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THE VALLEY PATRIOT

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"Congress shall make no law..."

A MONTHLY JOURNAL OF NEWS, COMMENTARY AND OPINIONS SERVING THE MERRIMACK VALLEY

Police Investigate Middle School Death Threats

Tom Duggan

VALLEY PATRIOT EDITOR

Several North Andover Middle School students are being investigated by the North Andover police for personal profiles posted on the America On Line Internet service threatening to harm fellow students and naming at least one teacher and a classmate the student pledges to "kill."

These threats were repeatedly posted in on-line chat rooms as well as in the students' personal profiles available for anyone with the student's screen name to see.

One of the students being investigated by North Andover Police lists a profile saying that his "life goal" is to "kill Mr. (name withheld) and (name withheld)" a fellow student. Mr. (X) is a teacher at the North Andover Middle School.

According to documents, in one on-line profile a student promises "... and one day im gonna kill somebody so bad there mother will know who it was the second they see there sons skin stapled to a tree and there bones burned in a pit fire I made."

Another incident being investigated by the North Andover police involves a chat room conversation where a student asked another if they wanted to have a knife fight after school. In that chat room the boy who threatened the knife fight also said that he often dreamt about killing.

Members of the North Andover Police would not comment on the record about the particulars of the ongoing investigation, calling it cyber-bullying.

Documents found in The Valley Patriot mailbox detailed several explicit internet conversations where a middle school boy talks about "rape" and fantasizes about committing violence against his fellow classmates, neighbors and specific students he alleges have treated him badly.

One middle school mother asked The Valley Patriot, "How do we know if these children who make such threats are really serious? How do we know if this is just kids being stupid or if we may have another Columbine on our hands?"

CYBER BULLYING, page 22

Andover Surgery Center expands facility, services



PHOTO: COURTESY

The Andover Surgery Center has expanded its facilities to include more convenient, larger recovery areas, and expanded services such as orthopedics, pediatrics and elective surgeries.

Please See Page 3

VALLEY PATRIOT OF THE MONTH:

Agnes Breshnahan

Lonnie Brennan

VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

METHUEN - Her statistics from 1970 are simple: female, 5 foot five inches, 125 pounds, age 19. As she entered her Junior year at the now-closed Catholic Trinity College in Burlington, Vermont, Agnes M. Breshnahan was surrounded daily by images of the Vietnam war:

Images of war protests on TV, sounds of protest songs led the

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EDITORIAL



We suggest "Nearly Perfect"

The Massachusetts state Board of Education is unhappy with the mean-spirited words being used to describe government schools that are not up to snuff. Those who are concerned with this less-than-ideal performance have used such adjectives as "failing" and "under-performing." Schools with persisting imperfections are even bullied with terms like "chronically under-performing."

The concern is that educators might be blamed and students might suffer a loss of self-esteem. Parents might even take notice and start complaining to teachers, administrators and elected officials.

The board's suggested remedy is to banish such terminology and start describing these schools as "Commonwealth Priority" and, if the imperfections persist, to refer to them as "Priority One" schools.

We believe this initiative should be the cornerstone of Massachusetts' new education philosophy. What could be more important than the morale of our educators and our students' feelings of self-worth?

But does the suggested remedy go far enough?

We don't think so.

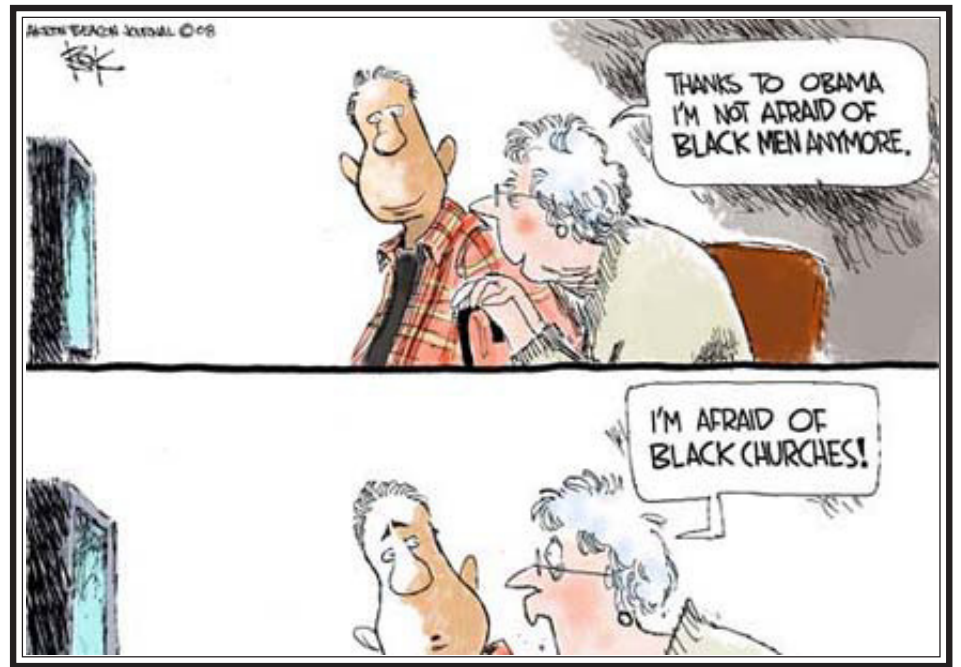
We are in a crisis. There are reports of teachers moping about and students with that downtrodden look on their faces. It is time to take desperate measures. Our children and educators deserve no less.

In an effort to make a positive contribution to the state's education initiative, The Valley Patriot commissioned a study to improve on the state board's recommendation. The study ended up with two possible improvements.

The runner-up was "Under Funded" and, for schools with persistent problems, "Grossly Under Funded." Many of our consultants, parent groups, and community activists fought hard for these options. The suggested terminology clearly places the blame for any imperfections squarely where it belongs: on the taxpayer. In addition, it relieves our legislators, education schools, school boards, administrators, teachers, students, and parents from any culpability.

But in the end the need for effusive congratulation, indeed celebration, prevailed. Like our grading system for students ("A" for perfect and "B" for practically everyone else), our team of education experts and consultants finally settled on "Nearly Perfect" and, for those that are Nearly Perfect for several years in a row, "Consistently Nearly Perfect."

When the staff and students in these Nearly Perfect schools hear this, their feelings of self-esteem will soar, parents will beam with pride, the community will celebrate, and the near-perfect performance of these schools will continue. Can greater funding be far behind?



Islam: Misunderstood Religion

Islam is the ancestral religion of humanity. It had its beginnings not with the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), but with the Patriarch Abraham. Islam is indeed the religion of Abraham, and of all the Prophets of God:

"Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian, but he was (an) upright (man), a Muslim; and he was not one of the polytheists." (3:67)

"Say: We believe in Allah and that which is revealed to us, and that which was revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes, and that which was given to Moses and Jesus and to the prophets from their Lord; we make no distinction between any of them, and to Him we submit." (3:84)

Islam is the most misperceived religion in the world, particularly by those in the West. Islam is seen as a violent and intolerant religion that suppresses the rights of women and seeks to swerve the world back into the Dark Ages.

To any object seeker of truth, these sorts of stereotypes are simply not true and display only a clandestine ignorance about the very foundations of the Islamic faith. Islam far from being a violent and intolerant religion calls upon its followers to live in peace (Holy Qur'an, 2:208; 10:25) and to avoid any coercion in religious matters (2:256). To provide protection and safe haven to the

unbelievers, so they may come to hear the word of the Lord (9:6). It stresses that the decision to subscribe to any religion is left to the free discretion of an individual (109:6).

Islam does enjoin on its followers though to support and strive for the establishment of Justice and Order in society (4:135; 5:8) to practice what is good and to abstain from what is wrong (3:104).

The historian, Professor Bernard Lewis, in his essay "*License to Kill*" couldn't in good conscious go against reality and concluded:

"At no point do the basic texts of Islam enjoin terrorism and murder. At no point do they even consider the random slaughter of uninvolved bystanders."

When it comes to the rights of women, I would like to quote a single verse from the Holy Qur'an.

"And the believers, men and women, are friends one of another. They enjoin good and forbid evil and keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate, and obey Allah and His Messenger. As for these, Allah will have mercy on them. Surely Allah is Mighty, Wise." (9:71)

Soner Uguz Member
Selimiye Mosque in Methuen

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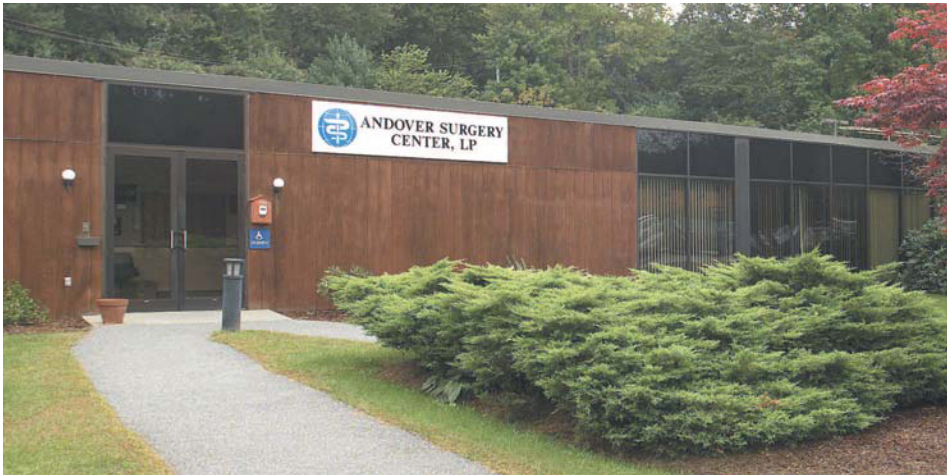


PHOTO: COURTESY

The Andover Surgery Center has expanded its facilities to include more convenient, larger recovery areas, and expanded services such as orthopedics, pediatrics and elective surgeries.

Andover Surgery Center expands facility, services

The Andover Surgery Center on Park Street in Andover has now reopened after closing briefly in December for major renovations.

Patients visiting the surgery center today may remember it as the old walk-in clinic run by the Lawrence General Hospital. It was the very first stand alone surgery center licensed by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

The surgery center services 200-250 patients per month, but with the expansion of the facility there is now room to service 350-400 patients per month.

The center now has brand new recovery areas and private pediatric

recovery rooms so patients' family members can now stay with their children throughout their visit.

What's more, the Andover Surgery Center provides a quieter and more convenient environment than day surgery at a local hospital.

The center has also increased office space for physicians, making it easier for doctors to see patients when they are not performing surgery.

Next month the Valley Patriot will be publishing a detailed report on the variety of specialties offered at the center and we will introduce you to the doctors who practice there and the staff who run and manage the facility.

THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

Are you a conservative? Can you pass the conservative litmus test? Part II

Dr. Charles Ormsby
VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

Last month we established a political foundation for Conservatives in the form of four core principles (the basic Conservative litmus test):

- * A dedication to individual liberty and the primacy of the individual,
- * A government dedicated to the rule of law (starting but not ending with strict interpretation of our Constitution based on the original intent of the Founders),
- * A no-compromise stance in defense of our most fundamental rights with particular focus on our First and Second Amendment rights, and
- * An insistence that government violations of our property rights be substantially reduced through a radical reform of our tax laws.

Any significant deviation from these principles by a candidate for public office seeking the support of Conservatives should be considered disqualifying.

But what about the myriad of day-to-day issues such as Social Security, health care, welfare, education, abortion, labor laws, and energy policy... right down to more mundane issues such as smoking and helmet laws?

Each of these issues represents a problem that must be addressed and each has its own complicating factors. In some cases the dominant factor is technology, in others it is cost, and in still others it is a question of organization, meaning, how should human and other capital assets be deployed to provide an appropriate solution? Of course, for the two lesser issues listed it is none of these; it is merely that some people just do not like being told what to do! Which leads to a critical question: Who should decide; the government or the individual?

Before government social engineers start concocting solutions to these "societal problems," maybe we should take a deep breath and think about the core principles and how they should guide Conservatives as we consider policy options.

Our core principles demand that the policies Conservatives champion must maximize individual liberty so that we, as individuals or with the mutual cooperation of others, can produce the necessities of life and, with hard work, accumulate assets that will make life as comfortable and enjoyable as possible.



PHOTO: TOM DUGGAN

Dr. Charles Ormsby of the North Andover School Committee

It is not government's function to produce or provide those necessities; nor is it to guarantee any particular standard of living or protect us from our own ignorance or stupidity. If it were, it would logically follow that government must have the power to abrogate our rights. Otherwise, how could it fulfill its responsibilities? Government would need to have the power to command individuals to produce and then confiscate the products of those efforts. Individual rights are meaningless in this context.

Liberty demands that government's role be limited to protecting us from others (foreign and domestic) who would initiate force or fraud against us and threaten our lives or property.

Regular readers of this column are probably prepared for an argument in favor of a return to the libertarian ideal; one that was most closely approximated during Jefferson's tenure as president 200 years ago. While that is tempting and represents a prescription I would endorse, the political state of affairs that existed during Jefferson's time has receded so far in our rear-view mirror that it might take generations to re-capture.

Unfortunately, we now have a population that has lost its appreciation for the gift of liberty and we are saddled with a legal and regulatory infrastructure that is choking the life out of society. The most valuable contribution Conservatives can make is to chart a course on every issue that will move us in the direction of greater individual liberty and personal responsibility. What are the characteristics that Conservative policies should exhibit?

If our policies are to be consistent with our core principles, they must emphasize persuasion, not force. Our laws must

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New study suggests chiropractic care can relieve hypertension

Over 65 million Americans struggle with hypertension. A recent study, published in this month's Journal of Human Hypertension, cites a specific type of chiropractic adjustment that significantly reduces hypertension.

The University of Chicago set up a double-blind study with 25 patients receiving a specific chiropractic adjustment while the remaining 25 study participants received a fake chiropractic adjustment.

The University of Chicago researchers found patients who received chiropractic adjustments saw their blood pressure drop an average of 17 points. A change this significant usually requires two blood pressure prescriptions.

Dr. Christopher Berard of Berard Family Chiropractic in Methuen explains, "Atlas is the first and most important bone in the spine. When Atlas is misaligned even the slightest bit it can impact health in many adverse ways including but not limited to headaches, chronic fatigue, insomnia, dizziness and, most importantly in respect to this study, high blood pressure."

Atlas is a unique vertebra. The spinal cord is thickest in the upper cervical region of Atlas where it completely fills the spinal canal.

Like the God in Greek mythology, it holds the weight of the world (the skull) upon its shoulders. It is comprised of one solid ring of bone and acts like a washer between the skull and rest of the spine.

Other vertebrae interlock one to the next but the Atlas (also known as Cervical vertebra 1 or C1) is highly mobile and depends entirely on muscles and ligaments to maintain its alignment. Therefore C1 is exceptionally vulnerable to displacement.

Misalignment of the base of the skull and upper cervical area will interfere with nerve signals, compromise the brain's optimum function and distort and disrupt its communication with various organs in the body. For example, one symptom of misalignment of the upper cervical vertebrae is abnormal posture.

The spinal cord is insensitive to pain and misalignment of Atlas often goes undetected and untreated.

Dr. Berard adds, "By realigning Atlas to its proper position in relationship to the spine and the skull, chiropractors are able to take pressure off of the brain stem and spinal cord."



Dr. Berard adjusts Christopher Marconi of Salem, NH

To say C1 is an important part of the spine would be a vast understatement. Its proximity to the skull base and cranial nerves means that movement of only millimeters can have a profound effect. In fact, "Christopher Reeve had an injury to Atlas and the bone below that was so small you could cover it with your fingertip," stated Dr. Berard. "From that point on, nothing functioned the way it was supposed to for Reeve."

Chiropractors look to restore proper alignment to the spine so the nervous system is free of nerve interference and, as a result, people are able to enjoy optimum health.

In most cases chiropractors obtain a Bachelor's Degree in biology, physics, chemistry or anatomy and move on to chiropractic school to study four more additional years.

The course hours for the average chiropractic student include but are not limited to:

- 217 hours of X-ray study;
- 300 hours of chemistry study;
- 370 hours of study in diagnosis;
- 217 course hours in orthopedics;
- 320 course hours in neurology;
- 271 course hours in pathology;
- 420 course hours in physiology;
- 520 course hours in anatomy;
- and at least 900 hours of work in a chiropractic clinic.

After graduating, chiropractors pass written and oral board exams, at the national and state levels.



Business owner holds casino night for Hospice House

LAWRENCE/CHELMSFORD. – A Chelmsford business owner celebrated her 7th year in business by hosting a fundraiser for the Merrimack Valley Hospice House. On Saturday, January 19th 2008, Laurie Cote from Diversity Studio in Chelmsford hosted an after dinner fundraising event "Lucky 7 Casino Night" at the Chelmsford Radisson to benefit the Merrimack Valley Hospice House.

"I have a close connection with the agency – my mother, Gail, works for Merrimack Valley Hospice and my sister, Kathy, is a nurse for it's affiliate agency Home Health VNA," said Cote. "My mother feels strongly about the Hospice House that they are building and suggested them as a beneficiary for our Casino Night event. Choosing to support the Merrimack Valley Hospice House seemed like a natural fit for my family."

The Lucky 7 Casino Night raised over \$2,900 to support the building of a 14 bed private room residence on North Ave. in Haverhill, Massachusetts. At the end of the night, Cote was thrilled to present the check to Janine Papesh, Manager of Development, from Merrimack Valley Hospice.

The Merrimack Valley Hospice House will be built to meet the needs of terminally ill patients who can no longer remain at home but wish to remain in a home-like setting while receiving comprehensive end of life care. The Hospice House will be available to patients 7 days a week, 24 hours a day, therefore providing increased access to hospice care for patients and families when care at home is no longer viable.

The Hospice House can also be used temporarily to help patients in need of symptom management or to provide some respite for the family or caregiver. It will be a place with unlimited possibilities to

spend one's last days in a specially created and caring environment.

The Merrimack Valley Hospice House will be the first such residence constructed in the Merrimack Valley.

Over 100 people attended the game night. Delicious hors d'oeuvres and desserts were provided along with terrific dancing music provided by Chris Brunelle. Many of Ms. Cote's friends and family not only attended the event but served as game dealers.

Those skilled and lucky Casino night players who ended up with chips were able to turn them in at the of the evening for chances to win terrific raffle prizes like hand made blankets, wine & massage baskets. Fun was had by all.

"We greatly appreciate all of the effort that Laurie Cote and her family exhibited to make this fun event possible," said Joan Stygles Hull, RN, MBA, and President/CEO of the Home Health Foundation. "It's wonderful to see this kind of support for our Hospice House. Not only does it raise funds for the construction, but Laurie has helped to raise awareness about the Merrimack Valley Hospice House's importance to the community. We thank her and her family for their generosity."

Merrimack Valley Hospice is a not-for-profit agency dedicated to serving the medical, emotional and spiritual needs of terminally ill patients and their families. The agency is a member of the Home Health Foundation, which also includes Home Health VNA and HomeCare, Inc. The agencies serve more than 80 communities throughout the Merrimack Valley, Northeastern Massachusetts and Southern New Hampshire. To learn more about the Merrimack Valley Hospice House, please check our web site at www.homehealthfoundation.org

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THE DOCTOR IS IN

Living with lower back pain ... Part I

Rami Rustum, M.D.
VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

- Pain in the lower back has been a growing problem in many aspects:
- 1- It's the most common reason to pay a visit to pain clinic.
 - 2- It's the # 1 reason for missing days at work in men and second to Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS) in women.
 - 3- In Dollar amount, the cost of treatment is about \$40 billion/ year and has been rising.
 - 4- The complexity of the problem since the source of the pain can not be identified in many cases. Or if identified, the treatment may only provide partial relief.
 - 5- Failure to report (???)

Since our goal is to raise awareness about issues concerning your health and well-being, we need to shed the light on the last statement in the above problems list.

For this discussion, I will consider the lumbar spine as a model, understanding that this may apply in great deal to cervical and thoracic spine:

- Q- What structures constitute the lumbar spine?
- A- Bone (vertebrae), muscles, ligaments and soft tissue, nerves and discs
- These structures exist in certain balance providing precise mechanical

stability to the body and any problem in any part for whatever reason will result in pain!

***Bone:** Consider osteoporosis, arthritis, age-related changes in the joints attached to the vertebrae (called Facet joints), bone infection, bone fractures (compression fractures), hip degenerative changes and possible metastatic cancer disease from the colon, prostate, bladder, ovary, lung, etc.

*** Muscles and soft tissues:** Muscle strain as a result of taking a wrong turn can trigger severe pain and significant muscle spasm. In the meantime, weakness of the lumbar spine muscles and increased elasticity in the ligaments may allow the bone (vertebrae) to move on each other and slip!!

Also remember, any infection in the adjacent tissues (abscess), or tumor growth may be felt as pain in the back.

*** Nerves and Discs:** Where the excitement is!! Consider disc bulge or herniation, nerve impingement by the bulged/herniated disc, or bone narrowing around the nerves as a result of arthritis. In rear cases, small cysts may grow on the nerves applying pressure which may cause numbness or burning sensation.

Over the next few months, I will discuss the most common problems in the lower back, sharing with you our experience at Lawrence General Hospital Pain Management Center in offering the up-to-date treatment for certain cases.

Finally, I would like to present a few quick real stories for patients seen at our Pain Center for lower back pain.

The common dominator among these cases is the patient's failure to report or address the problem with the PCP or the pain specialist as it started! I hope that you learn from them as a smart reader:

- * 81 year-old female** with lower back pain for about eight months believed it was related to bad arthritis and becoming old.
- The patient requested some pain medications or cortisone injection. No tests were done. Lumbar spine MRI was ordered showing fracture in one



Rami R. Rustum, M.D. is the director of the Pain Management Center at Lawrence General Hospital. For any questions or concerns, please email Dr. Rustum at: ramirustum@comcast.net

vertebra as a result to metastatic cancer from the lung!

- * 42 year-old male** with a few months complaint of mild abdominal pain radiating to the back and causing significant back discomfort, presents for evaluation and possible back injection.
- The patient believed the pain was related to muscle strain. Further workup showed evidence of pancreatic cancer with lumbar spine bone metastatic disease!!

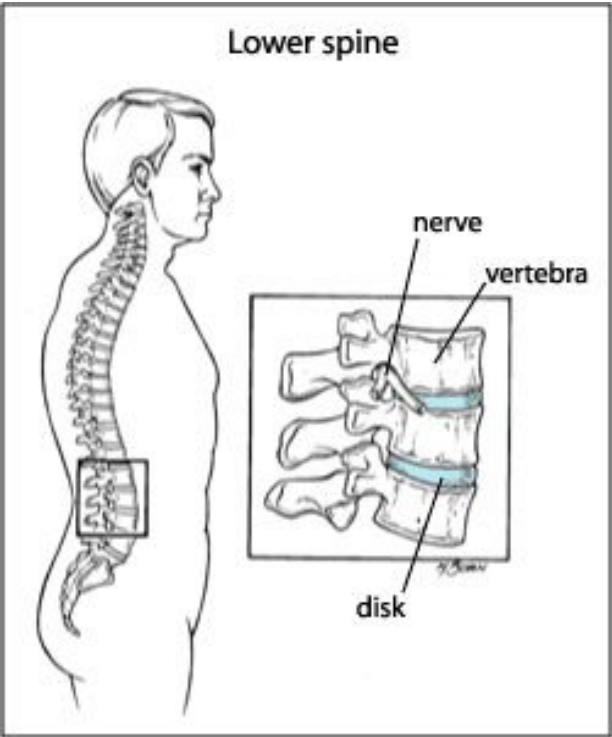
*** 63 year-old male** with gradual onset of mild back pain, but more pain in the right leg for about 3-4 months. The pain started after snow shoveling, so it was believed to be caused by disc bulge.

Lumbar spine MRI was normal. Occlusion in one of the arteries in the leg was suspected! Patient underwent immediate successful surgery at LGH to restore blood supply to the leg.

In most cases, the problem can be the patient him/herself neglecting the pain for months and years thinking that it will eventually go away on its own!!!

That is a major problem to us as caregivers and that will be problem #5 in the list above!

Rami R. Rustum, M.D. is the director of the Pain Management Center at Lawrence General Hospital. For any questions or concerns, please email Dr. Rustum at: ramirustum@comcast.net



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State meets obligation on SPED mandates

Steve Panagiotakos
SENATE WAYS & MEANS CHAIRMAN

The following information is intended to address the issue of local mandates and explains how the state complies with the applicable laws. I would also like to explain how the state assists municipalities in the funding of certain education categories.

One of the provisions of “Proposition 2 ½,” which was enacted in 1982, requires that, if the state enacts laws or regulations that impose new costs on cities, towns, regional school districts or educational collaborative, the state must also provide the necessary funding. Under this law, any statute or regulation enacted after 1980 that imposes a cost must be fully funded by the Commonwealth or be subject to voluntary local acceptance.

If a law requires the expenditure of local funds but the state does not provide those funds, an “unfunded mandate” would exist. Laws enacted before 1980 are not subject to this requirement.

Another provision of Proposition 2 ½ established the Division of Local Mandates at the State Auditor’s Office. To ensure that the local cost of legislation is considered by the legislature, the Division of Local Mandates reviews significant bills, prepares preliminary cost studies and occasionally contacts members of the legislature to make them aware of the law’s requirements.1

If there are any questions regarding breaches of the “local mandates” provisions, the State Auditor’s Office should be notified.

Under the landmark Education Reform Act of 1993, municipalities are required to spend a certain amount of money on education based on each municipality’s individual foundation budget.

“Chapter 70” aid – described in Chapter 70 of the General Laws – was developed as a part of the Education Reform Act as a way to assist districts to meet the new education spending mandates. Every municipality in the Commonwealth, using a combination of

state and local dollars, currently spends at least the amount required under Chapter 70.

The Legislature has demonstrated a strong commitment to education. Funding for education in the Commonwealth currently comprises over 20% of the bud-get and increases substantially every year. Chapter 70 funding in fiscal year 2008 is \$3.725 billion, and it is likely that there will be an increase of over \$220 million in the coming fiscal year.

Since fiscal year 2005:

- * Chapter 70 has increased by \$542.4 million
- * Regional School Transportation has increased by \$20.3 million
- * Special Education Reimbursements have increased by \$18.4 million
- * Kindergarten Expansion Grants have increased by \$10.8 million

The education clause of the Massachusetts Constitution states in part that “[i]t shall be the duty of legislatures and magistrates, in all future periods of this commonwealth, to cherish ... the public schools and grammar schools in the towns.”

Mass. Const., pt. II, ch. V, § II. The plaintiffs in McDuffy v. Secretary of the Executive Office of Education claimed that the Commonwealth had failed its constitutional duty to provide them with the opportunity to receive an adequate education of sufficiently high quality.

The Supreme Judicial Court held that the Commonwealth had failed to meet its constitutional obligation and left it to the Governor and the legislature to define the details and appropriate means to provide the constitutionally required education.

Only days after the McDuffy decision, the landmark Education Reform Act of 1993 was signed into law. The legislation had been in the works since 1991, when the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education published its report, *Every Child A Winner!*



“The Legislature has demonstrated a strong commitment to education. Funding for education in the Commonwealth currently comprises over 20% of the budget and increases substantially every year.”

- Senate Ways & Means Chairman,
Steve Panagiotakos

Hancock v. Commissioner of Education was initiated in 1999 as the successor to the McDuffy case. The Hancock plaintiffs, representing students in nineteen school districts, alleged that the Commonwealth was failing to provide public school students the constitutionally required education outlined in the McDuffy decision. In February 2005, the SJC dismissed the case, finding that the Commonwealth is in fact meeting its duty under the education clause of the Massachusetts Constitution. Chief Justice Marshall, in explaining the court’s decision, stated:

[t]he legislative and executive branches have shown that they have embarked on a long-term, measurable, orderly, and comprehensive process of reform to provide a high quality public education to every child ... They have committed resources to carry out their plan, have done so in fiscally troubled times, and show every indication that they will continue to increase such resources as the Commonwealth’s finances improve ... I cannot conclude that the Commonwealth currently is not meeting its constitutional charge to “cherish the interests of . . . public schools.”

In 2006, the Commonwealth adopted a new Chapter 70 formula with the intent of implementing it over the course of a Five Year Plan. The Governor’s FY09 Chapter 70 proposal represents Year Three of the plan and appropriates \$3.949 billion dollars to cities and towns, a \$223 million increase over FY08.

The Five Year Plan addresses **issues of adequacy** in the foundation budget by:

* Using the uncapped inflation rate, which means that all categories of the foundation budget – from which the state aid allocations are derived – are increased by this year’s inflation rate of 5.18%.

* Maintaining the modest increases made over the past two years to the following categories: English language learners and low-income students.

The Five Year Plan addresses **issues of equity** by:

* Weighing each district’s total income and total property wealth equally in determining what the municipality must contribute – at a minimum – towards its school funding.

* Setting the maximum local contribution for every district at 82.5% of the foundation budget, thereby setting the state aid floor at 17.5% of the foundation budget.

A school district will receive its state aid in the form of “foundation aid” (i.e., the difference between the foundation budget and its required local contribution) plus increments of the other types of aid (e.g., growth aid, down payment aid), pursuant to the formula.

The foundation budget is made up of the following eleven categories:

- * Administration
- * Instructional Leadership

- * Classroom and Specialist Teachers
- * Other Teaching Services
- * Professional Development
- * Instructional Equipment and Technology
- * Guidance and Psychological
- * Pupil Services
- * Operations and Maintenance
- * Employee Benefits/Fixed Charges
- * Special Education Tuition

Of note: until fiscal year 2003 there was a professional development spending requirement. This requirement, which was \$125 per pupil in its final year, was funded by the state through the Chapter 70 appropriation. Each year the Chapter 70 aid category called “minimum aid” was increased to reflect that requirement. The minimum professional development spending requirement no longer exists.

Below is a list of the education transportation mandates:

* K-6 transportation is required for students living more than two miles from school, and school districts pay for this without state aid. This mandate applied to all students in K-12 before Proposition 2 ½ became law, and it was relaxed in the early 1980s.

* K-12 regional transportation is also for students living more than two miles from school.

This mandate existed before Proposition 2 ½ and is therefore is not subject to the local mandate law. Funding for this program is appropriated in the budget through line item 7035-0006. In fiscal year 2008 it was funded at \$58.3 million, representing 88.5% of the total cost.

* Out-of-district vocational school transportation is also mandated for students living more than two miles from school.

Funding for this program is appropriated in the budget through line item 7035-0007. In fiscal year 2008 it was funded at \$1.95 million, representing 75% funding of total cost.

Budget Growth compared to Chapter 70 growth – 1993-2008:

FY 93 Budget – \$13,840,980,000

FY 08 Budget – \$26,812,000,000

Growth – 94% increase – \$12.971 billion increase

FY 93 Chapter 70 – \$898,131,787

FY 08 Chapter 70 – \$3,725,671,328

Growth – 315% increase – \$2.828 billion increase

As you can see, the increase in the overall budget during that time period was 150%, while the increase in Chapter 70 Educational spending was 315%.


(Footnotes) 1 Division of Local Mandates - <http://www.mass.gov/sao/localmandate.htm/>

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Acts 8:23, “For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.”

There was a recent article in the Eagle-Tribune by staff writer Mr. Mark Vogler containing an interview with my colleague and veteran Lawrence School Committee Member, James Vittoriosio; where he states that he is launching a campaign to publicly expose nepotism in the Lawrence School Department.

“I want to name all families that have three or more names on the payroll, if I can get the records.” Mr. Vittorioso said. He also vows to make public the names of family members or relatives of School Committee Members. So, to help my colleague in his endeavor I would like to state for the record and to anyone who really wants to know that I have a son who is in his second year of teaching for the Lawrence Public School System. I would like to thank Mr. Vittorioso for this worthwhile campaign because now I get to talk about one of my favorite subjects; my son the Teacher.

My son is a graduate of UMASS Lowell, his Bachelors Degree is in Mathematics and he is now going for his masters in education. He lives with his wonderful wife in Danvers. After he graduated he could have gone anywhere in the state, because the need for Math

teachers in this state speaks for itself. He alone chose to take on the challenge of teaching math to 7th and 8th graders at the Arlington Middle School in Lawrence.

I am so proud of our son. Math has always been a favorite subject of his, a trait that comes from his mother. He decided back then to become a math teacher to help others to become proficient in math.

You may have heard by now about the status of the Arlington Middle School; that it is designated as being a Priority One School. We are still awaiting information from the Department of Education as to what that really means. My son is a real Math Teacher, meaning that he went to college to be a math teacher as apposed to those who go into the business world and after sometime for whatever reason then decide to go into teaching.

Now what kind of father, (who also happens to be a School Committee Member) would stand by and let his son be grouped in with other teachers at a school that has economic and academic challenges like the Arlington Middle School? Surely I should be pulling some strings behind the scenes to get him into a less stressful and challenging school, some would think. Something definitely must be wrong with my parenting skills or my ability to do the right thing for my son.

According to the article in the Eagle-Tribune, nepotism is the showing of favoritism toward relatives when it comes to hiring and promotions. I must try harder to do the right thing for my son so that I fit into this profile for my colleague's campaign .

My son as a young teacher has still much more to learn in the art of teaching. As far as content goes, from all indications he knows his stuff! In my humbled opinion, my son has done more for the students of that school (as far as Math is concerned) than any other Math teacher for sometime.

The Arlington Middle School is a better place because of the caliber and character of teachers like my son, as well as the colleague's he works with day after day, performing the tasks that they are confronted with. I thank God for all of them!

So to my colleague Mr. Vittorioso I say; I hope this helps you in your worthwhile campaign. Just for your information, I abstained from voting for the New Lawrence Teachers Contract because of this very reason, I have a son who is a teacher for the Lawrence School Department. I also have on file at the Lawrence City Clerks office a Disclosure of Appearance of Conflict of Interest as required by G.L.C.268A,section23(b)(3). stating that “I, Peter Larocque, as a Lawrence School Committee Member District E, publicly disclose the fact that I

have a son who is a teacher in the Lawrence Public School Department.”

In conclusion, I find myself asking what can be the motivation behind such a campaign. Then I remembered a statement made by my friend and colleague many times during the public participation portion of our Lawrence School Committee meetings, “yes I am bitter, you bet I am bitter.”

So to my colleague, I very humbly ask that you take a look at the Webster Dictionary which states that Bitterness is characterized by strong feelings of hatred, resentment, cynicism, etc.

I also recommend taking a good look at Ephesians 4:31-32,
 "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."



Peter Larocque is a member of the Lawrence School Committee. He was originally elected by the Lawrence City Council to fill the unexpired term of Amy McGovern in

2006 and then elected in his own right last month. You can email him at peterlarocque@hotmail.com

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Inner city kids benefiting from school choice

Matthew Ladner
SYNDICATED COLUMNIST

Democratic activist Steve Barr, founder of the Rock the Vote campaign, has dived into school reform in Los Angeles. Predictably, this has run him straight into the teeth of opposition from the education union. Barr has been busily kicking out those teeth.

Barr’s Green Dot is a group of charter schools with a strong record of accomplishment with very disadvantaged students. Public school teachers in Watts have been using a California law to secede from the dysfunctional Los Angeles district to join Green Dot as charter schools. The education establishment in the city, led by the education unions, has fought Barr every step of the way. But so far, Green Dot is winning.

Barr is no union buster; his schools have school-level associations. Barr’s take-no-prisoners style, however, includes no patience for urban schools that systematically fail kids. Barr will not tolerate tenure or other impediments to quality learning.

Barr makes it clear, in sometimes colorful language, that the purpose of state education spending is to educate children, not to provide job security to underperforming adults. He told *LA Weekly*, “Where are these ... (expletive) teachers going to go? Where are these lifetime benefits going to go?

What will happen to all of these groups protecting their interests and their jobs and their construction contracts? The political puzzle of this is really fascinating. But I have no doubt that within five years, you’re going to see our impact. And it’s going to be huge.”

Green Dot Schools in the toughest neighborhoods in Los Angeles have an average high school graduation rate of 80 percent. The first two Green Dot schools also had high percentages of graduates attending four-year accredited colleges and universities. The school model focuses on getting resources away from bureaucracy and into the classroom and an unflinching commitment to academic achievement.

Susan Estrich, manager of the 1988 Dukakis presidential campaign, blasted the Los Angeles school board for trying to stop Green Dot. Estrich describes the dire need:

The graduation rate at the local high school, one of the absolute worst in Los Angeles, is 3 percent...Green Dot was ready to go in Watts. It had the money to open the schools. It had the support of the community. It met all of the legal requirements for its charters to be approved. Indeed, the School Board staff advised the members that their only legal option was to approve the charters... But who cares about the rule of law when the teachers’ union is saying no?

TV personality Drew Carey recently filmed an internet program on Green Dot’s takeover of Locke High School in Watts for the Reason Foundation. Approximately 75 percent of 9th graders entering Locke do not graduate in four years, and less than five percent of Locke students go on to four-year colleges.

In the 2003-2004 school year, there were three sex offenses, 17 robberies, 25 batteries, and 11 assaults with a deadly weapon at Locke. In the “no good deed goes unpunished” world of dysfunctional public school districts, the principal who tried to turn the school around was hounded by the unions.

Barr is not alone as a Democrat defying the prerogatives of the education unions. Democrats for Education Reform is a new group that is making a big splash. In 2007, the group held an event in which U.S. Representative James Clyburn (D-SC) stressed the importance of parental choice and innovation in education. Clyburn, the House Majority Whip and the highest-ranking African-American in Congress, supports both charter schools and private school tuition tax credits for middle-class families.

At an earlier event held by the group, Representative Jesse Jackson Jr. discussed “alarming dropout rates” and the dangers of a “monopoly” filled with failing schools. “We must explore options,” he said. “Every option for every American child so that every child might have the high-quality education they deserve in their lifetime...We need more competition in the system.”

Jackson Jr. mentioned that his parents sent him to the elite St. Albans Episcopal School in D.C. when he was a child. He said he plans to push the envelope to make Democrats approach education with a more open mind.

The big tent of education reform keeps getting bigger. The relationship between liberals and education reactionaries is under obvious strain. As Churchill once said, “Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end, but it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.”

Dr. Matthew Ladner is vice president of research for the Goldwater Institute and an expert on educational reform and school choice. Dr. Ladner holds a Ph.D. from the University of Houston.
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ANOTHER POINT OF VIEW

Random thoughts on our economy

Mark Palermo
VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

People are sometimes surprised to learn that ideas have consequences.

A good example is Ronald Reagan’s premise that “deficits don’t matter,” which even fellow Republican George Bush Sr. once called “voodoo economics.”

But the idea seemed to work for a while. It grew into a mantra. Indeed it almost seemed like it would go on forever. (Maybe deficits really don’t matter if you are growing the economy faster than your debts, but financial responsibility has never been the moral imperative of politicians.) The consequences have arrived.

If we are fortunate, we may be in for a deep recession, and if not, then a global currency collapse and subsequent 1930’s style depression.

Nobody really knows what’s going to happen, but either way, a period of austerity looms ahead, an experience heretofore unknown to the present generation, brought up on conspicuous consumption and mindless electronic amusements.

During this period, the government will cut spending drastically. But where to start?

The following measures should be initiated ASAP. I am sure there are more, but these are a start.

1. First on the list would be legislation that Congress can never again vote themselves a pay raise. The voters must approve all future pay raises. It would send a message that this county belongs

to the people- and that the Congress works for us.

2. A moratorium on construction of new schools. If politicians say a new school is needed because the roof leaks and the boiler is old, then fix the roof and buy a new boiler. People must rediscover the old adage, “Use it up, wear it out, make it do.”

3. Last year Isreal received \$2.4 Billion and Egypt \$1.7 billion in U.S. foreign aid, i.e. borrowed money. This largesse must end. In fact, the entire foreign aid budget of \$20 billion must be cut or eliminated entirely. Perhaps we can give again someday when we have it. Those who fret over any country whom we currently support should consider donating their own money.

4. The US has the lowest savings rate of any country in the developed world. Is it any wonder? After money runs the gauntlet of taxations, and ends up in a savings account – then they tax the miserly 2% interest it draws. Interest on savings accounts was never taxed until the 1970’s. If they want people to save, don’t penalize them for saving.

5. About our role as world policeman... Let’s see if I get this right. We borrow money from China to support over 700 military bases in 130 countries? When asked about peace and prosperity, Congressman Ron Paul said, “Minding our own business is the best way to achieve it. Not only is it also a whole lot cheaper, but free trade and friendship with other countries benefits all involved.” The military is for the defense of our own borders.

6. I was surprised to hear Dubya admit that we don’t have much of an energy

policy. Note the use of the word “we.” I guess “we” don’t have one because “he” just didn’t get around to establishing one that emphasizes not only production but also conservation, and works toward energy independence as its goal. Oil imports comprise 40% of our national trade deficit, while we produce less oil than we did in 1950.

Let’s create tax incentives for fuel efficient cars and alternative energy installations.

(Wind power accounts for 20% of Denmark’s electrical generation, 9% of Spain’s, but only 1% of the United States.)

Let’s bring back the solar heat incentives Jimmy Carter’s administration initiated, but were repealed by Reagan.

7. Clean up the projects by giving them away. Senator Jack Kemp had the right idea years ago. Sell low income housing apartments to low income residents. Sell units for ten thousand dollars or less, or even give them away to residents if need be. We would create taxable property that people have a stake in. Capitalism works best when the largest number of people have their own piece of the pie.

8. No more unfunded government mandates. If bureaucrats in Washington want us to comply with their whims and caprices, they must send money for implementation.


9. Reward long term investment and discourage short-term speculation in stocks. Establish pro-rated reductions in capital gains tax at 4% a year down to zero capital gains tax after twenty-five years of ownership.

10. Investment credits for those companies that refuse to move manufacturing operations offshore.

While the lame duck Dubya treads water waiting for the next New World Order shill to take over and maintain business as usual, they tax and spend and print up money to pay off the deficit.

They still think deficits don’t matter. They’ll be saying it when you are working for a buck an hour.

The writer, Phillip K. Dick said, “Reality is that which, when you stop believing in it, doesn’t go away.”

 Mark Palermo is a professor at Northern Essex Community College in Haverhill. You can email him at markpalermo@lycos.com.



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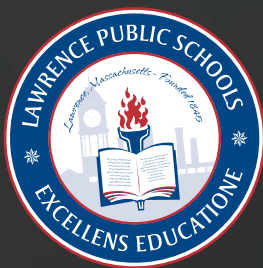


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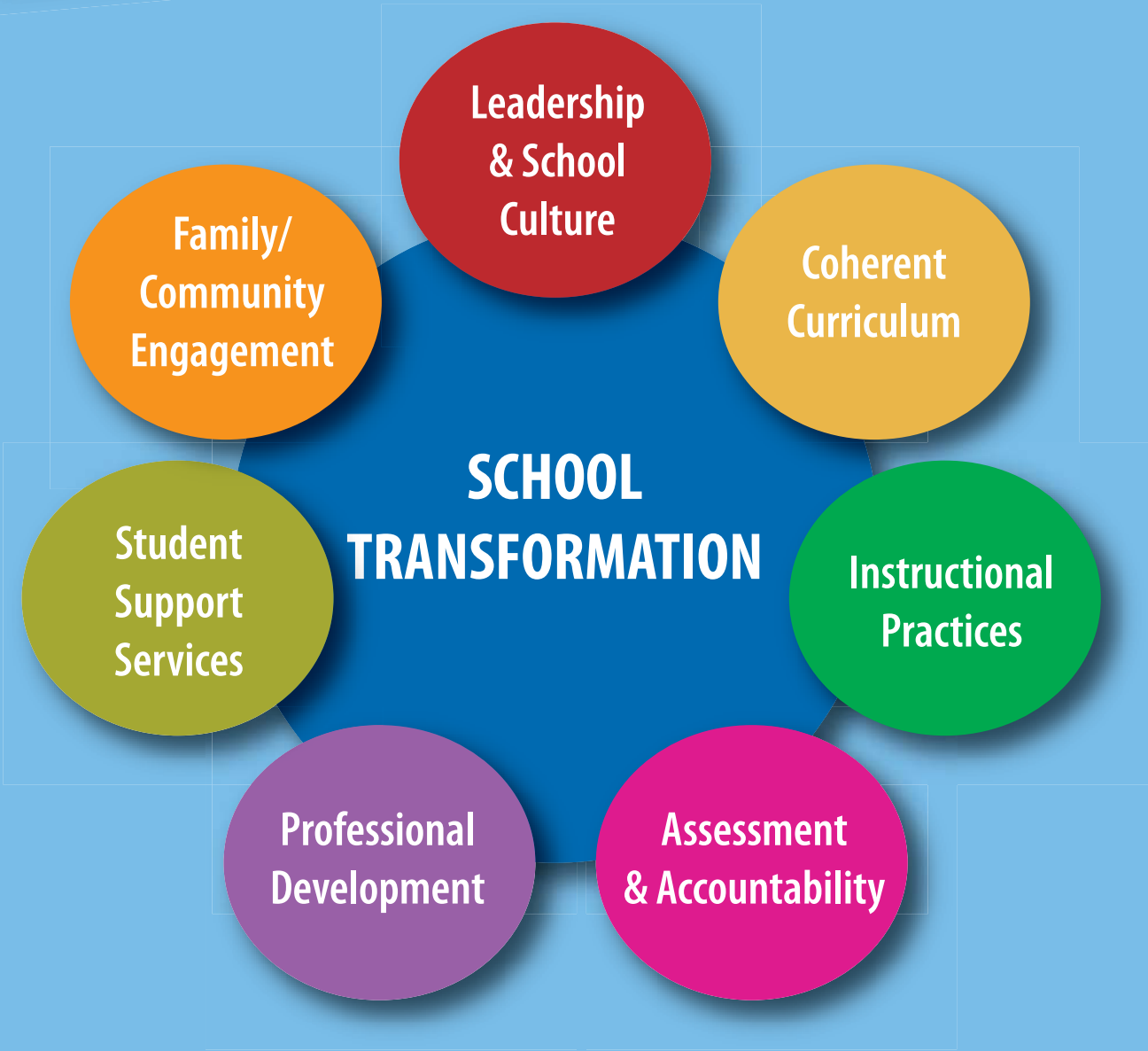
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School Committee: Mayor Michael Sullivan, Gregory Morris, Peter Larocque, Martina Cruz, James Vittorioso, Priscilla Baez, and Sam Reyes

N. Andover voters choose Limpert, Nobile, Nardella and Watson

Pictured below: Former North Andover School Committeeman Bill Kelly and newly elected committeeman Stan Limpert. Chris Nobile who won a seat on the school committee with his family, Rick Nardella with friends, family and supporters. Greg Vozeolas, Phil DeColengero with Paula Porten of the Valley Patriot and supporters of Tracy Watson.



2008 N.Andover Elections Results

North Andover Town Elections took place last month for school committee, selectman and a nonbinding ballot question concerning changing the town charter to do away with Town Meeting.

There were two open seats on the school committee with incumbent Tim Pybus and Bill Kelly choosing not to run for reelection.

Three candidates ran for the two seats with Stan Limpert and Chris Nobile beating out Mike Quinlan. Limpert and Nobile ran as a team with the support of Sandy Gleed and North Andover United. Quinlan was supported by Ted Tripp and the North Andover Taxpayers Association (NATA)

Prior to the election, outgoing committeeman Bill Kelly sent out an e-mail endorsing Limpert and Nobile and attacking the NATA. Members of NATA answered back saying that Kelly was a flip-flopper for taking the school committee stipend after promising voters that he would not.

When asked to comment on NATA's criticism on election day, Kelly said that he chose to take the stipend only after reading Tom Duggan's notebook of April 2006, which stated:

"North Andover School Committee member Bill Kelly does not accept the \$2,000 stipend offered to elected officials because of a campaign promise he made before getting elected. But based upon the Harutunian situation and all of the hard work Bill puts into his job as a committee member, I think he deserves the stipend and should take the money."

So, NATA seems to be misguided and should be attacking Tom Duggan instead of Bill Kelly.

On the Selectman side of the election, there were two seats open with Jim Xenakis and Tom Licciardello not seeking reelection. With four candidates vying for these two seats it was Tracy Watson and Rick Nardella beating out Joe Smith and former selectman Don Stewart. Ironically, Sandy Gleed and North Andover United also endorsed Watson and Nardella for selectman, while Ted Tripp and the NATA endorsed their third loser in a row, Don Stewart.

There was also a non-binding ballot question asking if voters would like to seek alternatives to Annual Town Meeting. It's bad enough that only 19% of registered voters came out for this town election. What's even worse is that only 2-3% of voters show up at town meeting. North Andover voters said they believe it is time for a change with the ballot question passing overwhelmingly. Congratulations to George Vozeolas for getting the question on the ballot and for bringing this issue to the forefront. Vozeolas coordinated a signature drive for the ballot question to create a charter commission.

Newly elected selectman Watson says that reviewing the charter and creating a commission is one of her top priorities. The prior Board of Selectman, with Licciardello being the most vocal, had refused to get involved with the charter change, but this new Board seems ready to get a home rule petition moving as there was a mandate from the voters last month. Ted Tripp was also opposed to the ballot question and is opposed to a charter change to keep town meeting. North Andover United favors a charter review.

MAIN STREET HARDWARE North Andover

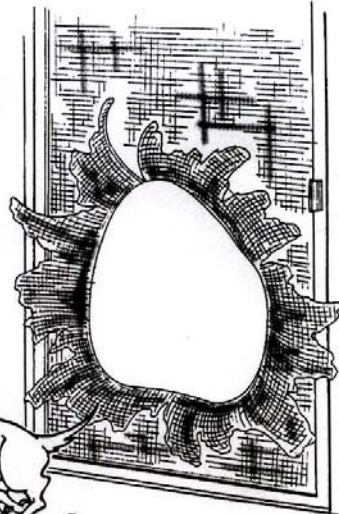
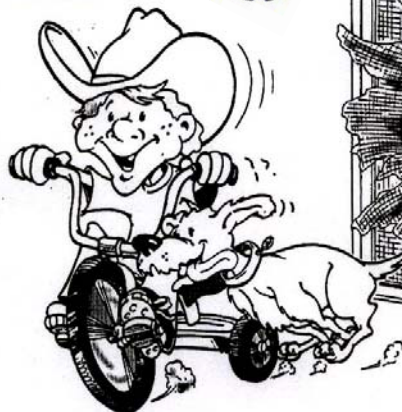
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Dracut School Commmmittee and Superintendent-Elect Mullen sign contract, saving Dracut Taxpayers Money

D.J. Deeb

VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

As I'm sure most Dracut residents now know, the Dracut School Committee signed the new Superintendent Contract with Superintendent-Elect Dr. W. Spencer Mullen on Tuesday evening, March 4th.

Both sides agree that this is a "bare bones" contract in the words of both Dracut School Committee Labor Attorney, Ed Morris, and Superintendent-Elect Dr. Mullen's Attorney, Howard Greenspan. Members of the Dracut School Committee unanimously approved this fiscally responsible contract that is both fair to Dr. Mullen and protects the interests of Dracut's taxpayers, while saving the Dracut Public School District a significant amount of money.

Often we hear newspaper editorialists commenting that the salaries and benefits being offered to superintendents and school administrators are excessive. Well, the Dracut School Committee, in conjunction with Dr. Mullen, is setting a new and positive trend.

The current Superintendent contract was approved in 2002 for a 6-year period ending on June 30, 2008. As has been reported previously, Superintendent Elaine Espindle chose not to seek a contract extension in Dracut, paving the way for a search for a new Superintendent that began this past summer.

Since I have only been part of the Dracut School Committee for the past three years, this is the first Superintendent contract that I have had input on.

I must say that I am very excited and pleased to have been able to help deliver this along with my colleagues in Dracut. Superintendent-Elect Mullen must also be

commended for demonstrating that he trusts the community and the people that he will be working with.

In the meantime, Dr. Mullen will transition into Dracut beginning April 1st through June 30th on a part-time basis for 10 hours per week at the consulting rate of \$65.00 per hour.

This means that we do not have to pay two superintendents, saving Dracut taxpayers even more money. Hopefully, this too will begin a new trend across the state.

This tran-sitional consulting contract will enable Dr. Mullen to finish the end of the school year in Woburn until June 30, while also having the opportunity to meet school district employees, attend PTO functions and after-school events, familiarize himself with the school district budget, and review district policies and procedures until he takes over officially as Superintendent on July 1.

Below is a comparison/contrast chart that highlights the major provisions in the current Superintendent's contract, approved in 2002, and the new Superintendent-Elect's contract that was just approved and signed on March 4.

TERM OF CONTRACT

Superintendent-elect Mullen's contract (2008-2011) - 3 years (2008-2011) with no roll-over provision

Current Superintendent Espindle's contract - 6 years (2002-2008) base salary

Superintendent-elect Mullen's contract (2008-2011) - \$130,000

Current Superintendent Espindle's contract (2002-2008) - \$140,146

ANNUITY BENEFIT

Superintendent-elect Mullen's contract (2008-2011) - None

Current Superintendent Espindle's contract (2002-2008) - \$20,000 per year

TRAVEL ALLOWANCE

Superintendent-elect Mullen's contract (2008-2011) - Reasonable travel reimbursement only with receipts

Current Superintendent Espindle's contract (2002-2008) - \$2,000 annually without voucher + additional reimbursement with receipts

TERMINATION OF CONTRACT BY COMMITTEE

Superintendent-elect Mullen's contract (2008-2011) - For "Good Cause" by a 4/5 School Committee vote with due process and 14 days Notice. No automatic buyout provision.

Current Superintendent Espindle's contract (2002-2008) - For "Felonious or gross misconduct" and 120 days notice. The superintendent. receives automatic buyout of remainder of contract

TERMINATION OF CONTRACT BY SUPERINTENDENT

Superintendent-elect Mullen's contract (2008-2011) - 120 days notice to Committee

Current Superintendent Espindle's contract (2002-2008) - 120 days notice to Committee

TUITION REIMBURSEMENT

Superintendent-elect Mullen's contract (2008-2011) - None

Current Superintendent Espindle's contract (2002-2008) - One course per semester at UMass

HOLIDAY LEAVE

Superintendent-elect Mullen's contract (2008-2011) - All holidays available to other staff

Current Superintendent Espindle's contract (2002-2008) - All holidays available to other staff

VACATION TIME

Superintendent-elect Mullen's contract (2008-2011) - 25 days per year, with maximum carryover of 50 days

Current Superintendent Espindle's contract (2002-2008) - 25 days per year, with total accumulation of 60 days

SICK LEAVE

Superintendent-elect Mullen's contract (2008-2011) - 15 days per year, with maximum accumulation of 45 days

Current Superintendent Espindle contract (2002-2008) - 18 days per year, with unlimited accumulation

The Town of Dracut is indeed fortunate to have such an outstanding educator taking over as Superintendent of Dracut Public Schools this summer. Dr. Mullen, a Dracut native who now resides in Chelmsford, has been a well-respected teacher in Dracut Public Schools for over 20 years and an administrator in Dracut, Haverhill, and Woburn.

We welcome Dr. Mullen and wish him the best of luck in his new position. We look forward to working with Dr. Mullen to move Dracut schools forward in a positive direction that benefits the students, teachers, administrators, staff, parents, and taxpayers.



D.J. Deeb is an adjunct Professor of History and Government at Bunker Hill Community College and a Political Science Instructor at the University of Massachusetts Lowell. He teaches Social Studies full-time at Reading Memorial High School.

He is an elected member of the Dracut School Committee and Greater Lowell Regional Vocational-Technical School Committee. You can email him at djdeeb@yahoo.com



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The Methuen Exchange Club is hosting its 6th Annual "Original Taste of Methuen". It will be held at the Wyndham Hotel (123 Old River Rd. in Andover) April 22nd from 6-9pm.

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- * Methuen Arlington Neighborhood
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- * Michael B. Christen Family Support Center
- * Dream Factory
- * Town of Methuen's Forest Lake
- * Methuen VFW
- * Methuen American Legion
- * Boy's State
- * And many oter projects



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Chris Augusta Scott is new Lowell Superintendent

Richard Howe, Jr.
VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

By a vote of four to two on March 24, the Lowell School Committee elected Dr. Chris Augusta Scott to be the next superintendent of the Lowell public schools.

Scott, who is presently superintendent of the Norfolk, Massachusetts school system, won the votes of Mayor Bud Caulfield and committee members Jackie Doherty, Jim Leary and Connie Martin.

Committee members Dave Conway and Regina Faticanti both voted for Dr. Wendy Jack, the Director of Curriculum and Instruction at Lowell High School.

The seventh member of the school committee, John Leahy, voted present. Paul Schlichtman, Lowell's Director of Assessment and Testing received no votes.

A fourth candidate, Portia Selene Bonner, an Assistant Superintendent in Hamden, Connecticut, withdrew her candidacy after being hired as the new superintendent in New Bedford on the morning of the Lowell vote. Scott had been a finalist in the New Bedford search, so her Lowell supporters breathed a sigh of relief when news of Bonner's selection was released.

Scott, who holds a Ph.D from the University of South Australia, began her teaching career in her native Halifax, Nova Scotia in 1988 and remained in that 53,000 student district for twelve years. In 2000, she moved to Massachusetts after being hired by Cambridge to be the principal of a Pre-K to 8 school.

After spending two years in Cambridge and one in Wayland as Director of Curriculum and Accountability, Scott became Superintendent of the 1100 student Norfolk school district in 2004.

School committee members voting for Scott cited a number of reasons for their choice. Connie Martin said that she looked for someone with vision, a strong background and the ability to inspire others. With these factors in mind, Scott rose above the rest. Jackie Doherty said

that in many ways, casting this vote required a leap of faith since no one had a crystal ball that could predict the future. Doherty said that geography wasn't a big consideration for her – meaning that being a candidate already employed or living in Lowell would not be a major factor. Instead, she wanted someone who could continue the momentum that currently exists.

Doherty felt that Scott had the vision and skills needed for the job and was particularly impressed with the improvement in academic performance by special education students in Norfolk and the strong support Scott received from Norfolk public officials such as the police and fire chiefs. Jim Leary said that being the best urban school system was not good enough for Lowell. He wanted someone ready to compete with suburban schools.

He said that Scott's demonstrated strength in building employee morale and being a leader in the community helped him decide to vote for her.

While Mayor Bud Caulfield voted for Scott, his remarks focused exclusively on a plea for unity after the vote no matter what the result. He reminded everyone that the best interests of the children and no other considerations should drive the post-selection process.

Committee member John Leahy explained that he would vote "present"

Doherty felt that Scott had the vision and skills needed for the job and was particularly impressed with the improvement in academic performance by special education students in Norfolk



PHOTO: NORFOLK PUBLIC SCHOOLS

because he was unconvinced that the four candidates included the best person for the Lowell superintendent's position, so he advocated re-opening the search process.

The two committee members who voted for Dr. Wendy Jack, Dave Conway and Regina Faticanti, both cited Jack's experience with curriculum and her work with a diverse student body as reasons for their votes.

Both Faticanti and Conway emphasized their adherence to a "promote from within" philosophy and with Dr. Jack, they had an eleven year Lowell employee who had demonstrated competence, loyalty and the ability to do the job.

After Dr. Scott was elected, the committee voted to meet with her in executive session at a mutually convenient time to negotiate her employment contract.

If those negotiations are successful, Scott is expected to start in Lowell on July 1, 2008.

Unfortunately, these negotiations are no mere formality. During a recent special meeting of the school committee, members drafted a preliminary offer sheet for the eventual superintendent-elect. Using the current superintendent's contract as a starting point, the committee chopped away at items such as vacation time and a travel allowance.

While neither of those perks would be a deal breaker, the committee exhibited such an enthusiasm for holding the line on salaries and benefits that many were left asking "why can't they do that when negotiating with the teachers' union?"

With an existing contract in Norfolk that extends until 2011, Scott is not exactly desperate for a job, so these negotiations could be complicated.

Assuming that Dr. Scott does take the Lowell job, she will face a number of challenges. There are the very tough but very predictable issues facing all urban schools – high rates of poverty, English language learners and special education students. But Lowell also poses its own set of challenges.

A succession of hires from outside of Lowell to fill high profile and high paying jobs in both City Hall and the school department created an electoral backlash in the last election.

Our nation's continued economic decline has not bypassed Lowell and only reinforces this "anti-outsider" sentiment. Winning over the many who consider a Lowell zip code the premiere qualification for employment will be a challenge.

A bigger challenge is to win the support of the general public for the schools. Most Lowellians have no direct contact with public education and view school improvement efforts more as the cause of higher taxes than as a precondition to meaningful economic development.

If Dr. Scott is able to inspire the community the same way she inspired a majority of the Lowell school committee, her tenure here will be a success.



Richard P. Howe Jr. is the creator of www.richardhowe.com, a blog that provides commentary on politics in Lowell. He also serves as Register of Deeds of the Northern District of Middlesex County. You can email him at lowelldeeds@comcast.net

Little Sprouts participates in Walk for March of Dimes

LOWELL - Little Sprouts Child Enrichment Center in Lowell will be showing their support for the March of Dimes by participating in their annual March for Babies Walk on April 26, 2008. This year, the march is being held at the LeLacheur Park in Lowell.

This Little Sprouts Center will not only be participating in the walk, but they are also showing their support by collecting donations for the March of Dimes. The center will be collecting donations in three fun ways – 1) Each individual walker will collect donations from family and friends. 2) The center will participate in a "change race" where each classroom will collect change from parents and staff.

The classroom that raises the most change will receive an ice cream social for their parents and children. 3) Families and staff are also able to buy a March of Dime donation card for \$1.00.

Each card will be displayed throughout the halls of the center to help

represent the support that families are giving to such a great cause.

All of the money raised for March for Babies will support lifesaving research, services, education and advocacy that helps babies get a healthy start. "We are looking for family and friends to help us in this quest to save babies lives." stated Katherine Mackland-Rivera, Director of Little Sprouts Lowell. "We are grateful to be able to participate in such a worthy cause." The Lowell Little Sprouts Center has a goal to raise \$1000.00 and is asking for help from the local community. To learn how you can participate in this event in any form please visit www.marchforbabies.org/littlesproutslowell.

About Little Sprouts Inc.: Little Sprouts has been a leader in providing award winning early education since 1982. A group of humanitarians that believe in the power of literacy to change the world; social, emotional, intellectual

and physical literacy for children, youth, teachers and families.

Little Sprouts believes in the commonality in humanity. We embrace that unity is best achieved by celebrating diversity. Little Sprouts has 7 schools in Massachusetts supporting families that reflect 32 cultures speaking 23 languages from all walks of social, economic, religious & ethnic backgrounds. To learn more about how you can join us in making the world a better place, visit us at www.littlesprouts.com

About March of Dimes: The March of Dimes champions the needs of moms and babies in our community and across the nation. The March of Dimes mission is to improve the health of babies by preventing birth defects, premature birth, and infant mortality. For more information please visit <http://www.marchforbabies.org>

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TOM DUGGAN'S NOTEBOOK

David "Where-is-he" Torissi returns

Like the groundhog each February, State Representative David "Where-is-he" Torissi poked his head out of his hole right on schedule. But, unlike the groundhog, David Where-is-he only comes out of his hole every *two* years ... at election time. In the last three months Torissi has come out of hiding to stand next to Lawrence Mayor Mike Sullivan at two press conferences and with Willie Lantigua at another, always making sure to stand as close to the master of ceremonies as possible so that when the press takes pictures of someone important he will strategically be positioned to get in the picture. So, as I do every election year, let me ask the voters of Lawrence; when was the last time you saw David "Where-is-he" Torissi in the City of Lawrence when it didn't include a press conference or a photo op? When was the last time you saw Where-is-he at a city council meeting or a neighborhood meeting between elections? And, when was the last time Representative Where-is-he actually did something for the City of Lawrence?

Whisker Walk 2008

Whisker Walk is a fundraiser that benefits local New England animal shelters and rescue groups. This year Whisker Walk will be held on Sunday June, 8th at the Lancaster Fairground. Everyone is welcome to join this FREE event. If you have a dog, bring it! One Tail at a Time Rescue from Haverhill will have a booth and will have many people walking on its behalf. If you would like to join our team or make a donation, please email The Valley Patriot's Puppy Girl, Kate Whitney at KAHW313@aol.com. Much needed items such as newspapers, towels, sheets, collars, leashes, and paper towels can be donated at our booth. Gates open at 9 AM and the walk starts at noon. Hope to see you there! For more information go to www.WhiskerWalk.org

Together We Can ... And, by the way, Get Out!

Governor Deval Patrick sent out a letter to the voters of Lawrence last month endorsing State Representative Willie



Lantigua in his bid for reelection. He then appeared at a Lantigua fundraiser at Sal's Riverwalk where he reportedly endorsed Lantigua. Two days later, Patrick attended a fund raiser for my good friend Marcos Devers at Caesars on Essex Street. Devers is challenging Lantigua in the Democrat primary for State Rep. in the fall. I entered the room of the Devers event (as a Devers supporter, not as a member of the press) and started to make my way towards the front of the room. Patrick's "handlers" immediately demanded that the I leave, whining that it was the Governor's "policy" to exclude the press from political fund raisers. Can you imagine? The publicly elected governor supports a candidate for public office at a public event but doesn't think the press should be able to attend even if they have a ticket and an invitation from the candidate.

"We don't want pictures of the Governor in any local newspapers from this event," one of his aides said. And it's no wonder! Apparently Deval Patrick has just been caught two-timing Representative Willie Lantigua and former Mayor Marcos Devers by appearing at both campaign events and misleading the supporters from both campaigns as well as the voters of Lawrence. So which is it Governor? Who do you really support, Marcos Devers or Willie Lantigua for State Representative in Lawrence?

April is Autism Awareness Month

There are many families in the Merrimack Valley affected by some form of autism. You can help by participating in the "Walk Now For Autism" in Greater Boston on October 19, 2008. For more information please call 978-688-6655 or email 2boyzz@comcast.net

Georgetown Water Rates to Double?

Three weeks ago the Georgetown Water Commission met and set new rates that are said to DOUBLE water bills for Georgetown residents, effective July 1, 2008. Last week, they announced the

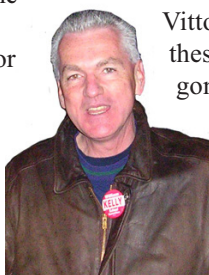
rates to the Georgetown Finance Advisory Committee. No rates were handed to the public, nor visible on the town's cable TV, but members noted that the rates would DOUBLE for town residents. An increase of \$160 per year on the base rate was mentioned (billable at \$40 per quarter to residents). Water Superintendent Glenn Smith, joined by Water Commissioner Reidar W. Bomengen, told the Georgetown Finance Committee of these increased rates as part of their general discussions. Only one finance member, Jack L'Hommedieu questioned the increase, which comes on the heels of an announced 4-to-5% raise for most water department employees. With more than half the water department budget going to raises, Mr. L'Hommedieu asked if any consideration for reductions on the expense side were explored. He was visibly less than happy with the lack of response he received. So now, pony up Georgetown residents, your water bills are about to go up dramatically.

Tower Hill Baseball - Lawrence

Sign up now to play baseball or softball on Tower Hill. Opening day is Saturday May 3rd at Gagnon Field. For registration information, or if you are interested in helping with the 2008 season or the opening day cookout, please email the league at towerhilllittleleague@comcast.net or call the League President, Mike Curley at 978-681-7576. Last day to signup is April 14th.

Jimmy V and Nepotism

I have always liked and admired Lawrence School Committeeman Jim Vittorioso from Prospect Hill, but these days Jimmy seems to have gone a little overboard. Vittorioso is on what he calls a "campaign to expose nepotism" in the Lawrence Public Schools. Vittorioso rattled off names of several school department employees who have family members working in the school system claiming it is "nepotism," but none of the people he publicly humiliated are in violation of the nepotism laws. Nepotism is giving favoritism in hiring and promotions to immediate family members. Yet none of the people being



"exposed" by Jimmy V were responsible for hiring or giving promotions to their relatives. So what's going on here? Is it that he just doesn't want more than one person from any family to be working in the Lawrence Public Schools at one time? I'm not sure what Jimmy V. is hoping to accomplish here, but I see nothing wrong with five members of the same family serving as firefighters, police officers or public school employees as long as they are not being hired BY family members who give them preference over more qualified individuals. And, if my friend Jimmy V. ever does stumble across evidence that someone in the Lawrence Public School hired their own family members, I would hope he would be passing that evidence along to the Valley Patriot instead of the Alabama-Eagle or spouting off about it at a public meeting. Until such evidence presents itself, however, I think Jimmy V. should start looking at the big picture and stop publicly harassing school employees just because of who they are related to.



Welcome to New Valley Patriot Columnist Bill Kelly (Stop Laughing)

It's not as if I have been easy on (now) former North Andover School Committeeman Bill Kelly in the last few years. His complacency during the Al Perry-Harry Harutunian regime was shameful. His silence on important public issues was deafening at times and there's still that little issue of taking a pay check after promising not to (though I understand I am now being blamed for that one). In short, I've called him to task for numerous issues, so it was quite the surprise (pleasantly, I must admit) when I ran into Bill Kelly on Election Day and he expressed an interest in writing for the Valley Patriot as a regular contributor. I do formally accept Mr. Kelly's offer to write for the Valley Patriot. We are interested to hear what he may have to say about the goings on of the North Andover School Committee and the way things really are in our school system from his perspective. If I could make a recommendation to Mr. Kelley for his first column (it's due March 29th, Bill) I think he should do a post mortem on the major issues he dealt with while serving on the committee and answer some long

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Lawrence/Boston – Sal Lupoli, President/CEO of Sal's Pizza Retail and Wholesale Divisions, Salvatore's Restaurants and Riverwalk Properties is proud to announce that for a limited time all Sal's Pizza stores in New England, starting April 1st 2008 will drop the price of its signature 19" 3lb cheese pizza from \$10.99 back to \$9.99.

"In a time of recession, rising gas prices, rising costs of groceries, and national pizza chains raising their prices, we are choosing to drop our price to help ease the burden and to help families who are trying to make ends meet," said Sal Lupoli.

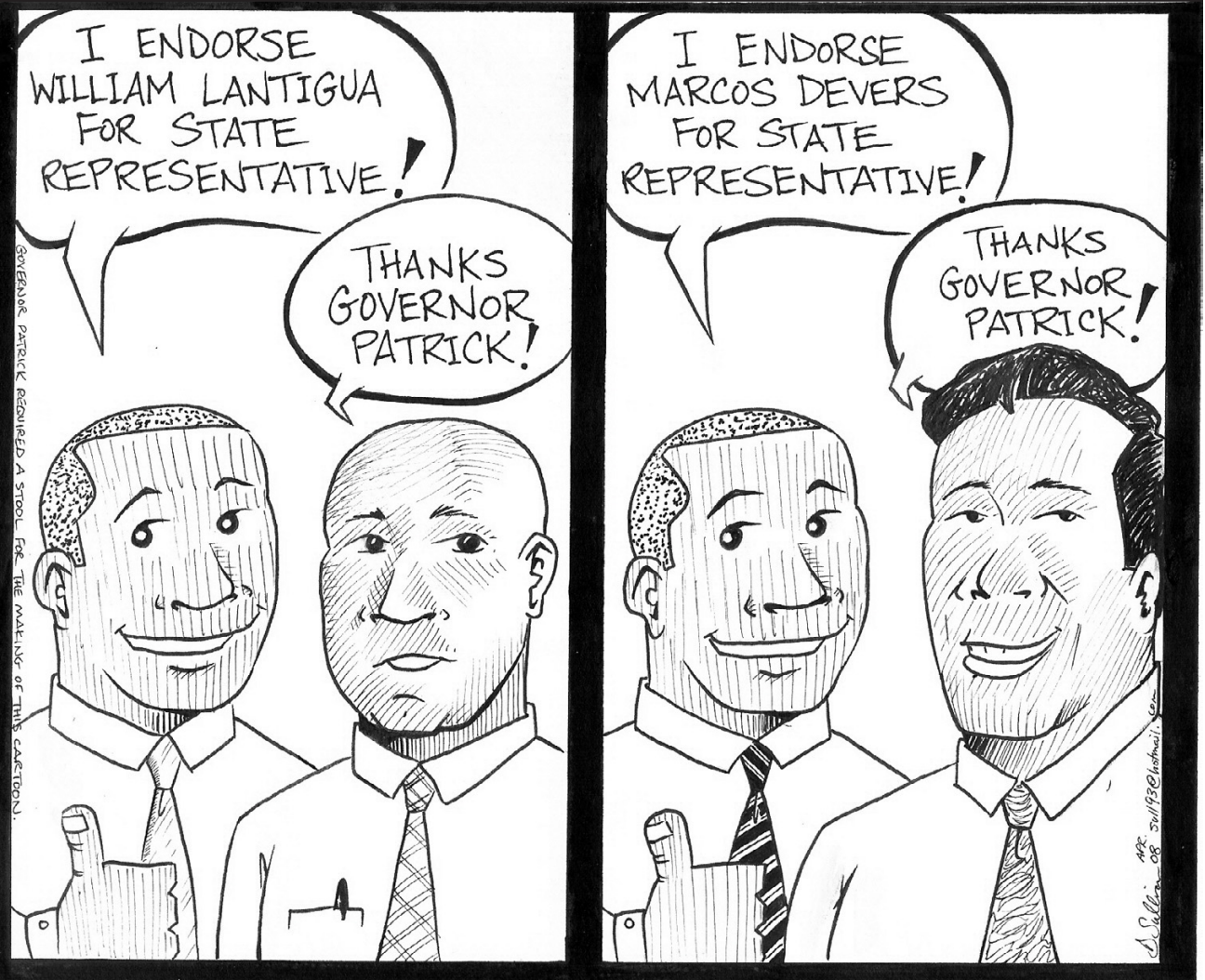
Sal's Pizza is a family oriented company comprised of dedicated community driven people, who strive to continuously help its customers and feed families.

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Sal's Pizza has corporate-owned properties in New Hampshire and Massachusetts. The business with over 35 locations has become a large retail franchise and wholesale operation serving all of New England with additional locations in California, Florida and opening soon in Virginia.

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Governor Patrick Tells Lantigua and Devers: *TOGETHER WE CAN!*



standing questions people still have in the community.

Lawrence Needs a Professional City Manager

You have to hand it to Mark Andrews, Finance Director for the City of Lawrence. He hasn't been on the job for a year and he has already identified one of the biggest problems in fixing Lawrence's financial crisis: politics. He has also come up with a solution ... a professional city manager. And, it seems that Mr. Andrews has found the perfect candidate to hold that position ... himself! This is an idea that should be taken very seriously by the Lawrence City Council and by the voters of Lawrence. No, I don't mean Andrews becoming our city manager (so to speak), but the idea of having one person who can run the day to day

operations of the city while the mayor serves as the city's CEO. As for Mark Andrews throwing Mayor Sullivan under the bus (he's NOT a team player!) by running to the Eagle Tribune and setting up the mayor to be the fall guy and the bumbling idiot. If he plans it just right, Andrews will be the city manager with the Trib's blessing. Patrick Blanchette (The Trib's candidate for mayor in '09) will be an impotent mayor who kisses babies and cuts ribbons, and the city council will have even less power over city expenditures than they do now. Who knew we had such a political genius in Finance Director Mark



Andrews? With this kind of talent and political insight, maybe Andrews IS the right guy for the job, or maybe he should be the next mayor. Just don't walk too close to any buses if he does.

St. Pats Luncheon

Like watching a train wreck that you can do nothing about, so went the annual Lawrence St. Patrick's Day Luncheon last month. And what a disappointment it was. It was bad ... really bad. The jokes were stale, the politicians were boring, and the audience in attendance was just plain rude. In contrast to the Methuen luncheon (run by Mayor Bill Manzi), where people actually show a little

NOTEBOOK, page 28



PHOTO: COURTESY

Fire Chiefs lobby for regulation of chemical processing in Massachusetts

DANVERS — The Fire Chiefs' Association of Massachusetts issued a Call To Action to the state legislature and Governor Patrick to pass a bill that would create a system to regulate chemical processing in Massachusetts. Speaking at the podium is Concord Fire Chief Ken Willette, President of the Fire Chiefs' Association of Massachusetts. Willette was joined by more than 30 fire chiefs across the state to urge passage of the bill. There is no systematic oversight of companies which mix chemicals in Massachusetts, and the bill would address that. The Fire Chiefs believe strong regulations on chemical processing could have helped prevent the devastating explosion in Danvers in November, 2006, and a similar explosion in Leominster the year before

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PHOTOS: TOM DUGGAN

Love Boat Captain Gavin McLeod (center) with North Andover resident Joey LaTorre and his mom Marie. Above right; Eric Heartquist with Tom Saab and Charles Dalrling.

Love Boat’s Gavin McLeod greets moviegoers at Christian Film Festival

Nearly 10,000 people attended the 16th annual Christian Film Festival last month at the Showcase Cinemas in Lawrence and organizer Tom Saab says it has been one of the most successful events they’ve ever had.

“Donations are still coming in,” Saab said. “The phenomenal response we’ve

received is in no small part due to the wonderful volunteers from around the Valley who came together and helped make this event such a huge success.” Television and movie actor Gavin McLeod was on hand to greet moviegoers throughout most of the weekend signing autographs and posing for pictures with fans young and old alike.

McLeod, most famous for his role as Captain Stubing of “The Love Boat” and Murray in “The Mary Tyler Moore Show” also played a major part in several of the Christian films being shown last month, including Veggie Tales, The Adventures of Jonathan Sperry and Time Changer. According to Tom Saab of Saab Real Estate in Methuen, planning has

already begun for next year’s event and donations are still being accepted to help defray the cost of this year’s festival

Anyone wishing to make a donation to the Christian Film Festival may send a check to Merrimack Valley Christian Film Festival, 25 Jackson St., Methuen, 01844

Methuen East 5th Grade Boys Division Champions in Merrimack Valley Youth Basketball League



First Row: Mike Crespo, Jamaal Rene, Billy Hannenfant, Curtis Foden, Danny Aziz and Freddie Santiago Back Row: John Farnkoff, Kyle Whittaker, Tim Galloway-Burke, Connor Bradley and Shane Borrelli. Coaches: Asssistant, Frank Cann (left), Head Coach, Jason Beers (right)



Steve Bucu of Mc Aloons Liquor Store in North Andover toasted the success of their wine tasting event last month.

Youth of the Year and ACE Award hosted by the Exchange Club of Haverhill

(l-r) Eric LaFleur, Exchange Club President, Ellen Archambault (Haverhill), Runner Up for ACE Award, Kerri Legros (Methuen), ACE Award Winner, Christopher Powers (Haverhill), Youth of the Year Winner, Nancy Robbins (Haverhill) Runner Up for Youth of the Year, Bob Graham and Glenn Strauss, Co-Chairs of the Youth of the Year/ACE Award program.



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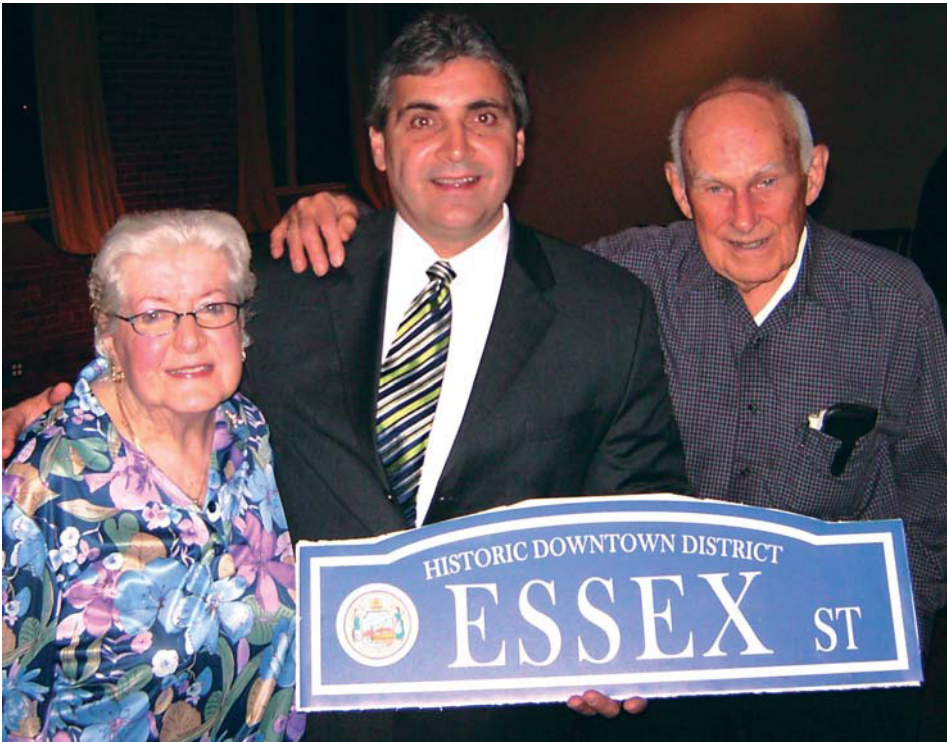


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PHOTOS: TOM DUGGAN

Lawrence Mayor Michael Sullivan unveiled the new blue and white Essex Street signs designed by Lawrence High School Students. Sullivan is seen here with Ruth Moore and friend.



Lawrence's Finance Director Mark Andrews poses with contestants from the Jennifer Ortiz Foundation's Prom Expo fundraiser at the Elks Club in Lawrence. The Jennifer Ortiz Foundation gave away scholarships to local students attending college next year.

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PHOTO: PAULA PORTEN

Newly elected member of the North Andover Board of Selectmen, Tracy Watson thanks her friend and campaign supporter Tara Melillo with a hug at her home on election night after learning the results.

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VALLEY PATRIOT OF THE MONTH; Breshnahan: from page 1

Billboard chart. But to spunky "Irish" as she was known, her love of country and dedication to service led her to enlist in the United States Army.

Born in Methuen, MA, raised in neighboring Lawrence in a family of 12 children, four brothers and seven sisters, Irish said she had a simple choice based on her family's makeup: "politics or military" to follow the steps of those family members who came before her.

"The U.S. Army had a special program for Juniors, and three woman from Trinity joined that year," Irish explained. "The military was recruiting and I became a Corporal when I was 20. One day before graduation, my enlistment contract was finalized."

Irish was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in the U.S. Army, and began Boot-camp training at Ft. McClellan in Alabama. Fort McClellan was home of the Women's Army Corps School, and the U.S. Army's Chemical Center and School. In addition to the Chemical School, Fort McClellan hosted the U.S. Army's Combat Developments Command, Chemical Biological-Radiological Agency. It was here, she claims, that her life took an unexpected and unwarranted turn.

Unfortunately for Irish, she says, "training exercises involved exposure to various gases which we were told were 'not in a quantity to inflict permanent harm.' We thought it was tear gas," she said.

Following an extreme skin reaction after exposure, Irish says she began a downward spiral of medical problems. She was later transferred to Camp Richie in Maryland and from there received her diagnosis at Walter Reed Medical Hospital in D.C. Having shrunk from 125 pounds to just 96 pounds, she began a long road back to stability.

After her apparent recovery, she applied and was accepted as an operations officer, and then applied and was assigned to a battalion in southern Germany in the signal corps. Women were not allowed in combat in leadership positions at the time.

It was during her trip to Germany that she was notified of the cessation of action in Vietnam.

She continued to serve, earned medals of commendation and was promoted to Captain. Her service also included the



PHOTO: LONNIE BRENNAN

Capt. Breshnahan's crusade has led to contacts of similar cases throughout the U.S.

National Defense Service Medal. She was discharged in 1977. Later, under the Vietnam Readjustment Act, she was hired at the IRS in Andover where she worked until 2005. In 2005, complications of her earlier chemical exposure led to a downward spiral of medical problems and she was terminated. "I needed that job, a reason to get out of bed, and a steady routine. I need the structure," she explained.

Today, at age 57, looking back at her time in the military, she proudly displays her medals and speaks with high regard for her fellow veterans. But she remains frustrated and saddened at not being able to help others as much as she would like to help them: to spread the word and let her fellow veterans know that they are not alone.

"I was diagnosed with stateside Agent Orange (exposure) at Walter Reed (hospital) in 1972. And, so I knew it was irreversible, incurable, progressive," she related. "I've suffered brain damage, degenerative bones... my nervous system. I'm told to avoid stress. The only treatment I have is for pain. They can't stop any of it."

"I was able to do well. But the dioxins in my body, they don't go away, and they slowly eat away at you. I was young. I'm still young, but I'm dying. Little by little, for 37 years I've been dying," she said.

Now, Capt. Breshnahan sits beside a map of the United States scattered with pins to show the locations of fellow veterans who she has been in contact with

who, she said, have experienced state-side Agent Orange exposure.

"It's something I have been outspoken about" said the now vocal activist and advocate for medical support for her fellow veterans.

"They would throw canisters, they would spray from above. They would spray. They would simulate war exposure," she said. "How many thousands of us are there?" she asked.

"On one of the exercises, they had mustard gas," she explained. "When I came out of the exercise, I blistered up. Around my mouth, around my neck. I was treated at the hospital."

Since her downward spiral accelerated a few years ago, Capt. Breshnahan says that she has made it "my crusade to try to contact every single person I knew in the military to inform them that if they were sick too, to see my example," she said.

She said she has gone to Washington, D.C. three times to provide testimony regarding state-side chemical exposure.

Capt. Breshnahan is a member of the Vietnam Veterans of America, the Disabled Veterans of America, and the American Legion amongst other veteran's organizations.

Initially denied VA medical benefits because her service records did not show service in Vietnam, she appealed and won. She relates cases where others have been denied entitlements, medical care,

and compensation and are still struggling to get the care they need.

Time Is Running Out

"We don't have time. We are running out of time," She said. "There is no cure, no treatment. It just keeps coming. We are dying...we don't know how many of us there are. "Agent Orange doesn't care where you were exposed. It's an equal opportunity poison. You could be here or in Vietnam or anywhere," she said.

"People think the baby boomers are going to drain Social Security. We're not, because we'll be lucky to make it to age 60 or 62. You try to get the word out," she explained. "Everybody has to fight on their own. I have so much documentation through my medical records. What I tell the people is to use my case."

"Here's my heart break. How old do I look?" she queried. "It's caught up with me and it's killing me...I gave me life to my country," she said.

Is there such a thing as a typical Vietnam-era soldier? Capt. Breshnahan thinks that every soldier, no matter where or how they served, served their country and she is proud of them. We at the Valley Patriot are equally as proud of our veteran heroes and think our country should do everything possible to help them deal with the aftermath of their service.

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CARING FOR OUR VETERANS

Little known education program

John Lenotte

VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

Last month I wrote about scholarships and that many students do not apply because they are now aware of them. This month I am going into detail on one of the American Legion programs that many are not aware of and should be.

American Legion Boys State is among the most respected and selective educational programs of government instruction for high school students. It is a participatory program where each participant becomes a part of the operation of his local, county and state government.

Boys State has been a program of The American Legion since 1935 when it organized to counter the Fascist inspired Young Pioneer Camps. The program was the idea of two Illinois Legionnaires, Hayes Kennedy and Harold Card, who organized the first Boys State at the Illinois State Fairgrounds in Springfield.

The American Legion Auxiliary sponsors a similar program for young ladies called Girls State.

At American Legion Boys State, participants are exposed to the rights and privileges, the duties and the responsibilities of a franchised citizen. The training is objective and practical with city, county and state governments operated by the students elected to the various offices. Activities include legislative sessions, court proceedings, law enforcement presentations, assemblies, bands, chorus and recreational programs.

High school juniors are selected by local American Legion posts to attend the program. In most cases, expenses associated with attending this program are paid by a sponsoring American Legion post, a local business or another community-based organization.

American Legion Boys State is currently conducted in 49 Departments of The American Legion. Hawaii does not conduct a program. As separate corporations, Boys States vary in content and method of procedure, but each and every Boys State adheres to the basic concept of the program - that of teaching government from the township to the state level.

Boys State Selection

The American Legion has established certain qualifications for prospective Boys State citizens. Following are the recommended guidelines that are employed by most American Legion Boys State programs.

- Only males who have successfully completed their junior year of high school and have at least one more semester of high school remaining are considered eligible to participate.

- Any boy who has previously attended an American Legion Boys State is not eligible to attend a second session.

- Only boys with outstanding qualities of leadership, character, scholarship, loyalty and service to their schools and community should be considered.

In the actual selection of boys as citizens of Boys State, merit and ability alone are the basis for selection.

Boys Nation

Two outstanding representatives from each of 49 Boys States are called upon to represent their state at American Legion Boys Nation in Washington, DC. It is here that the young leaders, who had excelled at their respective Boys States, are introduced to the structure and function of the federal government.

At American Legion Boys Nation, each delegate represents his Boys State as a senator. These youthful lawmakers caucus at the beginning of the session,

organize into committees and conduct hearings on bills submitted by delegates to the program.

The Boys Nation Senators are instructed on the proper method of handling bills according to the rules of the United States Senate. Actual participation in the political process is highlighted throughout the week to include the organization of party conventions and the nomination and election of a Boys Nation President and Vice President.

The week of government training in the Nation's Capitol combines lectures and forums with visitations to federal agencies, institutions, memorials and historical spots in and around Washington. During a visit to Capitol Hill, Boys Nation Senators meet with elected officials from their home states.

Boys Nation visits several historic and governmental sites in and around the Washington, DC area. Included are field trips to Arlington National Cemetery, the monuments and memorials on the National Mall, the U.S. Supreme Court, the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Capitol and the White House.

Since its beginning in 1946, Boys Nation has seen many of its graduates elected to public offices which include the Presidency of the United States, the United States Congress, as state governors and as state legislators. Many others became inspired to actively work for the campaigns of individuals seeking public office.

Famous alumni of the Boys and Girls State programs include Bill Clinton, George Pataki, Mike Huckabee, Tom Brokaw, Jane Pauley, Michelle D. Johnson (First Female Wing Commander, United States Air Force Academy), Michael Jordan, Michael Dukakis and Neil Armstrong.. Many United States Senators (including Harry Reid, Bob Menendez, and Lamar Alexander),

Governors, and state-level politicians (state senators, state assemblymen, et cetera) are Boys' or Girls' State alumni.

Participants of Boys State and Girls State are eligible to apply for a scholarship. Samsung, a worldwide leader in electronics, endowed a scholarship fund of five million dollars to be administered by The American Legion. The endowment was made to show appreciation to U.S. veterans who came to the aid of Korea during its struggle against communist forces during the Korean War.

“The Samsung American Legion Scholarship Program” established a series of scholarships derived from interest and other income from the \$5,000,000 principal amount. In 2007, ten \$20,000 scholarships and 88 \$1,000 scholarships were awarded. More information is available at www.legion.org/programs/resources/scholarships.

I hope that some of the parents who read this will seriously consider sending the children to either Boys State or Girls State. Boys State is held at Stonehill College in North Easton from June 14 – 20. Girls State is held at Westfield State College, June 15 – 20.

Also noteworthy is that attendance at these programs is a question on the application for schools like the US Military Academy at West Point. For the West Point Class of 2011, 202 of the 1,305 students had attended either Boys or Girls State.

Keep this in mind for the youth in your family. And please, keep all our troops in your thoughts and prayers.



John Lenotte is the American Legion, Commander, Wilbur M. Comeau Post 4 Haverhill and Vice Commander, Dept. of Massachusetts. You can Email him at JohnLDistrict8@verizon.net

Local MBA lawyers to offer free legal advice exclusively to veterans

BOSTON - The Massachusetts Bar Association is proud to announce a supplement to its monthly Dial-A-Lawyer programs: a session dedicated solely to veterans' legal questions.

The free program will run on Wednesday, April 9 from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m.

“The MBA is proud to add this new service to its wide array of programming already offered to the public across the state,” Executive Director Marilyn J. Wellington said. “Veterans’ legal needs are extensive and diverse, and we are lucky to have a talented group of committed attorneys to provide complimentary legal advice to veterans across the commonwealth.”

The Veterans Dial-A-Lawyer is provided at no charge as a public service

of the MBA. Attorneys participating in the program attended a free training last fall sponsored by the MBA and U.S. Trust, Bank of America Private Wealth Management. Ronald B. Abrams and Louis J. George, both of the National Veterans Legal Services Program in Washington, D.C., led the training.

Nearly half a million veterans live in Massachusetts, many of whom have pressing legal questions concerning benefits, divorce, child support, employment and landlord/tenant issues.

“Many men and women who return home from serving our country in the U.S. military have complex or unique legal issues that require professional assistance.

These issues include access to their earned benefits, employment questions,

personal financial problems and other matters. For many veterans, the costs associated with hiring a lawyer to answer their questions are not feasible,” said Massachusetts Department of Veterans’ Services Secretary Thomas Kelley.

“The Dial-A-Lawyer program from the MBA offers free legal advice and is a valuable resource for veterans of all ages and conflicts. On behalf of the commonwealth, I applaud the Massachusetts legal community for their commitment to our veterans and nation by offering this resource,” Kelley said.

The Dial-A-Lawyer phone number is 617-338-0610. If a caller gets a busy signal, they are asked to hang up and try again. Normal telephone charges will apply. (EDITORS NOTE: this number is

only active from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. on April 9.)

Incorporated in 1911, the Massachusetts Bar Association is a non-profit organization that serves the legal profession and the public by promoting the administration of justice, legal education, professional excellence and respect for the law. The MBA represents a diverse group of attorneys, judges and legal professionals across the commonwealth.

To send an email to the MBA pressreleases@massbar.org or write to the Communications Department, Massachusetts Bar Association, 20 West St.Boston, MA 02111-1204.

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Comparison of Policies Based on Liberal and Conservative Principles

Issue	Liberal/Socialist Approach	Conservative Approach
Tax policy	Always maximize the amount taken and, in the process, exercise as much control as possible over the lives of citizens.	Reduce takings to the minimum possible level to fund the legitimate functions of government and, in the process, minimize the impact on the liberties of citizens.
Health care	Government should control every aspect of health care. Government determines services, how delivered, who provides them, how long patients must wait, who pays, and then rations resources when the inevitable demands exceed supply.	Free market solutions sought such as healthcare savings accounts owned and controlled by individuals. People decide, with doctors they choose, what services to consume. Markets respond to demand for services based on individuals trading off costs and benefits.
Retirement/Social Security	Forced participation in the Social Security Ponzi scheme. Cater to senior voters by increasing benefits faster than inflation and saddle non-voting younger generations with an unaffordable tax burden and reduced standard of living.	Transition over time to private, pre-tax retirement savings accounts that are owned and controlled by individuals and which can be passed on to their heirs.
Education	Minimize choice while catering to union demands. Protect and expand the public education monopoly and micro-manage education through state & federal interference from pre-K to college.	Maximize choice and competition by encouraging charter schools and education vouchers. Minimize federal interference in education by abolishing DOE.
Military recruitment	Compulsory national service including re-instituting the military draft	Continue with the highly successful volunteer army and protect individual liberty by denying the state the power to demand forced labor of its citizens.
Prescription drug approval/FDA	Expand the power of the FDA to impose expensive and time-consuming testing requirements to prove drug efficacy that delay the introduction of life-saving drugs, costing needless deaths and dramatically raising costs.	Reduce the role of the FDA to determining drug safety with denial of acceptance only based on proven harm. Leave efficacy determination to free market mechanisms, resulting in a net saving of lives due to faster introduction of drugs and reduced costs.
Trade policy	Erect trade barriers to satisfy special interests (unions or businesses), thereby undermining the property rights of owners to sell to a mutually willing buyer.	Encourage free markets, eliminate tariffs, and only restrict trade when legitimate national security demands it. Permit willing buyers/sellers to trade free of restrictions.
Labor laws	Encourage compulsory unionism and endless regulations which specify hours, wages, vacations, leave, health benefits, ...	Honor the right of individuals to negotiate the terms of employment.
Energy Policy	Have government planners manage and control energy investments – including exploration, R&D, and usage.	Have the market determine energy investments and make it clear that resulting profits and losses will be neither confiscated nor reimbursed by the government.
Abortion	Mandate a federal right to abortion.	Return the issue of abortion to the states where it belongs under our Constitution.
Welfare	The more bureaucratic welfare programs, the better.	Respect property rights and rely on voluntary giving.
Smoking & helmet laws	Make the consequences of bad decisions the responsibility of government and then take away our freedoms to make those decisions.	Insist that individuals bear the responsibility for their decisions and then recognize their right to decide for themselves.

ORMSBY:
from page 3

allow individuals to interact with each other based on voluntary and mutual consent to the maximum extent possible and not force us to participate through compulsion. In the economic sphere, this means free market solutions should be emphasized whenever possible.

This is the polar opposite of modern Liberal dogma that emphasizes a collective determination of what is best for everyone (as determined by the anointed Liberal elite) and then enacting laws to impose that solution by force. For Liberals, liberty is an after-thought or, more likely, a major impediment to their agenda.

Different Conservatives, addressing these issues and sincerely trying to follow the principles suggested here, may come up with different proposed solutions. This is merely a sign that the problems are challenging, not that there is necessarily any ill-intent. Analysis and debate should follow and, hopefully, one or several specific solutions will emerge that are worthy of widespread Conservative support.


The nearby table provides a comparison, at a very general level, of the differences in approach to major policy issues. The Conservative positions outlined are not meant to be ideologically pure, but they will set us on a course that increases individual freedom. On a purely practical level, they will also ensure a rapidly improving standard of living that is in stark contrast to the economic failure that our Liberal/Socialist course has in store for us.

The comparison couldn't be starker. The ideological battle for the last 225 years - maybe 10,000 years - has been between individual liberty and government coercion. Once coercion gains its final grip, it will take centuries to be loosened. We have become accustomed to a significant degree of personal liberty and we treat it as a cheap birthright. But infringements of that liberty are now commonplace and most of us take it as a legitimate role of government to impose those infringements for the "common good."

We are near a tipping point. Our society is on the verge of falling over an abyss. The fall will be difficult to survive and the abyss nearly impossible to climb out of.

Most of the rest of the world is wandering about at the bottom of this abyss and looking up – clueless as to how we reached the top and hating us for our good fortune. Many in the U.S. are equally clueless of how we got to the top. One thing is certain: it wasn't merely good fortune that got us here. Our forefathers treasured individual liberty and understood how important the concepts of liberty, free markets and limited government were.

We are about to squander these gifts due to ignorance and neglect. This would be the most sinful act in history. Only if Conservatives grasp these core principles and band together to defeat the champions of collectivism will our free society survive.



Dr. Ormsby is a member of the North Andover School Committee. He is a graduate of Cornell and has a doctorate from MIT. You can contact Dr. Ormsby via email: ccormsby@comcast.net

Methuen Man Navy Bound



PHOTOS: TOM DUGGAN

Chad Pusateri of Methuen was sworn into the United States Navy last week at the Veteran’s Memorial Stadium in Lawrence. Pusateri comes from a family of Navy men and said he decided to hold his swearing in ceremony at the Stadium after having a conversation with Lawrence Mayor Michael Sullivan. “I was weighing in at Latitude’s Biggest Loser contest in Methuen when Mayor Sullivan suggested I hold my swearing in ceremony here at the stadium.” Pusateri is pictured above with his parents Laura and Jeff Janco.

Cyber Bullying: From Page 1

“The reality is that parents need to be just as involved, if not more so, as they are with any other activities that their children are involved with; just as they would be for after school activities, who their children are making friends with or playing with, etcetera” said North Andover police officer Dan Cronin who investigates cyber bullying and computer crimes.

“Parents should take an active roll in learning the online identities of their children’s friends and what identities their children are using. If a child is being bullied on the internet, it is no different than if it is happening in the school yard. Any parents that are intimidated by computers or the internet should seek educational instruction or even have their children teach them what the child knows about the computer and Internet,” he said.

“A child should not have internet access when they are alone. When they do, it should be in a location in the home where their activity can be observed or monitored. There is an abundance of information for parents at <http://www.missingkids.com> that cover a wide range of safety topics,” he concluded.

North Andover School Committee member Charles Ormsby said that he had not been informed of these threats against students and teachers at the Middle School, and therefore he would not comment on the specific charges.

However, when asked his opinion of the appropriate response to such threats and cyber-bullying, he responded, “I don’t think threatening to kill people should be characterized as bullying. Doing so downplays

Northern Essex Community College Looks for Outstanding Alum

The NECC Alumni Association is currently accepting nominations for its annual outstanding alumni award. Each year it recognizes the accomplishments of a graduate of the college who has achieved success in his/her career, is active in the community, and/or has given something back to our college as a volunteer and/or financial donor. If you define a friend, family member, or business acquaintance as "Outstanding" for these or other reasons, please nominate him/her for this award.

Recent past recipients include: Philip Starks, Ph.D., '91, a Tufts University biology professor; Thang Nguyen, '98 and '00, a Vietnam refugee who went on to earn a master’s in engineering; Milton Taylor, '99 and '01, a retired Lucent employee, and Rosemary Hernandez, '98, a Hispanic single mother who has been recognized nationally as a role model for women who have overcome adversity and achieved economic independence.

The Outstanding Alumni Award will be presented at NECC's Forty-Sixth Annual Commencement Exercises on May 17, 2008

The nomination form is available for download at www.necc.mass.edu/alumni or by calling the Alumni Office at 978-556-3621.

Completed forms must be returned by April 11, 2008 to: Outstanding Alumni Awards Committee, c/o Libby Jensen, Northern Essex Community College, 100 Elliott Street, Haverhill, MA 01830. Nominations will be reviewed by the NECC Alumni Advisory Board Awards Committee with President David Hartleb approving their recommendation.

Nomination materials will be held by the Alumni Association for consideration for two years. If not selected during that period, the nomination form will be discarded unless resubmitted. Updated information for the nominated individual is welcome.

The recipient will have the opportunity to work with faculty, staff and students of NECC to share their expertise with the college community. Activities may include, but are not limited to, speaking to a class, lunch with college staff and students, serving on an advisory committee or the Alumni Advisory Board or serving as a mentor.

For additional information contact Libby Jensen, director of alumni and donor relations, at 978-556-3621 or ljensen@necc.mass.edu

“... and one day im gonna kill somebody so bad there mother will know who it was the second they see there sons skin stapled to a tree and there bones burned in a pit fire I made.”

Written in profile of North Andover Middle School Student

the serious nature of such threats. Threatening someone’s life is extremely serious and we should treat it as such. If a student is guilty of making such threats, both the police and the School Department should impose very tough sanctions so that other students get a clear and unambiguous message: Such behavior will not be tolerated and will be severely punished.”

According to sources at the North Andover Middle School the students being investigated are still attending classes every day. It is not known if the teacher has been notified of the threat and if any steps have been taken to protect the teacher, his family or the threatened student.

Help for Parents

According to the website onlineteendangers.com, author David Kent Jones has created a handbook that parents can download for free, which explains the five greatest internet dangers teenagers face and how to avoid them. The book also provides a checklist for parents to use on internet safety and ways to discuss internet safety with their teens. Simple things, like keeping the computer in a public area and not allowing your teen to use a webcam, can help keep them safe.

One of the biggest dangers discussed by Jones is online harassment. Jones discusses how some teens have a different personality when on-line. He discusses how a mild mannered teen takes on a bullying personality while chatting on-line and the dangers such a bully poses.

According to Officer.com, cyber bullying laws were not in effect in Missouri when 13 year old Megan Meier went to myspace.com and developed a relationship with someone named “Josh”. After forming this relationship on line, “Josh” then turned on Megan and began tormenting and insulting Megan, calling her derogatory names, and suggesting that the world would be a better place without her. Megan, who had emotional issues and suffered from depression, subsequently committed suicide.

It turned out that “Josh” was not really a teenage boy, but rather, was a local mother who was upset with Megan because she was no longer friends with her daughter. The woman could not be prosecuted because there were no laws regarding cyber stalking or cyber bullying. After this tragic incident, the local Missouri Alderman passed cyber harassment misdemeanor laws. Many other states have passed their own cyber harassment and bullying laws, including Massachusetts. MGL Chapter 156, Section 43 is Massachusetts’ criminal harassment statute, which includes cyber activity.

According to the Essex County District Attorney’s Office, kids can be prosecuted for criminal harassment or even stalking based on these online interactions. Just three incidents targeting an individual and causing that person distress constitutes illegal behavior. If those interactions include attacks on a person’s religious or ethnic background or sexuality, then it can constitute a civil-liberties violation, and a felony offense according to wickedlocal.com

Here in Massachusetts, there is also the Massachusetts Crimes Against Children Taskforce (ICAC). As stated on the Essex County D.A. website, the Massachusetts State Police is the lead agency for the taskforce in Massachusetts. The Massachusetts ICAC Task Force provides training to law enforcement, investigative support, and internet safety awareness presentations to schools, parents and interested public and private organizations.

The Massachusetts ICAC Task Force also acts as the contact for the National Center for Missing and exploited Children Cybertip line and provides computer forensic capabilities directed towards crimes against children. More information about ICAC can be found on the Essex County D.A.’s website.

There are many other websites available to help parents learn about cyber-bullying and cyber-harassment, including wiredsafety.org, stopcyberbullying.org, and netsmartz.org where parents can report cyber-stalking, harassment or bullying.

North Andover parents can contact Officer Tracy Castiglione, the school resource officer who assists families regarding internet safety.

Laurie Chase Kidfest will be held May 4th

HAVERHILL – HAVERHILL – The Laurie Chase KidsFest will be held Sunday, May 4, 2008 from 11am to 4pm.

The festival will take place in Washington Square, Merrimack Street and Columbus Park around the area of Downtown Haverhill. There will be activities for all ages including the Haverhill Youth Idol Contest, Candy Land, the Doll Parade down Merrimack Street, face painting, crafts and many other games and activities for children

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Home of the 19” 3lb. PIZZA

Straight From Boston's North End

and teens. More activities will be announced in the coming month.

All residents, service clubs, and businesses are encouraged to participate in all aspects of the festival.

The Haverhill Downtown Association is also looking for volunteers to help organize and staff this event. The KidsFest committee is already meeting regularly to plan this event and would welcome new members to the committee. Please contact Master Catherine Chang of Chang’s Tae Kwon Do America at 978-556-1616 to join the committee.

Volunteers are also needed on the day of the event to help merchants set up their tents and booths, to help distribute flyers and to help with games and activities. This project is perfect for teens looking for community service hours as part of their school or graduation requirement. To volunteer for the day of the event, call Michael MacDonald at 978-549-7430 or e-mail Mr. MacDonald at micmacIII@cs.com.

The Laurie Chase KidsFest is a Haverhill Tradition that directly benefits the Children and Families of Haverhill and surrounding communities. The Haverhill Downtown Association, a committee of the Greater Haverhill Chamber of Commerce, will continue to lead the Merrimack Valley in providing safe, fun and educational events for our children.



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PUPPY LOVE

Info on animal testing available on-line

Kate Whitney
VALLEY PATRIOT CONTRIBUTOR

This month I decided to write about a subject that is not very pleasant - testing on animals. I was on the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) website one day (www.peta.org) and came across a whole section that promotes awareness about this topic. As I read through what was on the website, I only grew more curious.

I googled the subject and found hundreds of websites that talk about animal testing. At first I was pretty emotional and I cried. I couldn't believe what I was reading. Then that sadness turned to anger and disgust. I scrolled through the endless number of websites trying to learn all I could about testing on animals. I channeled that anger I had inside into writing this article.

I hope that you find this topic as eye opening as I did, and maybe it will even convince you to change some of your habits, to start reading labels, and only buy products that are not tested on animals.

I feel like I should put a warning on this article because some parts are pretty disturbing. However, I think it's important that the American people who love animals know what is being done to millions of innocent ones.



To educated myself on this topic, I tried to read as much as I could and watch as many news clips that I could find.

There is one video on PETA's website that I began to watch and had to turn it off after about six seconds. It's a video that shows the animals in actual testing situations. It was absolutely, horrifically disgusting. If anyone thinks they can handle the video the website is <http://www.peta.org/actioncenter/>

[testing.asp](#). For anyone who doesn't believe this exists, or who needs to see something to get them mad, watch the video. But don't say I didn't warn you.

Some of you might have heard about animal testing but don't really know what it entails. Well, you're in luck because after researching the topic, I now know the ugly, horrible truth and I am going to share it with you. So what does it mean when a product is tested on animals, and what animals are used for testing?

The number of animals that are tortured and killed in US laboratories every year is in the millions. Companies pump their products into animal's stomachs, rub the product onto their skin, squirt it into their eyes, or force the animals to inhale them as aerosol sprays.

Animals that are used for testing include monkeys, birds, rats, baboons, mice, dogs, cats, rabbits, farm animals, and guinea pigs.

On the PETA website, there is a list of companies that do and do not test on animals. The companies that are featured on the list include cosmetic, personal care, and household cleaning product companies.

What's inexcusable about this list, is that there is no law that requires animal testing of these products.

Each company purposely chooses to test their products on innocent animals. Put another way, these companies do not have to test on animals but do anyway. Personally, I think this is just ridiculous and it makes me mad.

Not featured on the list are companies that are required by law to test on animals, such as pharmaceuticals, automotive and garden chemicals, food additives, etc.

For your convenience here are a few of the companies that do NOT test on animals

Abercrombie & Fitch, Almay, Avon Products, Inc., Bare Escentuals, Bath & Body Works, The Body Shop, Bumble and Bumble, Burt's Bees, Crabtree & Evelyn



Boxford resident Kate Whitney holds Honey, a puppy she took in temporarily as a foster parent. Honey is a golden retriever/lab mix.

Cosmetics, Hello Kitty, L'Occitane, M.A.C. Cosmetics, Revlon, Trader Joe's Company, and Victoria's Secret

(for a full list, visit http://www.caringconsumer.com/resources_companies.asp)

Some companies that DO test on animals are3: (for a full list go to above link as well)

Arm & Hammer, Bic Corporation, Clairol, Clorox, Cover Girl, Johnson & Johnson, Oral-B, and Pantene.

Something that we give to our dogs every day and don't really think twice about is dog food. Take a minute to think about the following statements:

WHITNEY, bottom next page



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Live the WOW!

Open your eyes! See all the gifts that exist around you! Better yet, open your eyes and your heart to fully experience all the miracles that come into your life when you decide to live the WOW!

Thomas Connors
VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

WAKE UP!

That’s right! Wake up to all life’s possibilities. The daily gifts of life that are right in front of you each and every day! Life’s *MIRACLES*!

Most of us go through life always wanting more. Nothing is ever enough. No matter how big the paycheck, how close the friendships or how many material things we accumulate, there is always an emptiness, a void, that never seems to be filled. And when things do go our way, the exhilaration is always short lived and never quite enjoyed. Take satisfaction in knowing there *is* a much better way to live!

Blast through whatever is holding you back and open wide your Eyes and Heart to fully recognize and feel what it’s like to be a priceless, unique human being in this world of ours! Start today to look for the gifts given you each day and create a new appreciation for them.

Walking Blindly through life costs you a fortune in missed opportunities to Live The WOW! Let your eyes introduce your heart to the true and lasting *Miracles* of life.

Don’t just focus on the unusual. Let your focus expand to the so-called ordinary, simple things to truly see the wonder you have been missing for years.

When that good Ole Mr. Sun rises in the morning and graces your path, take the time to let it also warm your soul. When you see that first tender blade of green grass sprout, give praise for the renewed life spring brings. When you see that first of many lemon-yellow daffodils poke through winter’s last snow, scream **WOW!**

You really DO have much for which to be grateful!

When I first introduce people to the WOW! they usually ignite two feelings. The first is Excitement. The second is a sense of Regret. Make the most of the first and toss the other aside!

It’s exciting to know you have all these *Miracles* right in front of you. *Miracles* that will make your life so much more meaningful than you could ever imagine. That realization always brings with it a giant leap in self-esteem and self-worth. Yes, you *are* special!

There can also be a feeling or sense of regret. Regret, that you have gone through life for so long never

noticing or paying any attention to those things that were right in front of you all that time. It’s ok to feel that way. But, let it go quickly. You are living in the here and now, not in the past. Live the **WOW!** Every single day from here-on-in will greet you with a life filled with one *Miracle* after another.

Never stop dreaming the Biggest Dreams you can dream! Commit to it! Just stop letting the little things pass you by without fully taking in all they have to offer.

What is most important is that you continue to look for reasons to be grateful. Do it each and every day. From the time you wake, as you go about your business and finally, when you settle in for the night.

At American Training we practice what we preach. During our Vanway Division’s “Reading Series” Program we used the book, The Secret, to discuss the importance of being grateful for the things and the people who are already a part of our lives. Sure, we may not have every thing we want at the moment and some of our acquaintances might drive us nuts from time to time, but, all that seems to fade when we focus on the good in all we have and with whom we associate.

We discovered that IF we fail to recognize and be grateful for all we have, why should God or the Universe grant us more? If you can’t appreciate what you do have, why would any one or anything trust you to appreciate greater and more satisfying things in the future? It really is a simple fact of life. The greater tragedy is the vast majority of people only come to realize their *Miracles* on their death bed with no hope of ever reliving the past.

Sure, life throws us all a curve ball every now and then. But, most often than not we are the ones who put barriers in our own way. We set up the roadblocks and then complain how difficult they are to hurdle. Let’s stop building them in the first place!

Living the **WOW!** is a journey that is to be cherished and enjoyed every single step along the way. That means it is not just the end that is important but each new step forward, no matter how small. Each huge leap into happiness that adds up to a balanced and quality life. Even each misstep that might set you back.

Stop blaming others for those setbacks. Put an end to all the excuses. The reality you create is directly due to your actions and choices. So, make your thoughts and actions count from now on.



PHOTO: COURTESY

Tom Connors is President/CEO of American Training, a diverse collection of companies committed to “Bringing Out the Best in Everyone They Touch”. He believes in living life to the fullest by making the **WOW!** a regular part of your personal, spiritual and working life.

There is No Excuse ... NONE! No reason why you can’t start the day by Living the **WOW!** No matter where you are or what circumstance you are in.

You’re under a bridge? Be glad you survived another night. You’re in a shelter? Be thankful you have a roof over your head. You lost your job? Give thanks you have some skills and talents to sell yourself to another company. And if you are truly fortunate to live in an apartment or your own home and have a hot shower each morning and a cooked meal every night, get on your knees and express your gratitude for your Blessings!

Use your Eyes and Heart to blast away the ordinary and give yourself an extraordinary new beginning each and every day! Get out there and Live the **WOW!** knowing full well that every single day from here-on-in will greet you with a life filled with one *Miracle* after another. From sunrise ... to sunset ... and beyond!

Now, that’s a WOW!

You can reach Tom at Tom@AmericanTrainingInc.com or by writing to him at Tom Connors, American Training, 102 Glenn Street, Lawrence, MA 01843 (C) Copyright

WHITNEY: from previous page

Dogs and cats are confined to tiny lab cages for years and are forced to participate in horrible experiments in order to test dog and cat food. Lonely dogs are driven mad from confinement in barren steel and cement cells. Dogs are dumped on cold concrete flooring after having chunks of muscle cut out of their thighs.

Experimenters severed dogs’ vocal cords in order to keep them quiet. And lastly, sick dogs were languishing in their cages desperately needing veterinary care.⁴ You would probably say I’m crazy and made those statements up, right?

And things like that don’t happen? Wrong.

Those things all did happen and they were exposed when PETA conducted an undercover investigation that lasted nine months to expose a laboratory that conducts cruel animal testing for companies like Iams and other major companion-animals food companies.

Don’t believe it? Watch this video and see for yourself, at; <http://www.petatv.com/tvpopup/video.asp?video=iams&Player=wm>

Want to view pictures and learn about some of the dogs used in the experiment? Type in this link <http://www.iamscruelty.com/photos.asp> and make sure you have a box of tissues next to you. Why are these animals suffering like this?

PETA found that testing like this occurs so that the companies can add “new and improved” to their packaging. You can find a complete list of food companies that do not test on animals by visiting the link http://www.caringconsumer.com/resources_companies.asp and scrolling to the bottom. Here are a few that are on the list:

Nature’s Variety, PetGuard, Veterinary Nutritional Formula, and Active Life Pet Products

So why haven’t these cruel ways of testing on animals changed? New research methods, like computer models, cell cultures, and human studies are more accurate, less expensive, and much more humane. ⁵ Researchers are hesitant to change their ways.

They are comfortable with the testing routines they know. Change is slow coming, and unless we start to do something, things will never change. If you want to start living a cruelty-free life visit <http://www.peta.org/living> to find out how.

After writing this article, I threw out anything in my house that was on the “tested on animals” list. I will never buy products that are tested on animals ever again. The testing often provides misleading and inaccurate results and even if a product has blinded an animal, it can still be marketed to us.

So why is this testing even done? What good is it doing?

Apparently some researchers haven’t noticed that humans and animals differ significantly, making animal drug tests dangerous and unreliable.

I’m not telling my readers to stop using products on the “do test on animals list” or not to buy Iams food dog food. People are allowed to make their own decisions and live their lives as they please. I just hope that this opened your eyes to some things that maybe you never knew.

So even if you change just one product you use, you will be making a difference, and possibly even saving a life.

(Endnotes)¹ <http://www.peta.org/actioncenter/testing.asp>, ² http://www.caringconsumer.com/resources_companies.asp, ³ http://www.caringconsumer.com/resources_companies.asp, ⁴ <http://caringconsumer.com/pdfs/companiesDontTest.doc>, ⁵ <http://www.peta.org/actioncenter/testing.asp>, ⁶ http://caringconsumer.com/info_consumers.asp



If you are interested in adopting a puppy or becoming a foster parent to a puppy waiting for a home you can email Kate at Kwswingrite@aol.com

INNOVATION VALLEY (ivalley.org)

Emergence of the green mills region

How a Green Mills Rotating Fund Can Reclaim Valley Cities and Re-brand the Region

Seth Itzkan

VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNISTS

“The mills of the Merrimack Valley led one industrial revolution, now they can lead another.”

- Quincy Vale

Quincy Vale, CEO of Lawrence-based PowerHouse Enterprises and former Director of the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative (MTC) Green Buildings Program, is speaking about the emerging idea of a Green Mills Campaign that would provide funding for ecological restoration of mill space throughout the Merrimack Valley.

“The Merrimack Valley is an ideal location for this initiative”, states Vale. “The region is blessed with splendid examples of historic mill buildings located near the center of communities with abundant access to sunlight, Valley wind resources and sometimes hydropower... Financing for these renovations could come through a rotating fund that provided loan guarantees to enable the redevelopment of mills in a green manner, providing that they meet energy performance standards.”

“The indigenous assets of the mill buildings need to be unlocked”, continued Vale. “We need to bring them back to life.”

It’s not such a radical idea. Just north of Boston, the Cambridge Energy Alliance operates a \$100M fund to help residents and businesses retrofit for efficiency. Loans are structured so that anticipated energy savings will cover the



PHOTO & MOCKUP: SETH ITZKAN

Conceptualized mill roof with wind turbines.

loan payments, thus, as energy costs go up, the savings to the customers greatly increase. Additionally, the alliance is unique in that it provides a one-stop shop for auditing and contracting, as well as financing services.

They have negotiated plans with contractors, utilities, and banks to provide a unique package of services that is unparalleled for energy retrofitting.

The Cambridge Energy Alliance is supported in part through private foundations, and the same could be true here in the Merrimack Valley.

The idea of the Green Mills Campaign for the Merrimack Valley emerged through discussion with Quincy Vale and others at a meeting hosted by the Merrimack Valley Economic Development Council.

The objective of the meeting was to help define a branding campaign for the Merrimack Valley that could capitalize on many of its green initiatives and strengths.

The region is already known around the world as a mill district, so that branding isn’t about to change. However,

something that could harness that and move it into the modern era could be a winning strategy. Thus, in a subsequent discussion between Quincy Vale and myself, the idea of a Green Mill Region was born, and we believe that an innovative funding scheme, like what is being done in Cambridge, could provide the kick to get it started.

To get a sense of the potential magnitude of the initiative, just consider that the estimated “under utilized” mill space in Lawrence alone is between 10 and 13 million square feet. Assuming that the buildings are on average 5 stories, that yields over 2 million square feet of urban rooftop space available for solar arrays, wind turbines, urban gardens, and other energy generating or community enhancing services.

Of course, that is just Lawrence; what is the footprint (or actually, *roof print*) for the whole region? Whatever the number, we know that one of the first steps is to get a proper census of the available space. These are assets that must be utilized and their value can’t be overstated.

“We are already at a pretty good starting point”, says Shaw Rosen, Chief Operating Officer for Mass Innovation Inc, the company behind the Monarch Lofts development on Merrimack Street in Lawrence, “Sal has the solar array at the River Walk, and our building will have geothermal heating and cooling, plus other sustainable features.”

“The very idea of redevelopment is a sustainable practice”, continues Rosen, “because you are reusing buildings and materials.”



John Michitson was a Haverhill city councilor for 10 years; the last 2 as president. He is a manager and electrical engineer at the MITRE Corporation in Bedford, Mass. John and his wife, Heidi, are enjoying the childhood of their 4-year-old daughter and 6 year-old son. email: jmichitson@verizon.net



Seth Itzkan is president of Planet-TECH Associates, a consulting agency identifying innovations in economic development. Recently, Mr. Itzkan helped The Boston Foundation to conceptualize and implement its Hub of Innovations tool. You can email him at seth.itzkan@gmail.com

The Innovation Valley initiative seeks to help stimulate economic growth and quality-of-life enhancements in the Merrimack Valley. Every month we will report on innovative businesses, practices, and ideas that are helping to make Merrimack Valley the place to be. Look for our article in print media and online at www.ivalley.org.

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City’s labor union may kill summer kids program

Valley Patriot Staff
VALLEY PATRIOT EDITOR

The City of Lawrence’s Summer Youth Program is the newest target of the Local Laborer’s Union and is in jeopardy of being canceled due to a complaint filed by Local 3 – Laborer’s Union. The complaint is in protest to the hiring of nearly two dozen public school students to work for the city of Lawrence.

Union officials say they do not want these students to work for the city and are demanding that the city recall laid off employees (only laborer’s union employees) before students are allowed to begin their summer jobs.

In an exclusive interview, Lawrence Personnel Director Frank Bonet said he felt it was “a disgrace” for any union to hold the city’s students hostage in lieu of gaining on their own “selfish demands.”

“I can’t understand why a labor union would use children to gain an advantage in their demands. This program allows our city’s youth to gain experience in the workforce, to learn the responsibilities of having a job, to learn how to compose job resumes and create networking opportunities with city professionals”.

Bonet continued, “Mayor Sullivan has been and will continue to be a friend of students and jobs and I don’t believe that he will allow these unions to put our children down. He never has and never will.”

“For someone to think that the city will buckle under threats of bogus grievances and arbitrations better begin to think about how they can assist this city in its goals instead of taking advantages of its children.”

Mayor Sullivan added, “The Workforce Investment Board and Valleyworks employees have worked hard, worked smart and added many long hours to make sure that our children have the opportunity for the Summer Youth Work Program. It offers Lawrence kids the opportunity to gain work experience and develop skills while connecting with City governments and non-profit agencies.”

“The experience that kids get in a program like this is something they will carry with them the rest of their lives. It’s very disappointing to me that the union would grieve this and try to take that opportunity away from them,”

Lawrence Mayor Mike Sullivan

Students work with the city of Lawrence in many capacities and in various city departments, including; the Lawrence Public Schools (with funds of the LPS), the Police Department, the Fire Department, non-profit agencies such as the YMCA, YWCA, Boating Program, City Hall and many more.

Mayor Sullivan said the Lawrence Police and Fire Departments both support the importance of showing their student residents the worklife of city employees.

Sullivan says this includes engaging the talents and interests of young people, increasing their skills and competencies, and providing positive adult role models.

“This kind of real life experience introduces them to the workplace, passes on valuable employment skills, and provides them with a summer income.”

Bonet said the city unions are playing politics with the lives and futures of young people.

“This isn’t just a job placement program, it has the core elements of thriving youth-development programming including: adult support and guidance, engaging activities, and contributions from youth. We assist them in making a successful transition to healthy adulthood and economic independence.”

“The bottom line is,” Mayor Sullivan concluded, “I am not going to tell the kids of Lawrence that making our unions happy is more important than helping them start their work and life experience here in the city” Sullivan said.

The recent complaints from the Laborer’s union came in response to an Eagle Tribune article that revealed Groundwork Lawrence’s interest in hosting Lawrence Outdoor Youth Corps (LOYC) summer job slots for youth aged 14-18 through the Summer Jobs Program.

The LOYC youth workers would be dedicated to keeping this summer’s newly constructed two-way Essex Street corridor looking clean, supplement the Essex Street work with a rotation of staffing support for Farmers Market, park cleanups, and landscaping maintenance of the Marston Street/Canal Street Gateway area.

“This summer jobs program is an important way to strengthen the character of our community. The experience that kids get in a program like this is something they will carry with them the rest of their lives. It’s very disappointing to me that the union would grieve this and try to take that opportunity away from them,” Sullivan concluded.

Northern Essex Community College’s Lawrence Film Festival

Saturday, April 5, 8 p.m.

“Dirty Pretty Things”

R-rated, Britain

Saturday, April 12, 8 p.m.

“La Cage Aux Folles”

R-rated, France

Saturday, April 19, 8 p.m.

“Pan’s Labyrinth”

R-rated, Spain

All moves will be held in the atrium of Northern Essex Community College’s John R. Dimitry Building, 45 Franklin St., Lawrence.

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- > Can the SolarSheat save on our monthly energy bill?
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LIFE IN METHUEN

Celebrating Methuen Community Television

Kathleen Corey Rahme
VALLEY PATRIOT CONTRIBUTOR

Methuen Community Television – Channel 22 on Comcast and Channel 33 on Verizon, is celebrating its 5th anniversary of being located at 13 Branch Street. Under the leadership of Karen Hayden, Executive Director, the studio has had quite a growth spurt. Many changes have been made since the old days when the station was using space at Methuen High School.

The new facility offers a state of the art television studio with three cameras, an editing room as well as a control room. MCTV offers training in all aspects of television production including hosting a show, producing, editing, cameras, directing and much more.

These training programs have benefited more than 150 members. Many of the members have taken advantage of more than one of the training programs and many can claim certification in several. The training is free and available to any Methuen resident. Even if you do not utilize it at the studio, you can take what you learn and use it with your own video productions. Two

other full time employees, Bill Wallace and Michelle Houle are always on hand to assist.

The beauty of public access television is that if you have an idea for programming, you are able to express it by creating your own show. There are several shows that are produced at MCTV and two of them are celebrating their 5th anniversary this month.

One is the award winning show Methuen Now. It is a *good* news program all about Methuen. Another show celebrating five years is Call to Serve. This show involves recording oral histories of Methuen veterans. It too is award winning. These shows compete in the Alliance for Community Media competitions.

Having a community television station like MCTV affords the citizens of Methuen with the opportunity to watch hometown sports, musical performances and live political debates without leaving their living rooms. Religious services are shown on Sundays. There are a variety of programs offered and they are quite impressive.

You can find shows about the city council agenda, health department news, police department information,

an award winning comedy show called SNAFU, a reading show for young people to encourage literacy, sports shows galore, a show about mortgages, an informational show about what is happening at the Methuen Senior Center, and even a show hosted by a radio and television icon named Bruce Arnold who lets you know what’s happening around the Valley to name a few.

Being part of MCTV is free to any resident age 16 and older. The possibilities are endless. Not only do you feel like you are contributing to your community, you are able to satisfy your own creative urges. You should visit them at their website www.methuentv.org to find out more. The folks at MCTV treat everyone like they are family and believe me, it is just plain fun.



Kathleen Corey Rahme is the former Central District & At-Large Councilor in Methuen, is the founder of the Methuen Youth Corps., and hosts “Call to Serve.” You can email her at kcoreyrahme@comcast.net

Announcing Summer Jam 2008

Pine Island Music Tunes Up for Summer Season

Pine Island Music, Essex County’s premier music studio for kids, teens and adults, has announced its upcoming dates for 4 one-week Summer Jam sessions in June and July. All sessions will take place for 5 fun-filled days, Monday-Friday, 9:00 am - 1:00 pm in Pine Island’s spacious and air-conditioned studios in Byfield, MA.

Summer Jam dates:
Session 1: June 23-27
Session 2: July 7-11
Session 3: July 14-18
Session 4: July 21-25

Now in its 28th year, Pine Island’s Summer Jam sessions offer a wide-ranging program of creative instruction and jamming for musicians, ages 9 - 17. In this one-week program, students will learn the skills necessary to arrange songs and play together. Everybody receives individual instruction, participates in a live performance and records a CD.

Past Summer Jams have included players on guitar, bass, drums, fiddle, keyboards, mandolin, trombone, ukulele, pan flute, penny whistle and woodwinds. There will be a live jam concert, open to friends and family, at the end of each session. Charlene Becht, mother of Evan,

a participant from Summer Jam 2007, says “Wow! We’re still floored after last summer’s jam concert. Evan loved it. It really was the best thing for him.”

“Expect a week of intense fun and learning!” says EJ Ouellette, Summer Jam Director and acclaimed music educator. At Pine Island Music, from the moment you strum your first chord, sing your first verse, or pound out your first drum fill you’ll be playing together with others. “The kids make amazing progress in our Summer Jam,” says Ouellette, “They end up seeing the bigger picture - it’s about teamwork, respect for others and the nature of musical discipline. We’re not your ordinary music school.”

After the session, each Summer Jam musician will receive a mastered CD with a group photo on its cover. Thirteen-year-old Ben Stickney of Newbury says, “My playing improved a lot during Summer Jam and the concert was really cool! I’m looking forward to going back and recording with EJ.”

If you’d like to plan to make music at one of Pine Island’s Summer Jams, call 978-462-9020 or visit their web site for more information: www.pineisland.com. Sign up today, classes are limited.



PHOTO: COURTESY

About Pine Island Music
Pine Island Music is a multi-faceted music studio, production company and resource center offering private lessons and group classes in guitar, bass, fiddle/violin, voice, drums, percussion, piano/keyboards, mandolin, banjo, dobro, ukulele, harmonica and more. Home of the popular “Summer Jam”™ program

for kids and teens, Pine Island Music specializes in musical development for beginners to professionals. It is the home of several adult rock groups, teen bands, fiddle ensembles and the fiddle-rock jam band, “EJ Ouellette & Crazy Maggy”. Visit us at <http://www.pineisland.com>.

NOTEBOOK: from page 15

class and listen to the speakers, the people attending the Lawrence event seemed oblivious that there was an event going on at all.

Speakers could barely hear themselves on stage over the loud noise of people talking while one-liner after one-liner went unheard by 85% of the people in the room. Last year (and the year before) David Burke had to take the microphone several times to scold the audience, telling people to “shut up” and “have some common courtesy and listen.”

And though it only worked for about 4.1 seconds in previous years, this year he finally gave up and didn’t even bother to make a plea for decorum.

Despite the poor performance by most of our local dignitaries, there were a few standouts this year. Colie Ryan, owner of the Claddagh Pub, was very funny and clever, and was one of the few speakers who got the audience’s attention. Methuen Mayor Bill Manzi finally stopped repeating the same jokes from previous events and had the best line in his top ten list of reasons why Elliot Spitzer should be Mayor of Lawrence or Methuen.

NAHS Owed Money

According to State Treasurer Tim Cahill’s list of abandoned properties the Town of North Andover, specifically North Andover High School is listed as the owner of abandoned properties. Hmm?

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RONNIE’S RANTS

War heroes & leprechauns

Ronnie Ford
VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

Lawrence resident Dan Cotnoir is an affable guy, nice personality, easy going and ... a war hero!

Dan’s job in the United States Marine Corps was to go out by Humvee and find dead Marines, (sometimes their blown body parts), and return them to the Corps and their families.

Sergeant Cotnoir did his job well and received a commendation for his performance in combat. Dan Cotnoir’s civilian vocation is a funeral director and registered embalmer.

He helps people accept the inevitable occurrence in all our lives, death. Whether a mom or dad, a brother or sister, or even a family friend, Dan Cotnoir is always there. Comforting others is what he does best.

A woman named Trish Wood wrote a book about combat heroes of Iraq and Afghanistan. She devoted an entire chapter on this man named Daniel Cotnoir from Lawrence.

I interviewed Ms. Wood and I read her book, it was great. During the interview she mentioned Dan Cotnoir was featured in four other chapters as well.

Now, this war hero says heis being harassed by Lawrence Police Chief John Romero and members of the Lawrence Police Department. As a former cop myself I just want to say, enough is enough Chief Romero! Give Dan his license to carry a firearm back. He has certainly earned the right! It is over——let it lie!

**** It’s catchy, it’s like a pandemic, or a locust-like spread, and Jim Vittoriso is starting it up again!**

Amy McGovern as well as this writer are very proud of the fireplug statured school committee man displaying the courage of a stand-up politics. Jim wants to look at nepotism in the school system. It seems as though we have an imbalance of people who are related to political hacks or certain churchgoers, grabbing school related positions! Would you believe it??? Atta Boy Jim! Keep it up!

**** Thanks to St. Patrick that beautiful man of God who drove the snakes out of Ireland and into America (and is claimed**

by every ethnic group in existence), we have about a week and a half of celebrations including food, drink and pretty Irish girls of all nationalities dressed in their Kelly green and shamrocks.

St Patrick’s Day is almost as magical as Christmas. Sooo, I dragged meself to Irish breakfasts and luncheons all over the Valley and stuffed my belly with soda bread, potatoes, cabbage and corned beef.

Methuen Mayor Bill Manzi had a slam bang event at the Tara Mara with all the political stars intact. Some great jokes were told; poems and stories flowed from silver-tongued politicians, many taking a beating but it was a lot of fun.

Linda Campbell is a former Saint Mary’s High School top athlete, former Captain in the US Army, a qualified paratrooper (Trolley Trooper) but, a canary she is not. Campbell wrote a song, said she would not sing it, but at the insistence of the crowd, changed he mind. Bad move!

John Milori was at his best and poor Matt Kraunelis (Mayor Manzi’s coffee boy) was at the end of every speaker’s barb. Senator Baddour was his usual master of appearance, as was Reps. Barbara L’Italian and Willy Lantigua.

On the other side of heaven, Mayor Mike Sullivan hosted the City of Lawrence’s Hibernian bash. It was a great crowd, with Little Joe Carroll, the brother of former Lawrence High School great, Tom Carroll ... well, Joe reminded me of that movie “Darby O’Gill and The Little People” ... a true leprechaun wouldn’t have looked more authentic!

**** I can feel Tom Duggan breathing down my neck, sooooo ... May the good Lord take a liking to you, and do something nice for someone today. And we wish you enough.**

Ronnie can be reached at radiotalk@comcast .net.



Ronnie Ford is a Methuen resident, the former host of the “Hot Line” radio program, a former Methuen police officer and a former member of the Methuen school committee and city council. You can email Ronnie at Radiotalk@comcast.net

Superior Court Trial Begins

Did Georgetown Club Owner Swindle \$357K

Lonnie Brennan
VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

A trial is now being heard in Essex Superior Court in Lawrence against Georgetown Country Club owner Peter Wojtkun, who is facing several counts of fraud, misleading, deceptive and coercive business practices, and physical assault according to court documents obtained by The Valley Patriot. The complaint was filed by Christopher Rich.

According to Mr. Wojkun’s attorney Thomas H. Curran of Sherin and Lodgen in Boston, “the number of charges are quite lengthy in this case, and will most likely be divided with “some being heard by Judge Ball, others to be remanded to a jury.” Mr. Wojkun is also represented by Anthony DeProspo.

Mr. Wojtkun currently faces more than a dozen other lawsuits, including charges that he wrongfully suspended members from The Georgetown Club, coercion, fraud, forgery, extortion, threats of frivolous allegations, ridicule in the community, intimidation, threats of frivolous civil action and others.

According to Attorney Curran, Mr. Wojtkun is currently appealing a 2006 court judgment, which may take another 2-4 years to be decided.

In that judgment, The Commonwealth of Massachusetts slapped the Georgetown Country Club, Inc., New England Golf Partners Nominee Trust, Georgetown Links LLC, and New England Golf Partners, Inc., with a \$62,576.50 order of payment and placed a permanent injunction against the above entities “as a result of Mr. Wojtkun’s actions to “retaliate” and “to deter (neighbor and Georgetown Town Moderator) Beverly Enos and others from taking legal action against him by demonstrating the consequences to those who do not cooperate with the Club,” according to the judgment against them.

Mr. Wojtkun is alleged to have directed activities which “destroyed and laid waste” a portion of Ms. Enos’ backyard. His testimony in the case was termed “unbelievable” and “self-contradictory” and “contrary to common sense” according to Essex County Superior Court documents obtained by The Valley Patriot.

The case finally went to court last month, a little more than five years after the complaint was filed and Mr. Wojtkun took the stand in front of court officers, a Valley Patriot reporter, a stenographer and as others looked on.

Under cross examination of Mr. Wojtkun from Mr. Rich’s attorney, Scott Gediman, the timeline of payments from Mr. Rich to purchase a 5% share of the Georgetown Club, was laid out. Nine months later, after collecting \$357,670 from Mr. Rich, Mr. Wojtkun refused to accept the final payment of \$157,330 and called the deal off.

“He defaulted on the note” Mr. Wojtkun told the judge. “He didn’t pay when he said he would. He defaulted.”

Wojtkun said that he had his attorneys arrange an auction to sell-off the 5% stake at foreclosure auction. “Isn’t it true that only one bidder was present at the auction?” Atty. Scott Gediman asked. “Yes” Mr. Wojtkun replied. It was learned that Mr. Wojtkun’s partner at the club tendered the sole offer.

When asked by The Valley Patriot reporter what question he would like to ask Mr. Wojtkun, Mr. Rich said “I just want to know where my money is. He took my money, I have nothing. Ask him what he did with my money.”

The judge has continued the trial to April 23rd.

Meanwhile, more than a dozen other complaints from former club members and original investors in the club have been filed complaints in different courts in Essex County.

A growing number of golfers are watching this case with great attention, as well as the Georgetown community.



Lonnie Brennan is a former selectman in Georgetown and the owner of the Chocolate Cellar. He was the Republican candidate for state representative in 2006

and is active in the Republican party. You can email him at lonnie@thechocolatecellar.com.



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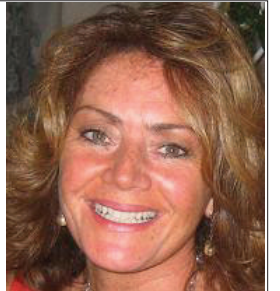
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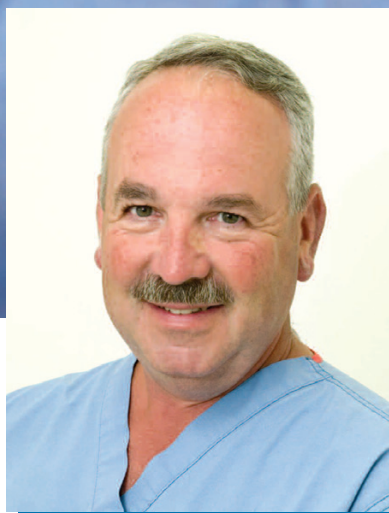
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