/17
9 a.m. Veterans’ Agent
10:15 a.m. Aerobics
11 a.m. Chair Exercise
11:45 a.m. Friends Meeting
12 p.m. Bring Your Lunch Bingo
1 p.m. Mobile Food Bank
4 p.m. Mat Yoga
Thursday 12/18
2 p.m. Pitch
Friday 12/19
10:15 a.m. Aerobics
11 a.m. Chair Exercise
12 p.m. Pizza Party
2 p.m. Chair Dance

ERVING
Open Mondays through Fridays from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. at 1 Care Drive. Daily snacks and coffee. Fitness room and pool table open.
Monday 12/15
9 a.m. Good For U
10 a.m. Seated Fitness

12 p.m. Pitch Game
1 p.m. Yoga
Tuesday 12/16
9 a.m. Stretch & Balance
10 a.m. Line Dancing
11 a.m. Social Stringer
Wednesday 12/17
9 a.m. Interval Training
10 a.m. Chair Aerobics
11:30 a.m. Bingo
Thursday 12/18
9 a.m. Barre Fusion
10 a.m. Pilates Flow
Friday 12/19
8:30 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. The next clinic is December 16. Luncheons are the fourth Friday at town hall. For more information, contact (413) 548-1022 or coa@leverett.ma.us. Check the town newsletter or the LeverettConnects listserv for info.

WENDELL
Foot care clinic is the first Wednesday of each month. The next clinic is January 7. Call Katie Nolan at (978) 544-2306 for information or appointments. For Senior Health Rides, contact Nancy Spittle at (978) 544-6760.

bodywork monthly a column about bodywork and self-care

By JAMIE SIMPSON

TURNERS FALLS – What comes to mind when you think of bodywork or massage? Luxury spa? Unaffordable indulgence? While many see bodywork that way, it is in fact as crucial to our health as proper sleep, nutrition, exercise, and medical care. And the good news: it’s easy to make it part of our daily lives, often at little or no cost. In this column I’ll offer simple, effective self-care techniques, drawn from many disciplines, to help you ease stress and pain and feel at home in your own skin. Each entry will look at common problems, such as chronic stress or upper body tension from extensive screen time, and suggest ways to address them. None of this, of course, is a substitute for professional medical care. That said, self-care can help us reduce pain, anxiety, and other complaints that make us seek medical care in the first place. To begin: What do I mean by “bodywork?” Most of us know the word in the context of cars and car repair. More recently, it has also come to be an umbrella term for massage and other manual therapies – physical therapy, chiropractic, acupuncture, and countless other practices from around the globe – that benefit the bodies we live in. New bodywork clients often tell me that for self-care they stretch, or use a foam roller, or a tennis ball, or (*gulp*) a lacrosse ball. Stretching is important, but stretching alone is not the same as bodywork, and lacks many of its benefits. Stress, tension, and imbalances accumulate in our bodies, and left unaddressed can lead to serious musculoskeletal issues like chronic pain, spine problems, breath and movement restrictions, and many more. According to the 2010 Global Burden of Disease Study, musculoskeletal disorders are the *second leading cause of disability worldwide*. As wellness expert Jill Miller says: “If you knew that you could prevent a disease from crippling you twenty years from now, wouldn’t you do everything in your power to... avoid that disease?” In many ways, we can. Massage incorporates stretching and other techniques to soften chronically tight muscles and fascia. (More on that later.) As physical tension subsides, so do our stress, pain, and breath and movement restrictions, moving us from “fight or flight” to deep relaxation, essential for proper rest, recovery, immune function, and mental health.

If we can afford regular, professional bodywork, great. And if not, there’s lots we can do on our own to better our mood, breathing, posture, balance, stamina, energy, focus, sleep, metabolism, and life expectancy. A sustained effort to make incremental changes can yield big results. **My December offering:** “Legs up the wall,” a profoundly simple and restorative inversion. An inversion reverses the normal relationship of heart, head, and legs. As most of our waking time is spent sitting or standing, the heart must work against gravity to get oxygen- and nutrient-rich blood to the brain. Similarly, lower body veins have an uphill climb to get “spent” blood back to the upper body to be filtered and get fresh oxygen in the lungs. Inversions help drain excess fluids that accumulate in the lower extremities during the day, while simultaneously helping the heart bring blood to a weary brain. The how: Find a quiet spot where you can lie face-up on the floor, up against a bare wall. Pad and snuggle as much as you like – lie on carpeting, quilt, or blanket, snuggle under a soft blanket, rest an eye pillow or warm damp cloth over your peepers, place a rolled-up hand towel under the natural curve in the back of your neck – anything helps you relax and feel good. Next, extend your legs and rest the backs of them on the wall. Or, you can do this against a sofa or armchair, resting your low legs on the seat cushions. Take off your shoes so your feet can breathe. Rest here for five to ten minutes, allowing your breath to slow and deepen, breathing in and out through your nose if you can. This activates our parasympathetic nervous system and our body’s own natural healing abilities. “Legs up the wall” requires almost no effort, which is the point: we need to balance hard work with true rest. It may well become your new favorite way to restore, and can be done almost anytime, anywhere you can find a quiet spot. Much more effective than doomscrolling. And if you’re “too busy,” think of how much better you’ll feel, and everyone around you too, when you feel more freedom in your body, rather than stress and pain. If you have questions or topic suggestions, please let me know. I’ll feature as many as I can in each column. Restful holidays to all.

Jamie Simpson is a Licensed Massage Therapist (LMT), registered yoga teacher, and certified Roll Model Method practitioner, as well as an occasional writer. Email to bodywork@montaguereporter.org.

MONTAGUE CRYPTOJAM ANSWERS!!!

DECEMBER 2024 TO NOVEMBER 2025

8/7/25: It seems a dreadful indignity to have a soul controlled by geography. – George Santayana

8/21/25 #1: Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel. – Samuel Johnson

8/21/25 #2: With all due respect... I beg to submit it is the first. – Ambrose Bierce

9/4/25: So long as you have food in your mouth, you have solved all questions for the time being. – Franz Kafka

9/11/25: All journeys have secret destinations of which the traveler is unaware. – Martin Buber

9/18/25: Good habits, imperceptibly fixed, are far preferable to the precepts of reason. – Eric Hoffer

9/25/25: Without education, we are in a horrible and deadly danger of taking educated people seriously. – G.K. Chesterton

10/2/25: ‘Emergencies’ have always been the pretext on which the safeguards of individual liberty have been eroded. – Friedrich Hayek

10/9/25: How many people would even try to be Jane Goodall today? – Temple Grandin

10/16/25: In totalitarian countries all places of detention ruled by the police are made to be veritable holes of oblivion. – Hannah Arendt

10/23/25: Sometimes a concept is baffling not because it is profound but because it is wrong. – E.O. Wilson

10/30/25: The difficulty lies not so much from old ones. – John Maynard Keynes

11/6/25: When exposing a crime is treated as committing a crime, you are being ruled by criminals. – Edward Snowden

11/13/25: Love takes off masks that we fear we cannot live without and know we cannot live with in. – James Baldwin

11/20/25: Insanity in individuals is something rare, but in groups, parties, nations, and epochs it is the rule. – Friedrich Nietzsche

4/3/25: He who fears he shall suffer, already suffers what he fears. – Michel de Montaigne

4/10/25: The fundamental weakness of Western civilization is empathy. – Elton Musk

4/17/25: Those who deny freedom to others deserve it not for themselves. – Abraham Lincoln

4/24/25: Love doesn’t just sit there like a stone; it has to be made, like bread, remade all the time. – Ursula K. Le Guin

5/1/25: Every great cause begins as a movement, becomes a business, and eventually degenerates into a racket. – Eric Hoffer

5/15/25: If evolution really works, how come mothers only have two hands? – Milton Berle

5/22/25: Assassins and presidents in[t]ellectuals are the same basic question: Just who do you think you are? – Sarah Vowell

5/29/25: To acquire knowledge, one must study; but to acquire wisdom, one must observe. – Marilyn vos Savant

6/5/25: Books are not made for furniture but there is nothing else that so beautifully furnishes a house. – Horace Mann

6/12/25: Whatever you’re meant to do, do it now. The conditions are always impossible. – Doris Lessing

6/19/25: Technology is not neutral. We’re inside of what we make, and it’s inside of us. – Donna Haraway

6/26/25: We love television because television brings us a world in which television does not exist. – Barbara Ehrenreich

7/10/25: Dearest creature in creation, study English pronunciation. I will teach you in my verse sounds like corpse, corpse, horse, and worse... – Charivari

7/24/25: Journalism largely consists in saying ‘Lord Jones Dead’ to people who never knew Lord Jones was alive. – G.K. Chesterton

3/27/25: We are currently clean on opses. Godspeed to our warriors. – Pete Hegseth

3/20/25: Out of the quarrel with others we make poetry. – William Butler Yeats

3/13/25: Reserving judgement is a matter of infinite hope. – F. Scott Fitzgerald

3/6/25: A throne is only a beach covered with velvet. – Napoleon Bonaparte

2/27/25: Unless you are breaking stuff, you are not moving fast enough. – Mark Zuckerberg

2/20/25: Wit has truth in it; wise-cracking is simply callisthenics with words. – Dorothy Parker

2/13/25: Then onward in my journey I come to understand that every hair is numbered, like every grain of sand. – Bob Dylan

2/6/25: Every time piece with a digital readout blinks us towards implosion. – Dean Koontz

1/30/25: The real opposition is the media. And the way to deal with them is to flood the zone with shit. – Steve Bannon

1/23/25: The political arena leaves one no alternative, one must either be a dunce or a rogue. – Emma Goldman

1/16/25: Always give them the old fire, even when you feel like a squashed cake of ice. – Ethel Merman

1/9/25: Not what we have, but what we enjoy, constitutes our abundance. – Epicurus

1/2/25: We will not learn how to live together in peace by killing each other’s children. – Jimmy Carter

12/19/24: The great thing about getting older is that you don’t lose all the other asses you’ve been. – Madeline L’Engle

12/12/24: Words without actions are the assassins of idealism. – Herbert Hoover

12/5/24: While the earth has slumbered, all the air has been alive with feathery flakes descending... – Henry D. Thoreau

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VALLEY VIEW from page B1
ladder-stand’s shooting platform to wait for the woods to awaken. The stand was a short distance inside a wood line bordering an open field where whitetails feed. As darkness faded, he spotted movement and recognized a few does passing through. Moments later the buck, obviously pursuing the does, appeared from a different angle.

When Kostanski burped out a couple of buck grunts from the grunt call hanging around his neck, the buck stopped and changed course. Now it was looping toward the bowstand to investigate what it thought was an antlered competitor for the does.

When the animal stopped within range, Kostanski’s crossbow was raised and ready. He aimed behind the deer’s shoulder, gently squeezed the trigger, and let fly. Miraculously, his arrow found its way through twigs and branches undiscernible to the human eye in the grey dawn light.

The deer flinched, moved a few strides, and laid down to die a few paces from where it was hit. The old battler soon expired peacefully. A quick, merciful kill.

Luckily, the final resting place was a mere 60 yards from Kostanski’s truck. After all, dragging 195

pounds of dead weight through the woods is a difficult chore for even a young man. Kostanski, in his mid-60s, was maneuvering on two replaced knees and a foot recovering from recent surgery that had put him in a walking-boot for a month. Despite his physical complications, he field-dressed the deer and dragged its heavy carcass to his truck, where lifting it onto the bed was a challenge.

When he got home, he sent me a cellphone photo of his trophy lying dead on the forest floor. He would have stopped at my house with it, he wrote, but was exhausted and wanted to return home, where more work awaited him. Three days later, buck onboard, he pulled into my yard on the way to the butcher shop.

How can you beat that? Column looming, a subject comes to my doorstep by special delivery.

Better still, the hunter is well known to many Gill-Montague readers, and the big buck lived and died in my neighborhood. The impressive 10-pointer without a doubt knew my old “Sunken Meadow” stomping grounds well, and lurked for years within clear sight of my home.

Gary Sanderson lives in Greenfield. Questions and comments are welcome at gary@oldtavernfarm.com.



THEATER REVIEW

The Nightmare Before Dragmas

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

TURNERS FALLS – Karl and Mr. Drag from the Eggtooth Productions do a holiday show that I particularly like. One year, the show was their own version of *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*. Another time it was *A Christmas Carol*.

This year’s show, held December 5 and 6 at the Shea Theater in Turners Falls, was titled *The Nightmare Before Dragmas*. I assumed it would be their version of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*.

Before the show, Karl brought his hat around to the audience so we could write questions for Mr. Drag to answer on pieces of paper. It seemed like a cool thing to do. I wrote a question myself for him to answer.

The show opened with a screen where we saw characters doing ads that parody certain things. One was the movie *Wicked*. People seemed to find these very funny.

Mr. Drag sang an opening number, and others came out to do a little bit of a dance. Right after that, he started answering those questions out of the hat. He made people laugh with his answers. He asked one person who had asked a question to come down and sit with him. I believe it was because he asked what Mr. Drag’s favorite drink was.

Anyone who has seen him perform should know it’s vodka.

The show started out resembling Bing Crosby’s *White Christmas*. The performers get stuck in a town where a woman is trying to keep her inn open. It’s mentioned where the show’s name comes from – it had to do with someone connected to the inn, and the timing of the group showing up there. As in *White Christmas* they continue to do musical numbers. One number involved a performer parodying a character from a movie.

Mr. Drag led a dance number featuring three performers with fans. People seemed to enjoy this very much and applauded nicely. Karl did a little dance-and-comedy routine for the audience.

As it went on, the show began to resemble a plot that has been done a few times for holiday movies: where people are stuck somewhere while traveling for the holidays. It’s not a bad plot for a holiday show. The same goes for *White Christmas*.

It was an enjoyable show. I would call it a hit, and not a miss. However, it didn’t turn out to be a version of the movie I thought it would be! I do get why it was called that, but *White Dragmas* feels like a better fit for a name.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Icy Roads; Argument About Shoveling; Medication Flushed; Hunters Accused of Removing Signs; ‘Gang Violence’; Hawk

Monday, 12/1

11:14 a.m. 911 call from a fax machine.

1:20 p.m. 911 misdial. Caller stated “Oops” and hung up. Referred to an officer.

2:12 p.m. Paxton PD requesting officers attempt to locate an individual on Park Street who has a warrant for a restraining order violation; states involved male just called their PD with questions regarding the warrant. No answer at door.

2:45 p.m. 911 call reporting two-car accident in front of the public safety complex. No injuries, fluids, or smoke. TFFD on scene. Tow requested for both cars. One operator warned for failure to stop.

Tuesday, 12/2

11:13 a.m. Caller from Montague Street reports that a silver pickup truck hit a tree by Stevens Street, backed up, and fled the scene headed toward the public safety complex. Caller believes half the tree is broken off into the road. Officer advised. Tree is on the tree belt, uprooted. Not a safety hazard.

11:28 a.m. 911 caller reporting three vehicles stuck on the hill on Turnpike Road near South High Street; unable to back up or turn around. Officer advised; DPW contacted. Officer advises no cars stuck on hill.

11:43 a.m. Caller reports that she hit a small tree on Montague Street, left the scene, and went home. Advised caller this would be put on record.

11:55 a.m. 911 caller from East Main Street reporting a group of people screaming at each other on the balcony. Officer advised. Verbal argument about shoveling snow. All parties separated.

12:38 p.m. Caller reporting car vs. fire hydrant on Unity Street. Car fled scene; damage to hydrant. Top portion of hydrant on its side. No visible water leak. Water department on scene. Caller gave a description of an early 2000s pickup truck, tan or brown in color, possibly a Chevy or Ford, with possible front-end damage. Area departments requested to be on lookout.

12:45 p.m. Report of tractor-trailer with its hazards on in the middle of

Millers Falls Road near the airport. Truck gone upon officer’s arrival.

12:53 p.m. Caller reports tractor-trailer stuck on the hill on Turnpike Road. DPW contacted and sending sander. Officer advises truck is blocking both lanes. Roadway clear.

1:09 p.m. Tractor-trailer unit stuck on hill at Park Street and Unity Street, blocking both lanes. Truck was able to be turned around to go back down the hill.

2:32 p.m. Multiple 911 callers reporting two-vehicle accident at L and High streets; sedan and truck. Unknown injuries, fluids, or smoke. Officers advised; medical started. Officer requesting tow for both vehicles. Officer blocking traffic at Seventh and L streets. Investigated.

2:42 p.m. Tractor-trailer unit stuck in road on Industrial Boulevard. Was able to be moved.

4:50 p.m. Report of FRTA bus unable to make it up the Turnpike Road hill, causing a traffic hazard. DPW will respond with sand. All traffic cleared.

Wednesday, 12/3

1:11 a.m. Officer attempting to make contact with owner of a vehicle on Third Street that has revoked plates. Advised of complaint.

8:22 a.m. 911 caller reporting a single-car accident on Sunderland Road at the crossover; not injured, but fluids are leaking. Rau’s contacted to tow vehicle. Investigated.

11:35 a.m. Caller from Montague Street states that a vehicle came onto his property and knocked over a 20-foot tree sometime yesterday. Caller will contact DPW to find out if the tree is owned by the town or if it’s his.

1:05 p.m. 911 caller states that there is a female who is passed out in his apartment; he wants her to leave. Officer requesting ambulance to help evaluate female. Removed to hospital.

10:15 p.m. Caller states her meds were stolen and the pharmacy told her she needed to file a police report in order for them to be refilled. Referred to an officer. Caller states male flushed meds down the toilet. Male states caller

has been taking more than prescribed.

Thursday, 12/4

11:28 a.m. Fire chief advises a Casella garbage truck took down some wires on L Street and they don’t know it. Truck is dragging wires behind it. Truck located on K Street, but no wires with it. Officer checking area. One low-hanging wire found in alley; not a hazard. Nothing found in road.

4:13 p.m. Caller from East Mineral Road states there is a car parked on his property and hunting; states the property is posted, but they do this every year and are causing damage to property. He would like them made aware that the property is posted and that he has cameras up; would also like them to stop taking down the posted signs. Report taken.

5:42 p.m. 911 caller states that she just hit a truck that was parked on the side of the road on Seventh Street. Tow company requested to help get vehicle out from back end of truck. Courtesy transport provided to operator.

6:42 p.m. 911 call from Millers Falls Road; caller reports that she was struck by another car; she is pregnant and has a baby in the back; also fighting with the other driver. Medical *en route*. Officer requesting tow for one vehicle.

Friday, 12/5

9:34 a.m. Party into station looking to speak with an officer about things being stolen. Advised of options.

10:09 a.m. Caller states neighbor’s smoke alarm on T Street has been sounding for a while and it appears nobody is home. Call given to Shelburne Control.

4:09 p.m. 911 caller from North Leverett Road reports he was just assaulted; both parties still on scene. Now turning into a verbal altercation. Situation mediated.

7:24 p.m. Caller reports he is at Turners Falls High School cleaning and there is someone on a snowmobile riding through the fields. Referred to an officer.

Saturday, 12/6

10:08 a.m. Caller states that there is a low-hanging wire that they believe is a power line across the road on South Prospect Street. Officer requesting Eversource respond. Eversource arrived and took care of the wire.

1:48 p.m. Walk-in reporting larceny of medication. Pharmacy required documentation. Advised of options.

7:23 p.m. Caller reporting disabled motor vehicle at Taylor Heights; she drives for Amazon and was attempting to deliver a package. Caller gave of-

ficers permission to drive vehicle to get it unstuck. She is now fine.

7:46 p.m. Walk-in demanding to speak to an officer; states police are covering up gang violence downtown and making it easier for gangs to get away with crimes. Advised party that sergeant is on a call right now. Party demands to speak to someone now. Officers advised; sergeant advised to return to station when clear. Party got mad and walked away.

9 p.m. Vehicle not stopping for PD; sped into driveway near Chester Street and Millers Falls Road. Vehicle occupied x2; registration revoked for insurance cancellation. Operator has an active warrant in Alabama; no extradition. A 47-year-old New Salem man was arrested and charged with speeding, operating a vehicle with a revoked registration, an uninsured vehicle, and failure to stop for police.

Sunday, 12/7

12:10 a.m. Off-duty officer approached disabled motor vehicle on side of road; believes driver may be intoxicated. Female party has facial injuries; unknown why. Control contacted and advised; officer requests Control have a Sunderland PD check the owner’s address and perform a welfare check on their partner. Partner and child stated they had not seen the involved female for six or seven hours. Officer advises female party being transported to Bay-state Franklin.

2:30 a.m. Officer out with a vehicle idling in the Walgreens parking lot. Officer advises he checked on vehicle; individual is homeless and sleeping in their vehicle.

7:17 a.m. Party into lobby asking to speak to an officer about a bunch of things. States that her phone is lost in her car and is moving back and forth between the seats. Officer advised.

12:36 p.m. 911 report of two-car accident at Hatchery and Greenfield roads. Rau’s *en route*.

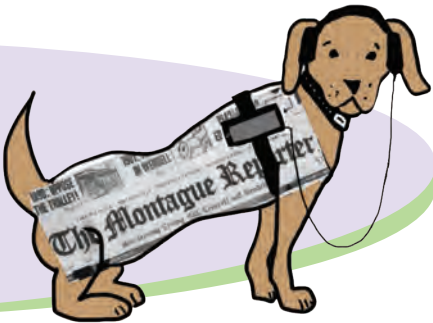
1:57 p.m. Caller from Court Square states a hawk is caught in her fence and is trying to attack her chickens. Hawk is scratched up. Canceled *en route*.

6:03 p.m. Caller from Meadow Road reports that she saw online earlier that a woman was chased by a white rat. Caller states she let her dogs outside and also saw the rat, so she trapped it in a bucket. Officer advised. Message left for animal control officer. ACO will take care of it in the morning; they are contacting the caller.

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Rogers, AR: A weekend of surprises in the Ozarks.

SOUTH DEERFIELD – When people from our Valley think of Arkansas, chances are their mind drifts to the Ozarks, to Walmart headquarters, or maybe to Razor-back football.

But Rogers, in the northwest corner of the state, is quietly re-inventing itself as a destination where art, history, food, and nature converge. Founded when the railroad came through in 1881, Rogers is where Sam Walton opened his first five-and-dime store in 1962. You can see it today.

Walmart and several other big companies, including the trucking giant JB Hunt, are now hiring many well-educated people who are moving here. Walmart is forcing their corporate staff to work in their sprawling, newish office campus rather than be spread out across the United States as they used to be.

So there’s an educated workforce here, buying houses and new apartments and enjoying a large new area built over the past 15 years called the Pinnacle. This neighborhood is unlike most of the rest of Rogers, which has some interesting little historic places and brick sidewalks. You can tell it’s new because all of the power lines are buried, and the buildings and landscaping are spotless.

I visited in September to see what this city of 70,000 has to offer, and over four packed days, Rogers revealed itself as a place brimming with interesting people and places. Hospitality America has just opened Hotel Avail, a sleek new property in the Pinnacle. It’s the kind of hotel that feels both modern and rooted in place, with warm wood tones and a lobby that invites lingering.

But I knew that about 30 minutes away was something really special.

Crystal Bridges

Just a short drive north from Rogers in Bentonville, the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art isn’t just a museum – it’s an experience. Designed by Moshe Safdie in 2011, its glass-and-wood pavilions hover over a creek in the Ozark woods, blending architecture and nature.

Inside, the collection traces America’s story from colonial portraits to bold contemporary works, while outside, forest trails dotted with sculptures remind you that art belongs both on the wall and in the world around you.

This dramatic museum was built by one of the world’s richest women, Walmart heiress Alice Wal-

ton. It cost \$317 million, much of which came from her. It has an interesting collection of art displayed in its unique round nooks and long galleries.

Coffee, History, Music

Friday began early, with a short walk to Onyx Coffee Lab. If you’ve heard of Rogers, chances are it’s because of Onyx. Voted the best coffee shop in North America and second-best globally, Onyx is a temple to the bean. The company has eight cafés in northwest Arkansas, and sells coffee by mail order all over the world.

A visit to Onyx includes the ritual of coffee bean cupping. We sampled flights of single-origin brews, as head roaster Jed Honderich explained to us how altitude and soil shape flavor. It was as much science as art, and the baristas treated their craft with reverence.

For a city like Rogers, having Onyx as a flagship is a huge win. The place truly out-coffees anyplace I’ve ever been, including the fancy five-level Starbucks Reserve Roastery in Chicago.

We set off on a walking tour of downtown. Rogers has preserved its historic core, with brick storefronts and painted signs that recall its railroad-town roots.

The Daisy Airgun Museum – home to the world’s largest Daisy BB gun – was a highlight, a quirky slice of Americana that delights kids and nostalgic adults alike. I grew up in the era of the famous *Christmas Story* movie featuring the Red Ryder BB gun, and they sell that exact model in their large gift shop.

The Rogers Historical Museum offered a broader sweep, tracing the city’s evolution from frontier outpost to modern hub. Inside the Hawkins House, the foods, kitchen devices, the Bible, and other trappings of 1800s life are left out on display.

We left Rogers to explore our rural surroundings. By midday we were on Highway 12, winding toward War Eagle Mill. Lunch at the mill’s café was hearty and simple – cornbread, beans, and sandwiches made with flour ground onsite. A milling demonstration showed how water power still drives the stone wheels. This mill has flooded many many times, but has come back stronger each time.

From there, we explored Hobbs State Park Conservation Area, a vast expanse of forest and trails that showed us the Ozarks’ natural beauty.

The Walmart AMP, Rogers’ outdoor amphitheater, was an easy walk from the hotel in the Pinnacle.

We enjoyed the evening’s concert: Leon Bridges headlined, joined by Charley Crockett, Dave Alvin, and Jimmie Dale Gilmore – a lineup blending soul, country, and Americana.

It was surprising to me how many adults brought their little kids to this late show. A country tradition?

Bikes, BBQ, and Beer

Saturday’s schedule was more relaxed. We headed to Lake Atalanta, a large park tucked into the hills. The biking trails here are accessible yet scenic, a cement path that winds past water views and shaded groves. For a city visit it was refreshing to get on two wheels and feel the breeze from the e-bikes.

Lunch was at Wright’s BBQ, a place that has earned its reputation. The brisket was smoky and tender, the ribs fell off the bone, and the sides – beans, slaw, mac and cheese – were the kind you crave long after.

On TV screens the Arkansas Razorbacks football game blared. “The owner says we can’t turn it down,” said a server.

Wright’s is the kind of spot that makes you understand why barbecue is practically a religion in the South. We took a walk out back, and one of the pit masters showed us the day’s brisket, still smoking away.

From there we moved to Ozark Beer Company, which has landed on several “best of” lists. Their taproom is industrial chic, and the beers – IPAs, stouts, lagers – showcase local creativity. A tasting flight revealed the breadth of their brewing, from crisp pilsners to bold barrel-aged experiments.

Here you can pay for a future customer’s beer, on their “pay it forward” display. And I always love a taproom with a kids’ play area.

Tigers and Bears

Sunday offered one last adventure: Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge. Located near Eureka Springs, an hour east of Rogers, the refuge rescues big cats and other exotic animals from neglect and abuse. Touring the grounds we saw lions, tigers, and bears in spacious enclosures, cared for by a dedicated staff. It was sobering to hear their stories, but uplifting to see them thriving.

The refuge’s biggest haul of big cats came from Carol Baskin’s Big Cat Rescue and from Joe Exotic, the Tiger King in Florida, a few years ago, but they’ve also rescued big cats from improbable places like people’s basements. The visit includes an all-day pass with an open air tram tour for 45 minutes bringing you close to the cats basking in the sun or hiding inside. If you love big cats you’ll learn a lot here.

What really stood out to me about this part of Arkansas was how positive everybody was about living there. It’s nice spending time in a place that’s seriously growing. Rogers and Northwest Arkansas are growing faster than almost any other place in the US – the population went from 38,000 in 2000 to 75,000 in 2024. For comparison, Franklin County hasn’t had any real population growth since the 1980s.

Even in these recession times, there are places where things are booming. It’s fun to meet a guy



The new Pinnacle Hills section of Rogers, Arkansas.



The Walmart Arkansas Music Pavilion (AMP) in Rogers.



The brisket at Wright's Barbecue.



Our correspondent (left), with local pickleball players in Rogers.

driving an Uber, or a woman working at a brewery, who will tell you about how they moved away, and how happy they are that they moved back to Rogers. They can still afford a house there, but for many young couples, Rogers has now become the place they wanna be.

Max Hartshorne, from South Deerfield, is the editor of the GoNOMAD.com travel website and the host of the GoNOMAD Travel Podcast, with weekly short-form episodes available at feeds.captivate.fm/gonomad-travel-podcast.

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ALBUM REVIEW

Sounds of Belonging Compilation Showcases Region’s Eclectic Talent – and Welcoming Spirit

By EASTON SMITH

TURNERS FALLS – This week, the Western Massachusetts Asylum Support Network released a benefit album entitled *Sounds of Belonging*, which features 33 unreleased tracks from local artists. The proceeds from *Sounds of Belonging* “will be distributed in direct aid to asylum seekers in Western Mass,” according to the group.

The album, which is available for purchase on Bandcamp, costs \$9 for a digital download – or more, if you’re feeling generous. While the cause alone merits a purchase, the actual album is absolutely worth the cost. Through a varied mix of genres, it’s a veritable montage of our region’s musical diversity and, perhaps, musical quirks.

Songs of Belonging begins on a decisively acoustic tone, with carly lara’s “Torn” (note the lower case name, which will be a recurring convention here). lara’s moody and spare song evokes a yearning and angst that carries through the rest of the album. The artist sings, “The only crystal ball I can use / Is trying to believe in what I can do.”

The folksy spirit continues and picks up pace with Sweet Petunia’s “Kate Bush on the TV (live at The Dream Away Lodge),” which, with its banjo, harmonies, and crackling, sepia-toned lyrics, was a favorite of mine. The third track, “Sun is Shining” by Daring Coyotes, sticks to the acoustic tradition but injects

some rebel-rousing energy into the compilation. “Sun is shining,” they sing, “it’s a beautiful day for a strike.”

More overt political messaging is available in Track 7, “Bombs or Starvation” by Brokestring & the Empty Promises, and Track 8, where Ryan Pirtle-McVeigh sings, “We don’t want christofascist klepto USA.”

Other tracks in the first third of the album include a cut by the operatic folk rocker Chris Goudreau, a somber tune by zymandee that boasts a fantastic horns section, and a song by Worcester-based Modern Forestry that evokes mid-aughts indie rock acts like The Shins.

The middle of the album comes into focus with “Surrogate Ocean Child” by The Cosaks. This wonderfully shoegaze-y track, in the tradition of Spacemen 3 or Galaxy 500, portends some of the more psychedelic tracks to come. These include “On Uvidel Solntse (He Saw The Sun)” by hush, puppy and the track “Go By” by the Holyoke-based Reuben Toadstool, which has notable echoes of Richard Swift.

The middle chunk of *Sounds* has plenty to love for aging punk rockers like myself. “Notes on the Vise,” from the New Haven-based Wow Okay Cool, is a bullet of a song that reminds me of Bad Brains or the art-punk outfit The Death Set. Death in Venice – not to be confused with the movie or the 1980s Italian goth-rock band – have contributed “computer song,” which sounds like the Country Teasers got drunk and did Johnny Cash karaoke. (That’s a compliment.)

Northampton’s SALIBA gives us an emotionally raw, lo-fi banger titled DLMHYFM, which sounds to me like Rilo Kiley meets the Breeders. Then there’s Edwin Everhart, apparently an anthropologist at UMass, who sings a Jeffrey Lewis-style folk-punk nursery rhyme about the dangers of automobiles: “Darling little Timmy went out to see / just a-lookin’ for somebody to play ball with me / Somebody lost control for just one second / Timmy was took away / Road kill, Timmy dear, goodbye...”

If the first half of *Sounds of Belonging* is the singer-songwriter who wears their heart on their sleeve, the second half is the equally sweet, but morbidly shy, musician who converts old electronics into sound-making machines in their basement and releases singles on microcassette tapes.

Lex Oliver kicks off this latter half with “Sheepish Wolf,” an absorbing electronic track that repeats, “I wish I knew the truth,” in a style that echoes Laurie Anderson. From there, we get a collection of electronic tracks by artists like Shane “Bray” Kerr, barbie.ai, bobbie, and Federico Balducci. While I’m sure another reviewer would be able to assemble these various interesting songs into more specific subgenres, I am not that reviewer. Listening to these songs brought to mind, variously, Crystal Castles, Grimes, clubbing



in Barcelona I did when I was 19, and the nickel arcade I frequented in Orem, Utah.

One song that breaks the electronic mold in the later half is “Penguins” by Anonymous, a slowly building, guitar-driven number that wouldn’t be out of place between a couple of Godspeed You! Black Emperor tracks.

In its final song, *Sounds of Belonging* returns to the campfire for an acoustic sing-along by Jesse Doane called “A Lullaby for the Times,” which reminds us that “It’s okay to cry when you’re scared.” The song then asks, “How do we take care of each other / in this messed up world together?” And it answers, “It’s okay to cry when you’re scared / so we better get started-o.”

It’s a fitting end for an album that demonstrates how, even in the toughest times, a diverse community of weirdos can come together across arbitrary differences, like genres and borders, to take care of each other.

The compilation is available at wmasn.bandcamp.com/album/sounds-of-belonging.



MUSIK from page B1

was also really important.

School band opportunities helped too, probably in ways I don’t really understand now, but I do remember the excitement of just being around peers who cared about music.

Music is such a social field – those connections are important! I think a lot of young people are drawn to music when they can’t find connection or community in other ways, and music provides that.

Josh, you were my weirdo music friend, and the only one in our grade! That was super important.

MMM: Oh cool! I’m glad. I remember you studied with Gary Burton – was that cool? Were there other teachers that influenced you? You played with Paul Flaherty early on?

MM: I’ve been lucky to have great teachers and mentors in my life. Gary Burton was a great mentor and someone I could call up and ask questions of even after he was officially my teacher, but the vibraphone teacher who really built my foundation on the instrument was Ed Saindon.

Growing up around the university gave me exposure to lots of different things, and finding Paul Flaherty and Randall Colbourne jamming on Sunday evenings in the art department definitely opened my ears at a young age. It was a thrill and an honor, years later, to work with them and make some albums together.

MMM: What’s it been like doing music full-time in NYC?

MM: The thing I love most

about New York City is the constant discovery of amazing musicians. Literally every week I’m impressed by something I hear in person.

MMM: What were the origins of Slavic Soul Party!? Any good stories about them? You toured overseas, right?

MM: I started Slavic Soul Party! because I love playing traditional Balkan music, but couldn’t repress creative ideas I had that weren’t appropriate to impose on master musicians from the Balkans. When I started the band in the ‘90s, there wasn’t much intersection between creative music players and people who appreciated folk music traditions, the way there is now. I was looking to merge those worlds.

MMM: What are some of your favorite recordings?

MM: Oh my god, I’m paralyzed by the idea of making a list and all the things I would exclude and all the things I would reveal about my ignorance!

But I will say that a lot of the music I discovered in my youth still inspires me: Coltrane’s *A Love Supreme*, Duke Ellington, the *Rite of Spring*... OK, I can’t do the list thing.

I tend not to be a super wide-ranging listener, but someone who obsesses over certain things. If I think about fixations I’ve had as an adult I think about the Boban Marković Orkestar, *Night Music*

of Western Sumatra, Morton Feldman, Charles Ives’s songs, Human Feel, James Brown, Joe Maneri (another mentor), Keith Jarrett’s standards recordings, Greek Macedonian brass bands, the Elliot Carter solo clarinet piece “Gra,” the Missy Elliott album *Under Construction*, D’Angelo records...

MMM: I still have a flyer from your early punk band, “Skid Row Noise.” What was their story?

MM: The further I get from that, the less I understand what was going on there! What did those 20-somethings get out of having an inexperienced and clumsy 15-year old drummer from rural Connecti-

cut? It makes no sense to me now. But being in a band when you’re a kid can help you get through challenging times, and I’m grateful that they let me plod along with them.

MMM: Any new projects you are working on, or would like to do?

MM: I’ve always got fantasies and projects... for a few years I’ve been trying to learn to play the trumpet, and I’m usually working on some new music for Slavic Soul Party!

To be honest, the economy of the music industry is so confusing to me that it puts a damper on my desire to create and document new work. But at the same time, I’m always meeting new musicians or working with inspiring colleagues on something new.

I’m in a band with Maria Valencia (woodwinds) and Brandon Lopez (bass) that’s exciting, and we just released an improvised record called *Tarabita Espiral*.

I’ve been playing duo with Lubo Smilenov, just Bulgarian folk bagpipe and tupan, and that’s been a thrill. I’ve had some gorgeous creative music gigs lately with a quartet of myself, Mariel Roberts (cello), David Leon (alto sax), and Lesley Mok (drums).

MMM: Any other good music stories or jokes?

MM: Man, the best music story I can think of is just all the musicians who stay in the game, who get up and practice their instrument and book a gig and let people hear their ideas, day after day.

Thanks y’all!



Matt Moran (center, with drum), with Slavic Soul Party!

SUBMITTED PHOTO

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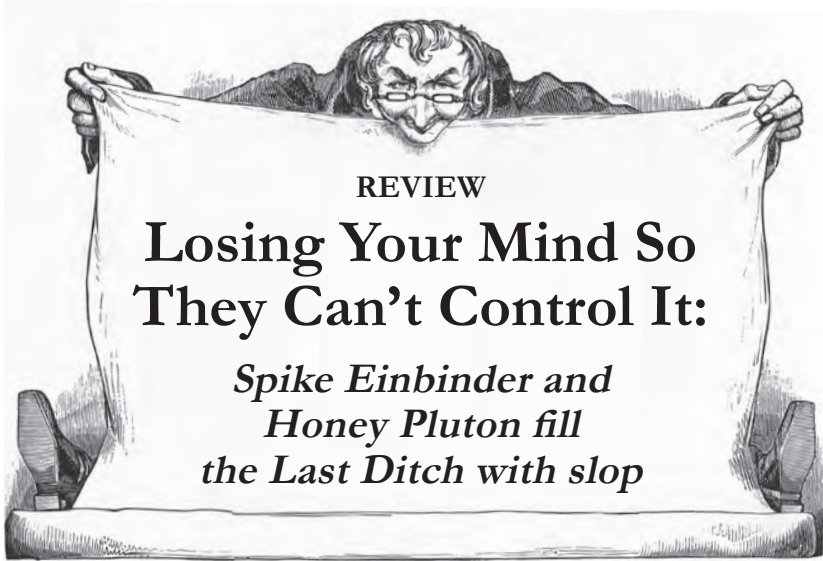
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Greed Kills



hour would make me sound like an alt-right person halfway down a rabbit hole: “transgender, autism, trauma, spiritual psychosis...” I muttered as I made mental notes.

This is part of the joke these two comedians play on their audiences, who are largely queer, trans, and left-leaning: we may think that we are immune to the AI-generated, endlessly echoing internet “slop,” but we are not. Slop is us, and we are slop.

In fact, slop might be the one cultural reality that extends across the deepening ideological divide. “You gotta lose your mind so they can’t control it” is Pluton’s catchphrase, and he was selling t-shirts at the venue emblazoned with it.

The genius of Einbinder and Pluton is their ability to break the surface of the slop and catch a breath of air before daily life forces them back down. Both comics had jokes about the surreal and captivating videos served to them by their re-

spective TikTok algorithms. For Pluton, it’s a woman who collects tiny replicas of kitchen appliances made for babies; for Einbinder, it’s people who have survived child sexual abuse, but have to use fake words to discuss it so the app doesn’t flag and delete their content.

On Thursday, they took the stage together and chatted rapid-fire about their drive up from New York City and Einbinder’s autism. They then flipped a coin to determine who would do their solo 30 minutes first. Pluton kicked it off.

Both comics made jokes about growing up trans before they had language for it. Honey went to parties in the Chicago suburbs clad in oversize shirts and stole things like printers and blenders from his hosts to sell on eBay before freebasing his first hits of cannabis through a lightbulb. Spike wore suspenders and uploaded videos of himself covering rap songs on the ukulele.

“We battled,” said Einbinder, giv-

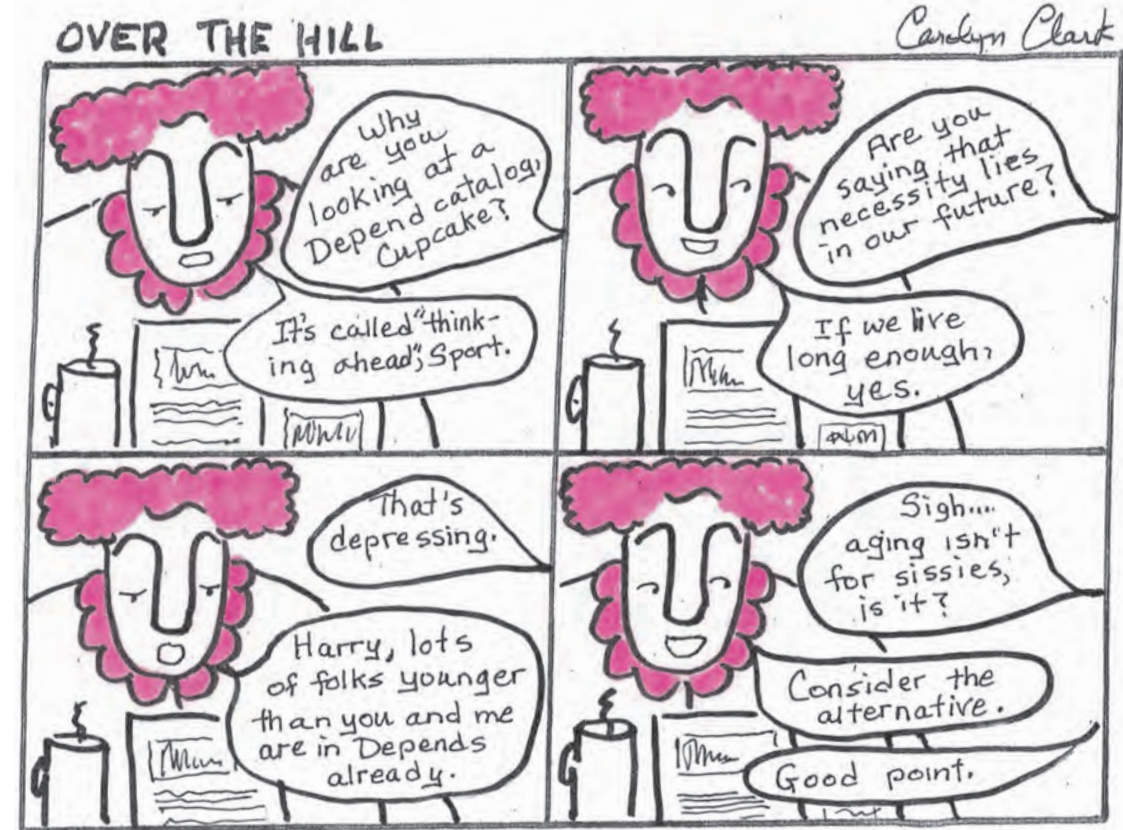
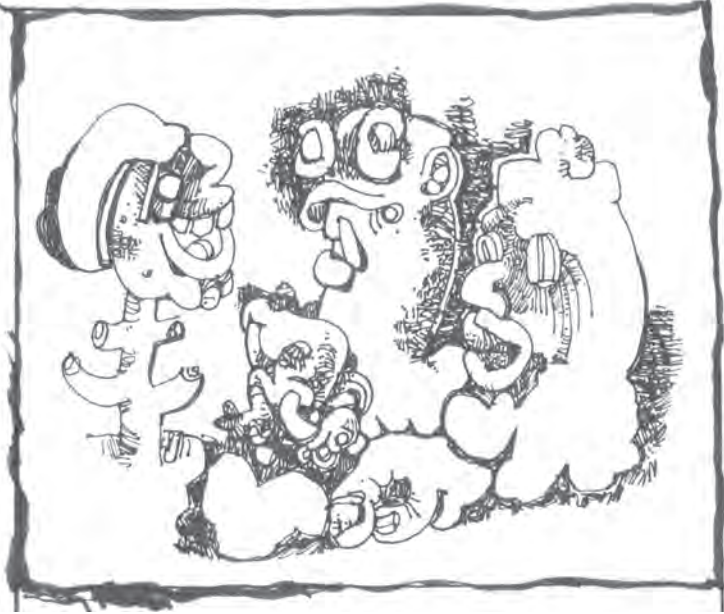
ing an Army salute, referring to how relatively easy it is for young people today to announce using commonly understood language that they are trans, non-binary, or genderqueer.

If you missed the show last Thursday, fear not, for both performers have lots of content you can enjoy online. Einbinder has been in three of Julio Torres’s latest works, and even had a cameo in the final episode of the *Sex and the City* reboot series, *And Just Like That*. Pluton makes one of my favorite podcasts, *Up Good*, where he improvises solo for about 25 minutes in each episode before interviewing other queer and trans comics and artists.

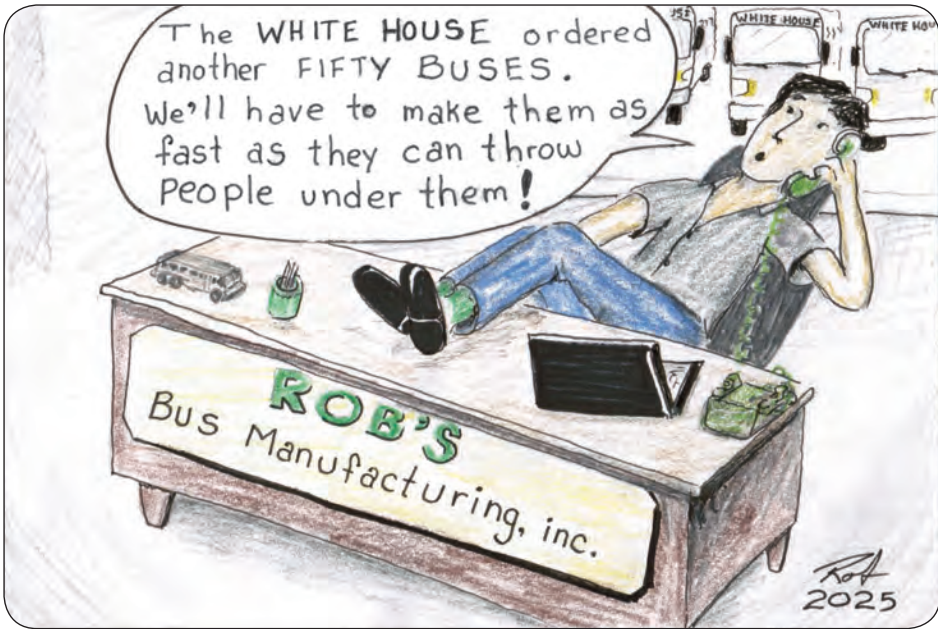
Pluton’s improvisations, on topics such as how to manipulate time and how to make offerings to the spirit of a place, have steeled me for long days at the office when it’s easy to question what it’s all for. Listeners need not be queer, trans, or workless to find something to enjoy in his pluck.



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

– William Carlos Williams

edited by 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 December Poetry Page

Haiku Series by Cheryl Kiras

Night creatures remind us
Storylines and rabbit holes
Sun rises, new day

Peace, love and calmness
In the midst of much chaos
Right now, it's like this

Listen to the birds
Peace is already present
Holding body and mind

Rain and coyotes
Nature is always present
Tune in and just be

Morning has broken
Showing up for what will be
Leaves hang from the tree

Water, trees, rocks and sky
Nature always heals
Just relax and breathe

Wisdom will prevail
Even during the dark times
Inquire within

Be calm and radiate!
In times of uncertainty
Each day a new beginning

Not all is fallen
Treasure all of the blessings
Alive in my soul

Fear is an obstacle
Breathe in and breathe out
That's liberation

– Cheryl Kiras
South Hadley

Tunnel

My body was thrusted under the current with a wicked immediacy
Unable to save the souls clenched in my arms
Gaping breaths without life
Do you know that feeling,
When you are pulled by nothing other than red?
Red impulse, melancholy, abomination of hopes and wishes and quiet desperation
Scavenge what is left of me, if you must
Tie my shoelaces, eat my bread, shut my eyelids.
You would never dare to cycle back into the forest after what occurred.
Don't trick yourself into believing that the comfort still exists
In the smell of dirt.

– Shannon Hobbs
Chicago, Illinois

Fallow Field

My life is now a fallow field
the life once there plowed underground
dissolving in a chrysalis
of darkness and soft swirling sound.

In the spring, what will life be?
Wild weeds from random seeds?
Whatever grows to face the light
will bear the mark of this dark night

when life became a fallow field
and wandering forgotten ways,
held in beauty, blessed by air
I learned slowly how to praise.

– Marian Kelner
Greenfield

Hoop Rap

Turners got the shot that's hot.
Bernardston, Cats is where it's not.
Amherst plays above the rim.
Northampton, Man, has got it grim.

Whites make their power moves.
Bloods find their space in the grooves.
From coast to coast it's salt and pepper.
From coast to coast it's not much better.

Fake to left, Drive to the right.
This Honkey's legs make quite a sight.
Can't crash the boards. Can't fill the lane.
Take so many steps I need a train.

Hands a shakin' and knees a quaking'.
There's Trees on the baseline, but they're not takin'.
Give up the ball, Man. Give up the dream.
When it's in your face, you're no Kareem.

My pill hits the boards but misses the net.
The Bro below get ready to jet.
But the ball's not done. It grabs the rim.
It bounces. It spins. It slips back in.

– Richard Andersen
Montague

MY DONKEY

I have a donkey.

It came with me at birth.

When I was a child, I played with my donkey, let's call him Shane. We could not be separated. I'd grown to think of Shane as much a part of myself as, well, myself. When we played, we played with everything we had inside of us – 100%. Our whole existence was a oneness with raw experience.

As I grew older, I learned about cold and hunger and desire first-hand and learned that I could make Shane work for me in fulfilling my wishes, like a recalcitrant djinn, it wasn't as simple as rubbing one out. Shane could do physical labor almost effortlessly and Shane didn't complain. While I was still not yet grown, I would continue to play with Shane when time allowed, but usually I left Shane to the drudgery while I focused on the joys.

As a man, I find that I struggle to find the joys in play, the rest from relaxation, and the comfort of a comfortable surround. Instead, I find myself looking for Shane.

When did I lose my best friend?

When did I lose my other half?

And then the {I don't have the words to express the immensity of the tragedy of this next part} reality hits that I'm Shane, and I've lost myself.

I could look for Shane, but I have no idea how to look for me.

– Chris Joseph
Erving

Contributors' Notes:

Shannon Hobbs writes: "I am inspired by my grandma, Mariel Kinsey, who spent much of her life in Ashfield, Massachusetts. I grew up in Northampton, Massachusetts and Colorado Springs. I hope you enjoy this poem."

Marian Kelner is a poet and writer living in Greenfield.

Chris Joseph writes to avoid his job, which is to write. He runs wemailcoconuts.com.

Richard Andersen, an infrequent contributor to the *Montague Reporter*, is a better basketball player than poet.

Cheryl Kiras writes: "I use she/her pronouns. I live in South Hadley with my wife, Deborah. I work as an IT professional at Mount Holyoke College. I really enjoy writing haikus for nature and self-care."

JULIE HART BEERS ILLUSTRATION



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EVENTS

submissions:
events@montaguereporter.org

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 11

Great Falls Discovery Center,
Turners Falls: *Nice & Easy
Walk*. 1 p.m. Free.

Dickinson Library, Northfield:
Environmental Book Group.
Hage and Marcotty,
Sea of Grass. 3 p.m. Free.

Leverett Library, Leverett:
Magical Winter Lights,
holiday magic show for ages
6 and up. 5:30 p.m. Free.

Millers Falls Library,
Millers Falls: *Book Club*.
Sonia Purnell, *A Woman of
No Importance*. 5:30 p.m. Free.

LAVA Center, Greenfield:
Film, *The Social Dilemma*
(2020), documentary-drama.
Discussion about social media
and AI follows. 5:45 p.m. Free.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls:
Ryan John Clary, Mark
Schwaber, Jared Knapik.
9 p.m. By donation.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 12

Great Falls Discovery
Center, Turners Falls: *Make a
Winter Birdfeeder*. Materials
provided. 4 to 8 p.m. Free.

Wendell Free Library,
Wendell: *Holiday Craft
Fair*. Handmade and locally-
produced crafts and products,
raffle, food. Fundraiser for
the library. 4 to 8 p.m. Free.

Carnegie Library, Turners Falls:
Cardmaking. 5 to 7 p.m. Free.

Loot, Turners Falls:
It's A Wonderful Night,
"festive fun and holiday
shopping." 5 to 8 p.m. Free.

Brick House, Turners Falls:
Light Up the Night, all-ages
family dance party hosted by
Under the Tree Arts and Great
Falls Creative Movement.
5:15 to 6:15 p.m. Free.

Ja'Duke Theater, Turners Falls:
Holiday Spectacular. 6 p.m. \$.

Deja Brew, Wendell:
Space Bar. 6 p.m. No cover.

Leverett Village Co-Op,
Leverett: *Rattlesnake
Gutter Gutterknives*,
jazz. 6 p.m. Free.

Spinner Park, Turners Falls:
Santa arrives. 6:30 p.m. Free.

Montague Common Hall,
Montague Center: *Square
Dance* with Katydids,
Grace Clements calling.
Jammers welcome.
6:30 p.m. By donation.

Wendell Meetinghouse,
Wendell: *Goodness Shakes*,
community dance.
6:30 p.m. By donation.

Palladium, Worcester:
Glassjaw, Saves The Day,
*Piebald, Soul Blind, All Under
Heaven*. 6:30 p.m. \$\$.

Midnight's, Brattleboro: *Gods
Wisdom, Andrew H. Smith*,
Jack Alboher. 7 p.m. \$.

CitySpace, Easthampton:
The Feast, collaborative
multimedia spectacle with 18
artists and writers organized
by Mo Schweiger. 7 p.m. \$.

Cold Spring Hollow,
Belchertown: *Secret
Places Of The Lion*,
Nick Hedtke, Terrierman,
Impure Luck. 7 p.m. \$.

Hutghi's, Westfield: *Choke
Out, Silence Equals Death*,
*Obsolescence, Hollow
Teeth, Dishpit*. 7 p.m. \$.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls:
*Welcome Yule: A Midwinter
Celebration*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

Last Ditch, Greenfield: *Film
& Gender, K.O. Queen, Prom
Dress, Sgraffito Kill*. 8 p.m. \$.

Stone Church, Brattleboro:
*Jeopardy, Goblet, Slob
Drop, Woundlicker*. 8 p.m. \$.

Haze, Northampton: *DJs
Bitcrushr, Jemmy, Badcatch*,
Azizam. 8 p.m. No cover.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls:
Eleanor Levine. 9:30 p.m.
By donation.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 13

Wendell Free Library, Wendell:
Holiday Craft Fair. Handmade
and local crafts and products,
raffle, food. Fundraiser for the
library. 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Free.

Great Falls Harvest, Turners
Falls: *Yule Bazaar*. Handmade
crafts and apothecary.
10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Free.



*Santa Claus, seen here touring downtown
Turners Falls shops in 2022, will return
to Spinner Park this Friday at 6:30 p.m.,
then spend Saturday afternoon visiting
Montague's villages. If you have any
wishes, he is prepared to hear them.*

Leverett Crafts & Arts,
Leverett: *Holiday Store* and
Open Studios. Pottery, fabric
arts, handmade books, eco-
printing, jewelry, fine art, and
more. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Free.

Northfield Mountain
Recreation and Environmental
Center: *Kids Nature Art:
Solstice Lanterns*. Materials
provided. Ages 4 to 10.
Limited space; register at
www.bookeo.com/northfield.
10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Free.

Artspace, Greenfield:
Clay Ornaments. Children
welcome with an adult.
10 a.m. to 12 p.m. \$.

Magpie, Greenfield: *Big Hat
Bingo Brunch*. Fundraiser
for Looky Here. 11 a.m. \$.

EXHIBITS

Great Falls Discovery Center,
Turners Falls: *Will Close*, paintings
showing the beauty and complexity
of the natural world, with text
from experts and longtime New
Englanders. Through January 31.

Waterway Arts, Turners Falls:
Local Local, small works by
21 local artists using material from
Franklin County, through January 4.

Montague Center Library,
Montague: Mark Mariani, pastel
paintings, through January.

Sawmill River Arts, Montague Center:
Guest artist Anna Leah Moon Gregoire
presents paintings at the gallery through
January, with an opening reception this
Saturday, December 13, from 1 to 4 p.m.

**Rhodes Art Center, Northfield Mount
Hermon, Gill:** *Primal Reflections*,
paintings by Walker Antonio,
through this Friday, December 12.

Leverett Library, Leverett:
*Flora, Fauna, and Fantasy: a Leverett
Homecoming*, Elena Watson and
Julie Kumble share works inspired by
scenes of Leverett, through December.

Hope & Olive, Greenfield:
Flora, Fauna, & Figures, paintings
by Julie Kumble, through March 15.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: *Silent Auction
Art Exhibit*, works donated by local artists
and assemblages by Andy Rothschild
for sale to benefit LAVA; *Sixth Annual*

Community Art Show, work by 36 local
artists. Both through December 20.

**Von Auersperg Gallery, Deerfield
Academy:** *Chameleon*, sculptures
by Alicia Renadette and paintings by
Scott Reilly, through December 19.

Fiddleheads Gallery, Northfield:
Season of Light, members' exhibit by
20 regional artists, through December.

**Festival of Miniatures, Brattleboro,
Vermont:** Over 50 downtown storefronts
are transformed into miniature worlds:
tiny train stations, whimsical dollhouses,
snow-flecked terrariums, and handcrafted
furniture created by local artists and
shop owners. Through December.

Gallery A3, Amherst: *Small Wonders
Holiday Show and Sale*,
through December 23.

Downtown Amherst: *Hats: A Celebration
of the History and Culture of Millinery*,
townwide exhibit showcasing hat
designs and the history of hat making
in the region. Through January 4.

Mead Art Museum, Amherst College:
New exhibits include *A Contentious
Legacy: Paintings from Soviet Ukraine*;
Spaces That Hold: Swapnaa Tamhane;
Re/Presenting: An Activity Gallery;
and the installation of Fred Wilson's
chandelier *Dramatis Personae*.

Shelburne Arts Coop, Shelburne Falls:
Magic of Moonlight, group exhibit
by member artists and crafters,
through December.

Salmon Falls Gallery, Shelburne Falls:
Glass: Color, Light and Motion, mosaics,

stained glass, and glass painting by
Sam Meyers, and Robert Osborne:
Optical Confusion, aluminum and glass
sculptures exploring light, perception,
and structure. Both through December.

**Lyman Plant House, Smith College,
Northampton:** *Koanbanchinemma
(do you see the light (in me))*, works
by Nipmuc artists, cultural and land
stewards Rachel Healing Willow Bayliss,
Willow Daly, Keely Curliss, Scott Strong
Hawk Foster, Andre StrongBearHeart
Gaines, Jr., and Kimberly Toney.

**Tabor Gallery, Holyoke Community
College:** *Hypercolor*, artists Sunny Allis,
Kim Carlino, Donnabelle Casis, Andrae
Green, and Sharon Leshner use brilliant
color to explore spirituality, memory,
intuition, time, and rebellious joy.
Through next Thursday, December 18.

CALLS FOR ART

Montague Center Library:
A call is out on the theme of Books!
Make art out of a book, or art inspired
by a book. Art is due February 2, to be
exhibited at the library through March. A
reception on February 11 will feature
a poetry reading on the theme.

Leverett Crafts & Arts: Hidden in the
Hills Studio seeks art for a month-long
exhibit, *Art for the Earth*, in April 2026
at LCA. Music, poetry, performance,
and 2D and 3D art proposals expressing
love of the earth will be accepted by
January 7. Contact Sue Kassirer at
suekassirer@gmail.com for information.

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CALENDAR

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *Winter Market* with music by *Oddball Song Creations, Frogtones, Gogo California, beetsblog, Impure Luck*. 12 to 5 p.m. Free.

Montague: *Santa Parade*. Santa arrives via fire truck at the Montague Center Common, 1:30 p.m.; Rutters Park in Lake Pleasant, 2 p.m.; the Millers Falls Library, 2:30 p.m.; and the Turners Falls Fire Department, 3:15 p.m. Free.

Ja'Duke Theater, Turners Falls: *Holiday Spectacular*, student production. 2 p.m. \$.

Element Brewery, Millers Falls: *Holiday Sip and Shop*. Arts and crafts by local vendors; music at 3 p.m. by *Dusty McNeal*. 1 to 6 p.m. Free.

Greenfield Savings Bank, Turners Falls: Selectboard member *Marina Goldman* meets with constituents. Light snacks. 1 p.m. Free.

Sawmill River Arts, Montague Center: Reception for *Annaleah Moon Gregoire* art exhibit. 1 to 4 p.m. Free.

Millers Falls Library, Millers Falls: *Kids' Holiday Party*. Crafts and snacks while you wait for Santa. 1:30 to 3 p.m. Free.

Greenfield High School, Greenfield: *Holiday Pops Concert* with the *Pioneer Valley Symphony*. 4 p.m. \$.

Brewery at Four Star Farms, Northfield: *Scott Kuzmeskus*. 5 p.m. No cover.

Montague Common Hall, Montague Center: *Open Mic*, with featured performer *Little Wild Bouquet*. 6:30 p.m. By donation.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: *Comedy Variety Show*, fundraiser benefiting LAVA. 5 p.m. \$

Ja'Duke Theater, Turners Falls: *Holiday Spectacular*, student production. 6 p.m. \$.

CitySpace, Easthampton: *The Feast*, collaborative multimedia spectacle with 18 artists and writers, organized by *Mo Schweiger*. 7 p.m. \$.

Hutghi's, Westfield: *Missed Cues, Ian St. George*. 7 p.m. \$.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Welcome Yule: A Midwinter Celebration*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

Holyoke Media, Holyoke: *sinonó*, with *isabel crespo pardo, Lester St. Louis*, and *Henry Fraser*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

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

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *Winds of Alluria, Neonach, The Oracle, Three Dragon Alley, Hyponova*. 8 p.m. By donation.

Tourists, North Adams: *Hammydown*. 8 p.m. Free.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Coyote Young, Ryan Pinette & The Bay Staters*. 9:30 p.m. No cover.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 14

Iron Horse, Northampton: *Chanukah Klezmer Carnival* with *Myrtle Street Klezmer*. 11 a.m. Free.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Welcome Yule: A Midwinter Celebration*. 2 p.m. \$.

Ja'Duke Theater, Turners Falls: *Holiday Spectacular*. Student production. 2 p.m. \$.

Omaha, Nebraska post-hardcore vets Cursive (above) come to Brattleboro this Saturday, on tour with folk-punk cult act AJJ, formerly Andrew Jackson Jihad.

Second Congregational Church, Greenfield: *Creating Community in Difficult Times*. Presentations, music, community meal. 2 p.m. Free.

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Danse Café*, live holiday music. 2:30 p.m. Free.

Feeding Tube Records, Florence: *Sunburned Hand of the Man, Clock Serum*. 4 p.m. By donation.

Quarters, Hadley: *Western Mass Electronics*, with featured artist *Lexi Polokoff*. Bring your own synth, drum machine, sampler, etc. 7 p.m. No cover.

Deep Thoughts, Northampton: *Suddering Words, Raub Roy, Feldspar 00000*. 7 p.m. \$.

The Hoff, Holyoke: *Rose House, bobbie, Pearl Sugar, The Classics*. 7 p.m. \$.

Midnight's, Brattleboro: *Strange Pains, Creative Writing, Holding Napoleon*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

Pink Edwards, Greenfield: *Shane "Bray" Kerr, Kim Chin-Gibbons, Jack Dwyer*. 8 p.m. \$.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 15

Montague Center Library, Montague: *Solstice Lantern Workshop*. Two one-hour sessions at 5 and 6 p.m. Free.

Stone Soup Café, Greenfield: *Community Soup Night*. 5 to 7 p.m. By donation.

Wendell Free Library, Wendell: *Fiber Group / Mending Circle*. 6:30 p.m. Free.

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

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 17

New Salem Public Library, New Salem: *Moonlight & Morning Star, Wendell Community Chorus*. Refreshments. 2 p.m. Free.

Wendell Free Library, Wendell: Matinee movie, *First Cow* (2019). 4 p.m. Free.

Dickinson Library, Northfield: *Dungeons & Dragons*. Single-night campaign, ages 16 and up, all XP welcome. Register at *northfieldrec.com*. 5 p.m. Free.

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

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 20

Montague Elks, Turners Falls: *Breakfast with Santa*. Children under 5 free. 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. \$.

Montague Retreat Center, Montague: *Winter Solstice Bonfire and Makers' Market*. Free until 4 p.m. Song circle, 4 p.m.; bonfire, 5:30 p.m.; then DJ and live music with *Incus Trio*. 10 a.m. to 12 a.m. \$.

Greenfield Public Library, Greenfield: *Winter Farmers Market*. 10 a.m to 1 p.m. Free.

Wendell Free Library, Wendell: *Solstice Party*. "Celebrate the shortest day of the year with crafts, cocoa, tea and snacks." 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Free.

Sawmill River Arts, Montague Center: *Hot Cocoa Sip & Shop*. 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Free.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: *Art Party and Auction*. Refreshments, live music, door prizes. Fundraiser for LAVA. 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Free.

Looky Here, Greenfield: *That's A Wrap!* Pop-up market with Mrs. Claus, vendors, Fill-A-Bag with art supplies. 12 to 5 p.m. Free.

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Gingerbread Houses*, for ages 3 to 16. Materials provided. 1 to 3 p.m. Free.

Workroom Theater, Northampton: *Hatchery Echoes*. (See Friday listing.) 2 and 7 p.m. \$.

Brewery at Four Star Farms, Northfield: *Briezzyjane & the Hurricane*. 5 p.m. No cover.

47 Henry, Northampton: *Alex Leff, Burrie & Dan W., Blindspot*. 6 p.m. By donation.

CitySpace, Easthampton: *LS Camp, Edo G, Bonnie Stone, Pharaoh Bacon*. 8 p.m. \$.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Sleep Destroyer, Baldwinville, Feldspar 00000, Cattlestack*. 9:30 p.m. By donation.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21

Looky Here, Greenfield: *That's A Wrap!* Pop-up market with Mrs. Claus, vendors, Fill-A-Bag with art supplies. 12 to 5 p.m. Free.

looking forward...

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Winter Solstice Walk*. 2 p.m. Free.

Bombyx Center, Florence: *Paul Winter Consort*. 3 and 7 p.m. \$\$.

Lupinewood, Greenfield: *Greg Jamie, Silvie's Okay, Sable Island Pony, Christy Armstrong*. 7 p.m. \$.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 23

Leverett Congregational Church, Leverett: *Christmas Candlelight Service*. Traditional readings, choir anthems, Christmas carols. Children welcome. 7 to 8 p.m. Free.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 26

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Kidleidoscope Story Hour: Deer*. Ages 3 to 6. Story, activities, and crafts. 10:30 a.m. Free.

Petersham Curling Club, Petersham: *Learn To Curl*. 6 p.m. \$.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 30

Carnegie Library, Turners Falls: *Wordle Competition*. 3 p.m. Free.

Millers Falls Library, Millers Falls: Movie, *A Christmas Carol*. 5 p.m. Free.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 31

Wendell Free Library, Wendell: *Disco Snail*, New Year's Eve craft drop-in makerspace. 10 a.m. to noon and 2 to 5 p.m. Free.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Grateful Dub*, reggae Grateful Dead tribute; *Roots of Creation*. 8 p.m. \$.

The Drake, Amherst: *Mind Left Body*, Grateful Dead tribute; *The Giant's Harp*. 9 p.m. \$.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 10

Stage 33, Bellows Falls: *Deep Seize, Dutch Experts, Holly Brewer, Snowglobe Almanac, The Y Lie*. 7 p.m. \$.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 17

The Drake, Amherst: *Spectre Folk*. 8 p.m. \$.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 13

Iron Horse, Northampton: *Jake Xerxes Fussell, Dougie Poole*. 7 p.m. \$.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Moviola, Wet Tuna, Animal Piss It's Everywhere*. 8 p.m. \$.

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BOOKS from page B1

Synthetic fabrics, young people leaving the island for the bigger world, and changing ocean life meant Anna was one of the last few remaining “duck people.”

Anna and Rebanks are boat-
ed to the main eider island where they would be based with a load of supplies – lamps, fuel, water, food, tools, books, knitting materials, boxed wine – for the time they would spend with no running water or electricity. As they prepare to get to work, another helper, Ingrid, arrives. The two helpers are a little wary of Anna’s moods and reserve, and Ingrid is concerned about Anna’s health. And Anna can be stony when men show up: they are too noisy, and maybe there is too much mansplaining? She seems to prefer to work alone.

But the work progresses, building and repairing nests on numerous islets, some barely above the high tide line and bare rock. Can they finish before the ducks arrive? Cold, rain, heavy storms, and predators can determine when the ducks come and if they will be successful.

Tasks are completed, and the ducks do begin to arrive and to lay their eggs after “feathering their nests” with their breast down. Rebanks is surprised how tame the hens are as they sit on the eggs. (So was I.) Anna’s last season as a “duck woman” is a success, with a

decent harvest of feathers.

By the end of his time on the islands, Rebanks seems to have come back to himself, in no small part because of what he learned watching Anna, and how she was, in her own way, forgiving, accepting, and hard-working. She had two ex-husbands, grown children, people who cared for her, and she found a way to live and forgive. She valued the indigenous practices and culture and natural wonders of her homeland. To Rebanks, she was a singular, special, and yet also ordinary, person.

Rebanks gives us a glimpse into a declining indigenous way of life on the rocky, cold northern coast, with a focus on Anna, who had already begun making an impact with her work: the Norwegian government and various other groups come to realize the cultural heritage that was disappearing is worth saving. Anna had revived some old duck stations, and her work and that of others was rewarded with the archipelago’s 6,500 isles being named a World Heritage Site by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Anna was also featured in a short film, and she met the Queen of Norway at a conference.

Definitely a book worth a read!

On to another non-fiction book about someone learning and making connections with a part of

nature in a human landscape.

I had read great reviews of *Raising Hare* by English author Chloe Dalton and then a noted literary critic, my sister Sandy, told me I would love the book, and that she “loved the simplicity of the story.”

Raising Hare was a finalist for the 2025 Women’s Prize, won the Wainwright Prize for Nature Writing, and was named a Best Book of the Year by the *New York Times*, *The Economist*, NPR, and *Elle*. “A modern classic, one we very much need right now,” wrote George Saunders.

And I did love the book!

The author, Dalton, goes up to her countryside home to hunker down during the Covid lockdown, leaving London and some of her

work as a political speechwriter and consultant. Soon after arriving, she walks on the unpaved lane to her house and almost steps on a tiny leveret – a European hare, also known as a brown hare. (Don’t think “rabbit” – very different!) She had heard a dog barking, and supposed it had been chased onto the lane.

Hoping the mother would come for it, Dalton returned to her house, but as nighttime approached she became concerned and went back outside to find the tiny thing, unmoved.

So, she brought the leveret into the house – and here our gentle adventure begins.

Searching online, Dalton reads that hares almost never survive rescues or captivity. She does her best to feed the creature, and to her surprise, it survives and thrives. Dalton plans all the while to let the leveret return to its natural habitat, but in the meantime, it begins to make itself quite at home. *Su casa es mi casa!*

As the hare grows, it begins to venture into the walled garden surrounding some of the house and comes and goes as it pleases. Then one day, as Dalton expected, she – we find that, yes, the hare is female – climbs to the top of the stone wall and drops to the ground on the other side, where there are weasels, foxes, dogs, raptors, and all kinds of other threats.

The hare disappears into the woods and fields, but always re-

turns to enjoy meals and the nice duvet on the author’s bed. At one point she becomes ill, and is brought to a veterinarian where she is prescribed medication. Dalton hesitates giving the medicine, but the hare heals on her own.

Dalton frets about the animal’s safety and health while learning to let the hare be what it is: a wild creature. But that is a challenge when it is also so, well, tame and comfortable around her and the house.

Nature takes its course, and the hare ends up with a litter of her own leverets. And then another. The two litters are very different; one is very comfortable hanging around in the house while the other keeps itself to the outdoors in the garden. The leverets disperse, but Mama still continues to visit the house and Dalton over the next two years.

Wild hares are not generally long-lived; predators, human and animal, take their toll, as do tractors and automobiles. As Dalton finishes up the book, the hare still visits, but she knows that any one of those visits could be the last one.

The book is touching and sweet, with lessons learned by the author that we can absorb as well. Loving, and letting go. The writing flows gently and you feel you are sitting in the garden watching the hare be tame and wild.

A wonderful story, beautifully told.



Great Falls Middle School / Turners Falls High School

1st Quarter Honor Roll

– Grade 6 –

- FIRST HONORS

Ryker-Sylas Blier, Lyla Burek, Antony Castro-Siano, Lilith Cutaia, Lucia Diaz, Zeke Diaz, Lucas Edson, Liam Fox, John Lemerise-Reinking, Owen Martineau, Kimberlyn Mason-Emond, Tianna Moise Valdez, Xavier Pouliot, Alexis Preissler, Eleanor Ramsey, Chase Robinson, Michael Rosa, Annika Sadler, Shaylynn Slauenwhite, Tyler Varilly
- SECOND HONORS

Keegan Charboneau, Madison D'Amici, Samuel Edson, Phoenix Inzer, Andrew Martinez Morales, Ruby McMahon, Anthony Nuckols, Lilliana Wade
- THIRD HONORS

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– Grade 7 –

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Dayzar Crapps, Carter Greene, Brenna Guilbault, Zechariha Hammonds, Liam McGuigan, Ryan Newton, Nathan Ortiz, Emmanuel Quezada Abarua, Jacob Torres
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- FIRST HONORS

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- SECOND HONORS

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– Grade 9 –

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– Grade 11 –

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- THIRD HONORS

Ivy Lopez

– Grade 12 –

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