



THE VALLEY PATRIOT

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"Congress shall make no law..."

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

Mayoral candidate in legal dispute

Israel Reyes at the center of lawsuit over allegations on May Street properties

Paula Porten
VALLEY PATRIOT REPORTER

Former Lawrence City Councilor and candidate for Mayor, Israel Reyes, is wrangled in a lawsuit involving May Street Partners, LLC, Reyes Group, Inc. and several properties on May Street in Lawrence.

May Street Partners owns the property located at 36 May Street and entered into a Memorandum of Agreement with Israel Reyes as President of Reyes Group to "accomplish the development and sale of developed property."

Under the agreement, Reyes would be responsible for day to day oversight of the construction of one duplex, consult relative to the permitting process and interface with City of Lawrence personnel.

Reyes Group would act as the construction management/marketing firm for the project. According to the agreement, Reyes Group would also be paid a consulting fee of \$25,000.00 for each duplex built.

According to documents filed in Essex Superior Court the lawsuit filed against May Street Partners, Reyes claims that the parties entered into an Agreement on or

about May 15, 2006 where May Street Partners contracted with Israel Reyes for the development, permitting and construction of four units known as 36A, 36B, 38A and 38B, May Street.

Reyes claims that he performed all of his obligations under the contract and that May Street Partners failed to pay him \$31,500 for construction costs and \$18,750 for services performed under the contract.

Reyes claims in his complaint that he provided May Street Partners with an accounting of the monies owed and that they have failed to make payments.

However, according to May Street Partners' answer to the complaint, as well as its counterclaims, not only did Reyes fail to provide any accounting, he also failed to submit invoices and corresponding cancelled checks, he refused to account for \$15,000 paid by May Street Partners in connection with the Agreement, and he refused to submit bank statements where funds paid by May Street Partners and the Southern Bank of New Hampshire were deposited.

According to May Street Partners, they are unable to verify the actual cost of labor because Reyes Group refuses to

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Merry Christmas!

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HONORARY VALLEY PATRIOT OF THE MONTH:

JIM WAREING

Tom Duggan
VALLEY PATRIOT REPORTER

For the last five years The Valley Patriot has reserved this space for honoring military heroes in the Merrimack Valley. It is, and has always been our mission to publicly thank the men and women who honorably serve our nation, answer the call to put themselves in harms way and continue contributing to the betterment of our nation when they returned home.

This month, we honor a non-veteran as our first ever, honorary Valley Patriot of the Month.

Methuen resident Jim Wareing, while never having served in the military has dedicated his life to helping our men and women in the armed forces fighting abroad.

Wareing has spent thousands dollars of his own money purchasing and collecting items for care packages to send to our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, paying the postage, keeping in contact with soldiers in the field and calling attention to their needs here at home.

Wareing is also single handedly responsible for the patriotic displays, flags, and welcome home messages to

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EDITORIAL



We oppose the Fallen Hero Commemoration Act (HR 6662)

Who could oppose a bill called the Fallen Hero Commemoration Act?

We can.

Under the current laws and regulations, when an American serviceman is killed in action his or her next of kin have the final say over whether or not the press is allowed to be present at the military base when the casket arrives back home.

While some family members of our departed heroes are generously willing to share such private and tragic moments and allow members of the press to enter a military base or photograph the casket as it leaves the plane while the family is coming to terms with their loss, most do not.

Most families, as was the case with Sgt. Alex Jimenez, see this as an invasion of privacy and request (as is their right) private time with their deceased family member.

While they are fully prepared for the onslaught of photographers and reporters at the public processions that usually follow the arrival of a fallen serviceman, they prefer to have *some* private time on the military base when their loved one arrives before the pressure of such publicity begins.

Now, House Bill 6662 is making it's way though congress and is laughingly called the Fallen Hero Commemoration Act.

This piece of legislation, if passed, would strip away the families' right to exclude members of the press from military bases when the bodies of servicemen arrive back home.

We are confused as to how a law can commemorate the honorable service and sacrifice of our fallen heroes by spitting in the face of their family members and forcing them to deal with the press and the public at the most tragic and emotionally vulnerable moments of their lives.

We believe that this decision should be left to those grieving families and not to the politicians in Washington with political motivation; or members of the press who have plenty of other opportunities to photograph and report on public funerals, parade processions, and other public services for our military heroes after their bodies are returned home.

We urge our readers to contact their congressman and to express their opposition to the deceitfully-named Fallen Hero Commemoration Act (HR 6662) and support the privacy of our fallen heroes, their families and the ones they love.



LETTERS

It is with great pride that I write this letter. For 7 full years I have served the great city of Lawrence. I have met so many wonderful people who have come to this country and this city in search of a better way of life. I have stated many times that it is the positive attitude and the Lawrence pride that is mainly responsible for all the good that has happened over the last 7 years.

Over the past 7 years we have witnessed over \$250,000,000 dollars worth of public investment in this great city. This has led to another \$250,000,000 in private investment that has come into the city. Our old mills have been renovated and that has created thousands of new jobs and new housing.

The city is experiencing the lowest crime rate in 38 years. We have renovated our city hall, invested in our parks and open space throughout this city and for the first time in almost 100 years we have built the finest high school for our youth. The conversion back to two way traffic and the investment in our downtown is beginning to bring life back to Essex Street. People are coming back to live in downtown Lawrence and the future looks bright and exciting.

I was extremely proud this past summer when the city of Lawrence was asked to be the host for the Prestigious Latin Pride Awards scheduled for September 25th. What better place to host this event than the New Lawrence High School Theater for the Performing Arts? Imagine the City of Lawrence being host to the great Sammy Sosa, Former Miss USA Susie Castillo, and many more great people that have excelled in their respective fields and have given back to their community?

I was more than proud when the organization asked me to give greetings to the full house on behalf of the proud city of Lawrence. I was honored to be at the

event. Lawrence Pride was contagious that night and everyone had a great time.

As I arrived, I was greeted by many people outside that were attending the event, including many media outlets. There was a positive sense of excitement in the air. All the media was reporting on the event as they interviewed the recipients of the awards as well as guests.

The owner and operator of Rumbo had just two questions for me: did I pay for my ticket and why is the city allowing the Latin Pride organization to use the theater for their awards night. I stayed positive and shrugged off the negativity as there was no room that night for anyone to criticize this organization during a remarkable event.

Oddly enough, I received a phone call from the State Ethics Commission asking me the exact same two questions; whether or not I paid for a ticket for the Latin Pride Awards and why the Latin Pride organization used the theater to host this event.

I explained with a great deal of pride to the State Ethics Commission that I was honored to be invited to give greetings of the city and how proud I was of the attendees and the event. The Ethics Commission was satisfied by my response.

Why would anyone call a State Agency anonymously to complain about the Latin Pride Awards? I hope as you read this you realize that we have come too far and have all worked too hard for this negativity.

Yes, as I said to Rumbo that night as well as to the State Ethics Commission and will continue to say... "I have never been so proud of this city because of the people that truly are Lawrencians".

Lawrence Mayor Mike Sullivan

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Corrections; Please contact the editor at valleypatriot@aol.com

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A COUCH WITH A VIEW

It's the most wonderful time of the year... for entertainment!

Ray Shackett

VALLEY PATRIOT ENTERTAINMENT REPORTER

One of my favorite times of the year for TV and movies begins now. Just after Thanksgiving, and sometimes a few days earlier if we're lucky, the networks serve up their holiday cheer in the form of Grinches, red-nosed reindeers and happy birthday wishing snowmen.

It's that time once again for an onslaught of holiday classics, specials and marathon movies.

Now, I'm Catholic. Well, a recovering Catholic at best. So my holiday celebration comes in the form of decorated trees, overpriced gifts and songs about grandmothers subjected to horrible hit and run accidents. While I honor and respect all celebrations equally, Chanukah, Kwanzaa, Festivus, nothing lifts my spirits more than colored lights wrapped around dried up pine trees. Let the celebration begin!

Ahead is a guide for what I believe to be the best of holiday television offerings. They are divided into three categories.

The Classics

Specials and movies that have stood the test of time. Must-sees every year and sometimes so good you sneak them in six months later for a very special "Christmas in July".

The Instant Classics

Recent additions to the holiday lineup, say, within 10 years that instantly warms the soul (or is that the rum soaked eggnog?).



A CHRISTMAS STORY (1983)

The So-Bad-You-Have-To-Watch-It-Every-Year-Classic
(personal favorite)

So bad they're good.

I should start with a

bold statement that I always get flack about. I do not cherish nor do I celebrate the black and white classics. There, I said it. Don't like 'em! Although I will briefly recognize them as Mandatory Classics (category four)... blah, blah, blah. *Miracle on 34th Street*, *White Christmas* and, of course, *It's A Wonderful Life*. Let's move on.

The Classics

These are just some of the specials and movies that I usually schedule into my decorating itinerary or save for the days leading up to Christmas. Nothing gets me in the spirit more than decorating the tree, hanging the mistletoe and kicking off my

holidays than a hot chocolate induced viewing of *Home Alone*.

The movie about child neglect you ask? Indeed, but it's so much more. It's a story of Christmas wishes. There's a candy cane sweetness throughout that makes you remember what Christmas is all about... family.

Another dysfunctional family classic is *Christmas Vacation* starring the road tripping Griswold family. This year they stay home to host Christmas for the entire family and hilarity ensues. But, again, behind the laughs is a warm story about family bonds and traditions.

I usually save this next one for late in the season. Mostly because there's a 24 hour TBS marathon that runs every year on Christmas Eve. *A Christmas Story*.

The classic tale of boy wants BB gun, boy gets BB gun, boy shoots his eye out (almost). I'm not sure it has any deep messages but it's a fun watch for the entire family. I double dog dare you to NOT watch it.

As far as classic specials go there are a few that I either always set the TiVo for or

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INNOVATION VALLEY (ivalley.org)

Merrimack Valley 2.0

How a Citizens Predictive Market can Steer our Future

Seth Itzkan & John Michitson

INNOVATION VALLEY/PATRIOT COLUMNIST

What will be the fastest growing industry cluster in the Merrimack Valley through 2009? Will it be biotech? Clean tech? Consumer electronics? If you knew, how would that influence what you do, and if you had a hunch, how much would you be willing to bet on it?

These aren't hypothetical questions. With predictive market technology we can help drill toward the most likely answers, and you, the armchair seer, can benefit.

In order to help drive economic development in the Merrimack Valley, we are utilizing predictive market technology to inform investors and stakeholders of the most likely prospects for industry growth through 2009. You, the reader, are invited to participate. The predictive market experiment will run through January 18th. All results and germane information gathered will be summarized and provided to regional policy makers and printed in subsequent issues of the Innovation Valley column. The winners of the predictive market exercise (those with the most "stock" value) will be profiled. To begin now, go to the link provided at the article's end.

What are Predictive Markets?

Predictive market technology is an innovation that is sweeping Fortune 500 companies. Using the "wisdom of the masses" a virtual marketplace helps determine the most likely ideas to succeed in the real world. These ideas are typically for new products, and they are purchased and sold like stock. Sophisticated

What will be the fastest growing industry cluster in the Merrimack Valley through 2009?

STOCK	VALUE	% CHANGE
Biotech and pharma	50.0%	0.00%
Robotics	50.0%	0.00%
Cloud computing and virtualization	50.0%	0.00%
Devices and diagnostics	50.0%	0.00%
Video games	50.0%	0.00%
Mobile communications	50.0%	0.00%
E-Healthcare	50.0%	0.00%
Web 2.0/Digital media	50.0%	0.00%
Consumer electronics	50.0%	0.00%
Clean tech	49.5%	-0.98%

Powered by Inking Markets

graphing and valuation technology shows the daily performance and value, just as if it were a portfolio on a trading site. Unlike trading sites, however, where participants keep their cards close to their chest, in predictive market environments, participants are encouraged to share opinions and incites. The objective is to help distill the collective intelligence as well as hone in on the most likely outcomes.

According to a recent New York Times article on predictive markets ("Betting to improve the odds", April 9, 2008), "These markets have often been more accurate than professional pollsters or market researchers. The idea is that the collected knowledge of many people, each with a different perspective, will almost surely be more accurate than an individual or small group or even experts. The concept has been championed by academic economists and was popularized by James Surowiecki's 2004 book 'The Wisdom of Crowds.'"

Merrimack Valley sets a Precedent

The Merrimack Valley will be setting a precedent by using predictive markets as a tool for regional economic planning. This further makes the case for the Merrimack Valley as a hotbed of innovation.

We will not rely solely on government agencies or industry analysts to determine which action plans are most likely to succeed, but will instead bring the ideas directly to the public and let the power and wisdom of a predictive market decide. As the New York Times article testifies, community intelligence is likely to be far more sage than we imagine. It's time to retire blue ribbon panels. The regional planning process is going Web 2.0.

Our Merrimack Valley experiment is asking the following question: What will be the fastest growing industry cluster in the Merrimack Valley through 2009? The ten possible answers are selected from a Boston Globe article by Scott Kirsner, "Even in difficult times, entrepreneurs will emerge", October 5, 2008. Those choices are as follows: (1) Biotech and pharmaceuticals, (2) Clean tech, (3) Robotics, (4) Cloud computing and virtualization, (5) Devices and diagnostics, (6) Video games, (7) Mobil communications, (8) E-Healthcare, (9)



Web 2.0 / Digital media, (10) Consumer electronics.

Participation is Easy

Participation is easy. All you have to do is create an account and start the wager. A wager is simply an answer to a question - Do you think the likely success of this idea (plan, product, industry) will go up or down? The really fun part, however, is that by answering that question concerning the idea, you are actually buying or selling shares in it, and the value of your own portfolio will reflect its performance. Each participant starts with \$5000 and the price of the share is determined by its likelihood. Zero dollars, means it has zero chance of success. One hundred dollars means it's a done deal. Of course there is no real value to these shares. Your job as a "trader" is to help the best ideas percolate to the top by wagering on your honest opinion. You can even, as might be expected, have a vested interest in the outcome. In a corporate setting, the "winner", or employee with the highest portfolio value, might receive an award. In our exercise, you will gain recognition as the bright bulb in the house, and, most importantly, will have helped influence regional outcomes.

The real value of this exercise, however, will not, we anticipate, be in celebrating who wins, nor even necessarily in the accuracy of the forecasts. It will be the knowledge that grows as participants provides rational for their choices. With each trade, you will be prompted, optionally, to say a few words about why you made it. You can also discuss it in a

blog. The sharing of key information is essential to the success of this pilot. The learning is viral, as marketplace activity can be fed to sites throughout the Internet. In a regional effort like this, municipal planning offices and development agencies could enhance the activity by carrying feeds. This has the potential to be a catalyst for broad based collaboration.

See you Online

To begin now, go here: <http://innovationbrokering.inkingmarkets.com/>

To discuss this and other issues germane to the future of the Merrimack Valley, go to Innovation Valley website (www.ivalley.org).



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



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 7-year-old daughter and 9 year-old son. email: john@michitson.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.

Reduce idling and go green!

Phil DeCologero

VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

Isn't that the priority of most people?

All over the country (and world) people are looking for ways to save energy, to save money, and save the environment. Drivers are swapping their SUVs for hybrids. Homeowners are dumping their incandescent light bulbs for longer lasting, energy efficient fluorescents.

People are making these changes with the goal of using "less".

However, using less energy isn't all about changing what you're using (cars, light bulbs), but how you use these objects (drive less, turn the lights off).

Regardless of what type of car you drive, its how you use your car that dictates how much energy will be consumed. While people often associate driving as being a major source of energy

consumption, not nearly as many people are aware of just how much energy their cars consume just by having them idle.

The individual car owner will be shocked to learn that by some estimates, the average person loses \$100 worth of gas each year due to unnecessary idling. A bigger picture look at idling suggests that Americans as a group waste over 2 billion gallons of gasoline annually, just through idling their vehicles.

This waste clearly amounts to a sizable amount of consumed fuel, which amounts to a large quantity of CO2 being unnecessarily released into our atmosphere.

The Environmental Defense Fund estimates that in New York City alone, idling vehicles produce up to 100,000 tons of CO2. The kicking of the idling habit by New Yorkers would be the equivalent of

removing over 12,000 cars from the streets of that city.

With the extra emissions being pumped into our atmosphere, idling can have a noticeable impact on our quality of life, especially in densely populated areas. The pollutants emitted by cars, both idling and non-idling, have been linked to asthma, heart disease, bronchitis, and even cancer.

These affects are especially concerning given where people tend to idle their vehicles most frequently - at schools, and at drive through restaurants.

Both of these locations typically have a large quantity of cars with their engines idling, causing a larger quantity of toxins to temporarily build up in the area - just as children are walking around.

Infrequent exposure is unlikely to have adverse health affects, but frequent, even

daily exposure, can certainly have poor affects on everyone, not just children.

When it comes down to it, avoiding the temptation to idle your vehicle will save you money, save you fuel, increase the performance of your car, and help the environment. Please read the below myths debunked by the California Energy Commission's Consumer Energy Center:

Myth #1: The engine should be warmed up before driving. Reality: Idling is not an effective way to warm up your vehicle, even in cold weather. The best way to do this is to drive the vehicle. With today's modern engines, you need no more than 30 seconds of idling on winter days before driving away.

Myth #2: Idling is good for your engine. Reality: Excessive idling can actually damage your engine components,

THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

Clowns to the left of me jokers to the right

Here I am ... stuck in the middle with you!

Dr. Charles Ormsby
VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

I must confess, the graphic accompanying this article is very unfair. My colleagues on the School Committee have much better taste in fashion than that.

But they sure did pull off a doozy of a joke this past week.

Can you believe it? They decided to give away \$345,000 of the taxpayers' hard-earned money to the teachers union while getting nothing in return. Man, that's a hoot!!

And they made this gift ... not just for this year, but for every year in perpetuity! That's right, forever. Wowzer!

Now that would be hilarious all by itself, but they really whacked it out of the park this time. They decided to pull this stunt after the Board of Selectmen (BOS) announced that it was adamantly opposed to the agreement. Take that!

I know, you're saying, "That's nothing new."

Well, you'd be right, except that this time they torched the money just minutes after the town's Finance Committee (FINCOM) voted almost unanimously to join the Board of Selectmen in opposing the contract. LOL!

Yes, the elected members of the BOS, myself, and all eight voting members of the FINCOM opposed the proposed contract settlement (a single, newly appointed FINCOM member abstained).

I understand that the town's Cub Scouts and Brownies were also against the agreement after they heard that the school libraries would stay closed, but they were too afraid of the clowns and jokers to register their complaints.

And I can understand why. My colleagues on the School Committee refused to allow an elected member of the BOS to voice his opposition to their joke.

That's right, Richard Nardella, an elected member of the Board of Selectmen who had previously expressed concern over the financial impact of the proposed agreement, respectfully requested permission to speak. With very little consideration, except my very vocal opposition, they denied him that courtesy. If they had a pie, I think they would have given it to him straight in the kisser!

Yes I'm stuck in the middle with you
And I'm wondering what it is
I should do
It's so hard to keep this smile
from my face
Losing control yeah,
I'm all over the place
Clowns to the left of me,
jokers to the right, here I am
Stuck in the middle with you

To be fair, they did allow Mark Caggiano, a member of the BOS, to speak. But they did so only because the BOS was guaranteed a vote on the contract by the town's Charter and Mr. Caggiano was



Well I don't know why I came here tonight
I got the feeling that something ain't right
I'm so scared in case I'll fall off my chair
And I'm wondering how I'll get down the stairs

Clowns to the left of me, jokers to the right,
here I am ... Stuck in the middle with you

**"Stuck In the Middle With You" - by J. EGAN & GERRY RAFFERTY
As recorded by Stealers Wheel**

the selectmen's formally designated representative.

So what did Mr. Caggiano say on behalf of the BOS? He indicated that there was concern over available funds both this year and next and that these raises should not be approved when many of the town's citizens were worried about having any jobs at all.

After Selectman Nardella was silenced, Mark Rogers, vice chair of the FINCOM and its designated representative, asked to speak. Talk about inviting a kick in the teeth.

The chutzpah factor was pretty high at this point and initial indications from Chair Whidden were to tell Mr. Rogers to go back to his neighborhood.

She must think we have nothing to learn by considering the perspectives of our BOS and FINCOM members, both of whom spend much of their spare time studying the town's revenues and expenditures and helping the town to avoid fiscal ruin.

Now you might wonder why Ms. Whidden didn't want the FINCOM's input on the contract. Surely she would assume that our nine-member finance board would see the wisdom of the School Committee's negotiated settlement and thus would have voted to support the proposed contract.

The answer, of course, is that one of her scouts had returned just moments before to whisper in her ear the news of the FINCOM's near unanimous disapproval.

Time to circle the wagons!
Clearly, following our restrictive "public comment" rules was now infinitely more important than listening to the advice of our Finance Committee.

The School Committee was determined to pull off this nasty prank and the less dissent the better! Unfortunately, at this critical juncture, committee member Nobile lost his sense of humor and decided to side with me and suggest that ... well

maybe ... just maybe ... we should let Mr. Rogers speak. He probably was worried that he would be banned from "the neighborhood" if we didn't!!

Mr. Rogers, recovering from the initial rejection, proceeded to read the FINCOM's motion disapproving the negotiated increases. He said that "the Finance Committee urged the School Committee to vote no on the salary increase and go back to the negotiating table," and later compared the town's financial outlook to "some variety of a train wreck."

Faced with a surrender demand, I fully expected Chair Whidden to yell "Nuts!"

Instead, Superintendent Marini weighed in saying that we were fairly confident of our ability to afford the contract this year, but that the budget for the following year may prove to be very stressful. In any case, he noted that the contract was "only

Try to make some sense of it all
But I can see it makes
no sense at all
Is it cruel to go to sleep
on the floor
Yeah I don't think that I
can take anymore
Clowns to the left of me,
jokers to the right, here I am
Stuck in the middle with you

for one year and would be re-negotiated next spring."

Wait a minute!! If the world is melting down and next year's budget is likely to be under considerable stress (not to mention the budgets of our town's families), why would any sane individual vote to approve an average raise of 4.4% for returning staff?

Won't these raises chew up a major portion of the monies derived from the recent override? Yes they will. Won't this unnecessary expenditure of \$345,000 put critical educational services at risk? Of course it will.

And, what is meant by describing the contract as "only for one year?" These raises establish the base upon which future negotiated raises will be added! Does the School Committee expect to negotiate these raises away next year? Of course not.

A motion on the new contract was made and seconded. The vote was taken. The gavel fell. The deed was done. The prank was pulled.

It was the same 4-2 vote that cursed the town three years ago (four school committee members against myself and the BOS).

At this point, several dozen union activists, who had packed the room to make sure no-one on the committee got cold feet, applauded and then got up and left. I guess they weren't too interested in our follow up discussions on curriculum improvements or making Adequate Yearly Progress. Party time!

Next month we will begin discussions of the school budget for FY2010. Don't you think it will be a real knee-slapper when we can't afford librarians, when we have to cut electives, and when we have to raise fees for transportation and sports? How about those tutors for math or reading?

I don't hear any laughs. All I hear is moans and groans and the gnashing of teeth.

My apologies to the taxpayers. My gut wrenching regrets to our school children.

All I can say is, "Here I am ... Stuck in the middle with you."



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



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Paying Attention with Tom Duggan

Some lingering questions about Pat Blanchette, Andrea Traficanti and Frank McCann

Tom Duggan

VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

Lawrence City Council President Patrick Blanchette desperately wants to be the next mayor of Lawrence.

Given his associations with certain city employees who will benefit from him becoming the next mayor here are some lingering questions about Blanchette and his friends and campaign supporters, Andrea Traficanti and Frank McCann.

Currently, Traficanti is suing the city for permanent disability, claiming she is so stressed from the politics in city hall that she can never work in any job ever again.

If Traficanti's health is so debilitated from the stress of Lawrence politics why has she been working on Blanchette's campaign for mayor?

Why was she working on his reelection campaign last year, knocking on doors, holding signs, making phone calls, and coordinating volunteers while collecting a check for being too stressed to work?

If Blanchette was such a good friend and was genuinely concerned about the poor failing health of the debilitated Traficanti, why would he let her do all that work on his political campaign knowing how stressed she is?

As mayor, Blanchette will be in charge of settling lawsuits, deciding whether they go to trial and what cases should be

appealed if a verdict is unfavorable to the city.

What will Blanchette do if the Traficanti lawsuit is still lingering when he takes office?

Will he write a big fat check to Traficanti (courtesy of the taxpayers) to pay her back for years of doing his political bidding and helping him get elected to the mayor's office?

Will he pay her legal bills?

Will he give her back her job in city hall or give her a better job ... say ... chief of staff in the mayor's office?

If he does, will anyone be surprised?

As the current council president who prides himself on persecuting public employees he perceives to be abusing the system, (remember Jim Bowers? Caroline Ganley? John Griffin?) does Pat Blanchette have any problem with the fact that Traficanti is claiming she is disabled and cannot work for the rest of her life while she is applying for jobs all over the place?

And why are they all taxpayer-funded jobs?

Do Traficanti and Blanchette really believe she has a constitutional right to a public job for the rest of her life?

Why doesn't she go back to work for GemCorp or apply for a non-political job in the private sector if Lawrence politics is so stressful and she really wants to work?

While she was applying for a job as the city's Cemetery Superintendent, did she ever once exhibit symptoms of post traumatic stress while sitting through hours of interviews and meetings at Lawrence City Hall?

Why was Traficanti catering a city council meeting (in city hall) while collecting a paycheck that week for being too disabled to work in city hall?

Does Blanchette have any problem with any of this?

Is it crossing the line to suggest that the personal relationship with her immediate supervisor, Frank McCann (her then, live-in boyfriend, now husband) created some of the stress that Traficanti is alleging to have experienced on the job?

How about Mr. McCann? He is claiming work related stress too.

Did working with his live-in girlfriend and immediate subordinate contribute to his stress in any way?

Most couples I know can't shop together without causing each other stress. And, with Traficanti's immediate supervisor being her live-in boyfriend, why couldn't he protect her from all the daily stress and harassment she supposedly endured on the job?

Will a Mayor Blanchette write him a check, care of the taxpayers?

And if he does, how many zeroes will be at the end of the number Blanchette decides to put on that check to Mr. McCann?

Then there are the DiAdamos who were fired by Mayor Sullivan after losing the Traficanti workers compensation case in the first place. Will a Mayor Blanchette bring back the DiAdamo Law firm to handle the city's claims when he is the one making those decisions?

One thing is for sure, any candidate running for mayor should be asked these kind of questions during the campaign.

After all, we are talking about public dollars in the care and control of the mayor of Lawrence.

The last question I will leave you with is this:

Will Pat Blanchette's association with Traficanti and McCann doom his front runner status in the 2009 mayors race?

Ah, so many questions, so few answers.

STAY TUNED!



Tom Duggan is the president of Valley Patriot, Inc., a former Lawrence School Committeeman, and hosts the Paying Attention! Radio Program on WCAP, 980AM, every Saturday afternoon from 10am-noon. You can email your comments to Tdugjr@aol.com

Thoughts for the coming new year

Peter Larocque

LAWRENCE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Now that the Presidential Election is over and a winner has been declared, I would like to congratulate President-Elect Barack Obama. This victory by the democrats has stirred up many comments for example, we now hear that the republicans not just lost the election but that they also have lost their way, they have lost their voice and they need to regroup.

As a lifetime conservative republican, I find myself saying wait a minute! I haven't lost my way, I haven't lost my voice and I never lost my principles so I don't see the need for myself to regroup. Obviously there are some who call themselves republicans who have to ask themselves are they really republicans? Do they believe in small government and a small tax burden on the U.S. Citizens?

Do they believe that all good hard work is honorable and if you are able bodied, you should work so that you can support yourself and your family. The problem with this last election, the way I see it, was that there was no real republican on the November 4th ticket for President! Just because someone says that they are a republican, that doesn't make them a republican. If I were to purchase from the grocery store a can of peas and then change the label on the outside of the can to read cut corn, that would still have no effect on the peas inside of the can. The most telling of this point is who voted for the bail out? Both candidates for President, can I make the point any clearer?

Now as I write this article, the discussion in Washington is around do we bail out the big three auto manufactories? Look who favors this and can we learn something here?

Congress in Washington now thinks it is a bank and can use our money to loan or bail out whomever comes crying

looking for a hand out. My friends the U.S Government was never designed to be a Big Brother Bank for all. It was never the intent of our founding fathers that the U.S. Government would be responsible for creating jobs.

We must ask our elected officials, when and where does this end? Who is next to come to Washington in their big corporate jets to ask for a bail out?

Lets all of us in Lawrence ask to be bailed out and maybe our government will pay our mortgages or rent, water & sewer bills. Looks like to me that nobody is accountable for their actions any more. We can go and act foolishly and spend our money any which way we can and then when it's all gone, big brother will bail us out. Isn't that special!

It seems to me that the message that we are sending to our students is that good hard work is not necessary any more. Good old capitalism or being self-reliant is just about dead in America and if when you graduate from school, that is if you even want to graduate, because Government with the redistribution of wealth will be there to assist you in your finances from cradle to grave. We are witnessing the rewriting of the American Dream with its new battle cry, don't worry, together we can, be Happy!!!

I do pray for our President- Elect because the liberal expectations that have been placed on him and the promises made concerning our economic situation are comparable to parting the Red Sea or walking on water. Remember, he is just a man and he will need our prayers as we approach his Inauguration and thereafter.

As we move forward there are still American Citizens who hold to the belief that good, honest hard work in the classroom or at the work place is the best way to embrace the future and get to solutions to our economic problems. But all is not lost; in Lawrence we are seeing more of our students taken AP courses



PHOTO: TOM DUGGAN

Lawrence School Committee members Peter Larocque and Sam Reyes with Lawrence Mayor Michael Sullivan (chairman) and Superintendent of Schools, Wilfredo Laboy

getting College credits while in High School. We are seeing more students pass MCAS (which is the most difficult of all state test in the country), in their first attempt at the 10th grade level.

In closing I would like to share with you that I was at a Fundraiser recently for a candidate for the Mayor of Lawrence in 2009 and he stated that, "he would rather focus more on education than building Castles." Of course this was his way of taking a shot at the New Lawrence High School Campus. I guess this candidate doesn't believe that our kids in Lawrence deserve this new High School Campus. Well I believe they do! These new six stand alone High Schools service the NEED of our unique diverse student body in Lawrence. This New Lawrence High School Campus which houses these six High schools allows for more concentrated individual attention given to our children in Lawrence. These new facilities level the playing field and afford the same opportunities to the children of Lawrence that you would find in other communities. For years one would only find such a Campus in affluent or suburban, rural school districts and not in urban school districts. But as a life long citizen of Lawrence, he should have known this, one would think? So once again I find myself making the same request to candidates running for office, please do not build your campaign on the

backs of the children of Lawrence. It sounds like to me that if a candidate has a need to put down what is proving to be more and more a success in Lawrence, and as time goes on will be even a greater success, that maybe you need to rethink your reasoning for running for the Mayor of the City of Lawrence in the first place!

Like I said in last months article, The Lawrence High School Campus is making many experts in the field of Education across our country take note of what really is happening to change secondary education. But let me be clear, it is the hard work and determination of the teachers and the students who attend the Lawrence High School Campus who are the real success story of our City and not a building. To them I say congratulations and keep up the good work! We are proud of you! I would like to conclude this article by saying to all of the readers of the Valley Patriot, Merry Christmas and may God continue to bless you all!!!



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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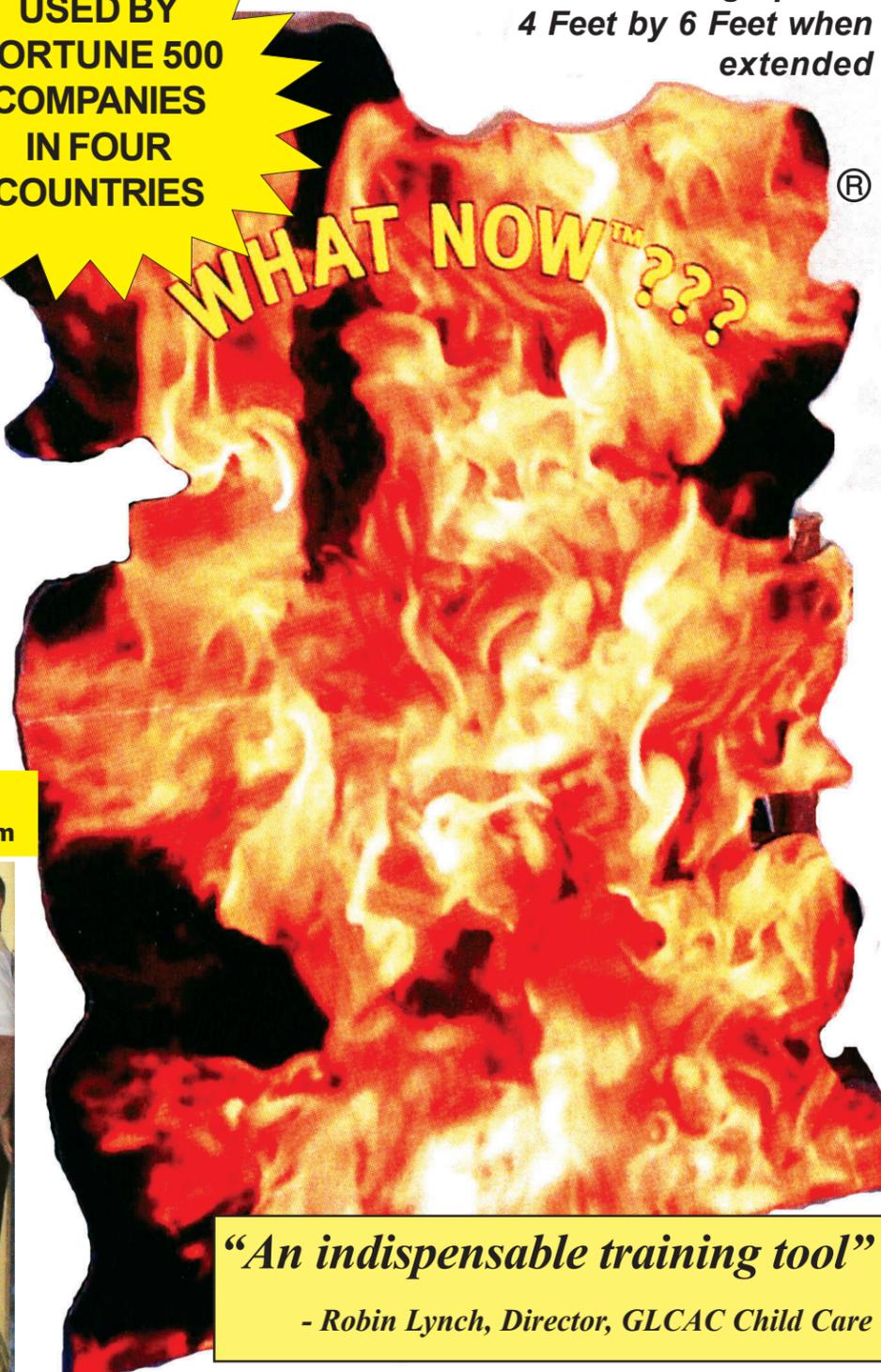
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Paula Porten
VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

The holidays are coming and I love to shop on line. I buy clothes, toys, books, electronics, and many of my gifts on line. I do many of my daily activities, like paying bills and talking to friends also on line. But, do you know what I and Massachusetts consumers cannot do on line?

We cannot purchase wine on line. That's right. Say you went to visit Aunt Sally's in New York for Thanksgiving and she had this great tasting Bordeaux that you wanted to buy for yourself. So, you wrote down the name of the wine and went home after the holiday and went on line to see about buying this great Bordeaux.

Well, when you press to button that says buy now, a message pops up which says, "Sorry, we do not ship to Massachusetts."

Yep, no shipping to Massachusetts. That is because in 2005 our Massachusetts legislature passed Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 138, § 19F, which prohibited out of state wineries who produced more than 30,000 gallons of wine a year from shipping into Massachusetts, if the winery was represented by an in-state wholesaler. This legislation was passed over Governor's Romney's veto. The purpose of the legislation was to

protect the 31 wineries in Massachusetts. What it failed to protect though, was the consumer and the constitution. On November 19, 2008 Judge Rya Zobel in Federal District Court in Boston ruled that the legislation was unconstitutional because it violated the Commerce Clause of the US Constitution, affecting free trade between states and discriminating against out of state wineries.



The case is Family Winemakers of California, et al. v. Jenkins, No. 06-CV-11682 (D. Mass.) Ed Jenkins is Chairman of the Massachusetts Alcoholic Beverages Control Commission. According to the case, in calendar year 2007 the 11% of wineries nationwide, which produced more than 30,000 gallons of wine accounted for 98% of the total volume of wine production.

Those wineries were barred from direct shipping to Massachusetts consumer. Kenneth W. Starr, former Solicitor General and an attorney with Kirkland & Ellis oversaw the strategy in this case.

The Massachusetts legislature now needs to enact a permit system that complies with Judge Zobel's ruling. So, I plan to contact my local legislature (Senator Baddour) to make sure that Judge Zobel's directive is being initiated and maybe by next holiday season, I can buy wine for gifts on line.



PHOTOS: COURTESY

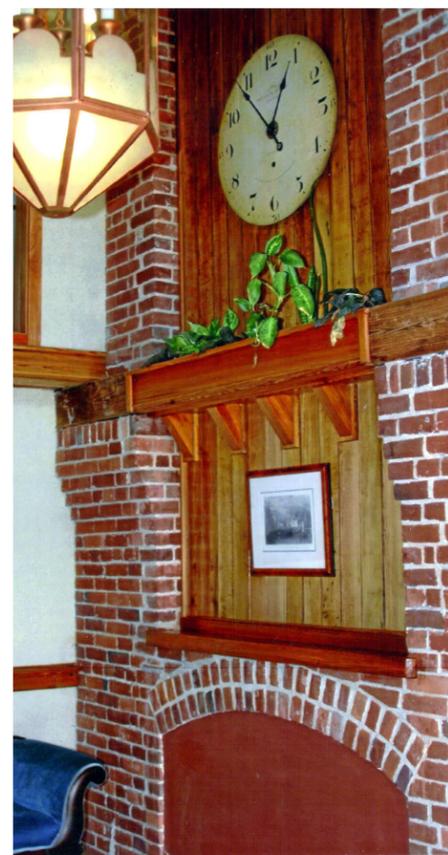
COMING NEXT MONTH : Our new series Lawrence on the Move!

Twenty years ago most of the mills in the city of Lawrence were empty, steel grates covered the doors and windows of abandoned storefronts lining Essex Street, Broadway, and much of the downtown, and the future of Lawrence's economic health was seen as non-existent.

Now, thanks to the hard work of city officials and members of the private sector, the City of Lawrence is on the move. Businesses large and small are starting to feel the benefits of that upward movement in one of the most impressive comebacks any mill city in the country has ever experienced.

Next month, The Valley Patriot will begin a new series called "Lawrence on the Move" where we will be highlighting the economic revitalization of the City of Lawrence's business community, the innovative entrepreneurs who took a gamble on the city, and the fruits of their labors. We begin our series with a look at the One Canal Street building, a former storage house for the Everett Mills.

One Canal Street is located near the Lawrence General Hospital and currently houses several businesses and human service offices. If you own or are involved in a major or minor business project in the city of Lawrence and would like to participate in our new series please contact The Valley Patriot at (978) 557-5413 or email us at valleypatriot@aol.com.



Top: The One Canal Street building. Above: hard wood finishing and rehabbed bricks in the lobby of the building

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The changing lineup of new media in Lowell

Richard Howe, Jr.
LOWELL COLUMNIST

The local media scene in Lowell saw some big changes in the past few weeks. The sun set on Sunrise as UMass Lowell's morning news and current events radio show on WUML 91.5 FM, fell victim to budget cuts. On the cable television front, a new politically-oriented interview show called City Life began cablecasting live each weekday on Lowell's public access TV station. Finally, Cliff Krieger, a retired Air Force colonel and local Republican activist launched Right-Side-of-Lowell, the newest addition to Lowell's very active blogosphere.

Sunrise began broadcasting on September 29, 2003 as a joint venture between the Lowell Sun and the University of Massachusetts Lowell and was originally called "Lowell Sunrise." The late Paul Sullivan, then an evening talk show host on WBZ radio in Boston and a Lowell Sun editor/columnist played a critical role in the show's inception as did Dana Skinner, the UML athletic director.

Although Sullivan never appeared on the air for Sunrise, the earliest version of the show reunited his old WLLH Morning Magazine colleagues, newscaster Bob Ellis and producer Tony Accardi.

From the beginning, it was apparent that Sunrise was primarily an effort by the Lowell Sun to join the mainstream media's trend towards teaming newspapers with electronic media such as cable television or broadcast radio. The earliest version of Sunrise consisted of pre-recorded segments that featured interviews of the day's newsmakers conducted by Sun reporters sandwiched between news, weather and traffic reports.

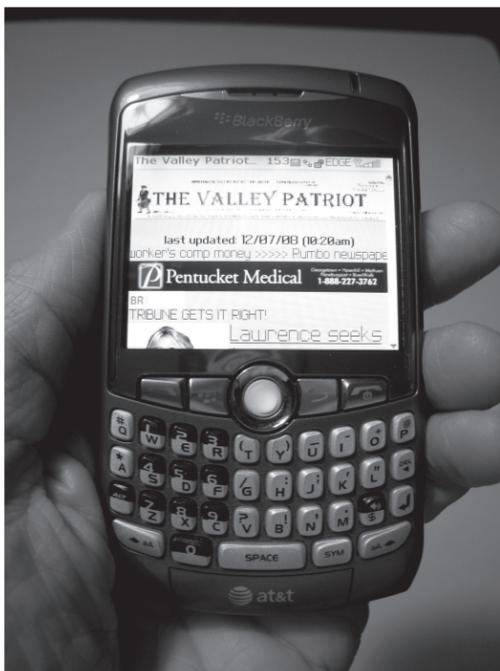
The anticipated synergism of partnering the newspaper and the radio station never materialized, however, and the Sun ended its radio experiment at the end of 2004.

At that time, the University took back full control of the radio station, broadcasting each day from 6:00 a.m. to

10:00 a.m. with Christine Dunlap joining Ellis and Accardi as the in-studio hosts. While this version of the show was trying to hit its stride, the University announced it would also "co-produce" a new radio program featuring Christopher Lydon, the longtime WBUR talk show host who had parted ways with that station under less than amicable circumstances.

By the agreement with UML, Lydon would host an hour-long daily radio program that would be broadcast on both WUML and Boston's WGBH. At first, the show would be produced at the WGBH studio but the plan was for Lydon to move to a soon-to-be-constructed studio on the Lowell campus by the fall of 2006 (neither the studio nor Lydon's move to Lowell ever happened).

UML agreed to pay Lydon \$12,500 per month through the duration of the contract. While many in Lowell were excited about the prestige the Lydon brand would bring to UML and the city, the size of his paycheck on the fact he would not actually be in Lowell created a substantial backlash against the endeavor. In October 2006, the University announced that it would terminate its contract with Lydon at the end of the year. While the Lydon agreement was in no way directly related to Sunrise, the locally produced program and WUML itself suffered collateral damage from the fallout over the Lydon episode.



Sunrise soon began downsizing and tweaking its format. Instead of three regular co-hosts, the show moved to a single host, a job rotated between Ellis and Dunlap on a day-to-day basis, joined each day by a new guest host selected from a long roster of volunteers.

The show also scaled back its hours, broadcasting live from 7 a.m. to 9 a.m., playing music during the 6 a.m. hour and replaying an hour of the same day's program at 9 a.m.

This was the version of Sunrise that was on the air for the past two years. While the size of its audience was open to question, the dedication of its listeners could never be doubted. Sunrise's chance to grow that audience came to an end on December 5, it's last day on the air. Forced by the current economic crisis to make drastic budget cuts, Chancellor Marty Meehan chose to terminate Sunrise. Every indication is that WUML will continue broadcasting, but it is unclear what programming will fill the morning slot vacated by Sunrise.

Just as Lowell was losing Sunrise, a new program loaded with potential burst on the local cable television scene.

"City Life" is a 90 minute politically-oriented interview program cablecast live each afternoon from 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Lowell's public access channel 8 and streamed live over the internet from

Lowell Telecommunication Corporation's website, www.ltc.org.

Each program is also replayed the next weekday morning at 7 a.m. on channel 8. The program is produced by John McDonough, who was a frequent guest host on radio station WCAP prior to its change in ownership. The on-camera hosts are George Anthes, another WCAP alumni, and Tom Byrne, who remains a regular guest on Warren Shaw's Saturday morning program on WCAP.

Most shows begin with Anthes and Byrne discussing the local issues of the day. Thirty minutes into the program they are joined by a different guest each day who remains with them for the final hour. With the immediacy of a live program and the consistency of a daily cablecast, City Life is a significant addition to Lowell's growing collection of "new media" outlets.

The most common form of "new media" is a blog and Lowell has a new one of those, too. Created by Cliff Krieger, who flew F-4s in Vietnam, Right-Side-of-Lowell tackles issues large and small in a thoughtful, well-reasoned way.

While Cliff is an active Republican, he is anything but an ideologue - he says that the title of his blog refers to his residence being in Ward 1 which, if you look at a map of Lowell, is always on the right side. The address of Cliff's blog is www.right-side-of-lowell.blogspot.com.

People in Lowell are passionate about politics so it's hard to imagine there being too many outlets for discussing the issues of the day. The addition of City Life and Right-Side-of-Lowell to the city's media scene should help fill the gap left by the demise of Sunrise.



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

Annual Radiothon Auction on 980 AM WCAP radio The Need has never been greater

From game systems to tickets for professional sports games, the variety of items make for great Christmas gifts.. all for a good cause.

Call in to bid on an item, or make a pledge.

Further info: <http://www.980wcapradiothon.com>

**Saturday Morning, December 13th
6:00 am through the Early Afternoon**

Donate Directly by calling the Salvation Army at 978-458 3396



The Farmtown lowdown: The Dracut news minute

A look at recent newsworthy developments and upcoming events from rural, old Dracut

George Papoulias

VALLEY PATRIOT DRACUT REPORTER

Dracut Food Pantry

The *Dracut Food Pantry* is a non-profit organization, whose mission is to support those in need. The Pantry gathers generous food donations from Dracut residents, to businesses, to schools.

The Pantry began last November by serving 11 families. Currently, the pantry has served 107 families and obtained non-profit status this past spring.

One of the more effective ways of gathering donations has been from food drives among various schools. The *Lakeview Junior High School* and its principal, Theresa Rogers recently completed a friendly competition between the 7th and 8th graders regarding who can raise the most.

The *Englesby Intermediate School* and its principal Bob Young recently gathered 6,000 canned goods and 120 Christmas hams.

The *Brookside Elementary School* and principal Jian Chrissitello also contributed with a food drive of their own. Superintendent of schools, Dr. William Mullin has also been an avid supporter of the cause.

The *Dracut Food Pantry* is still accepting non-perishable food items, paper towels, toilet paper and other health & beauty items like shampoo and soap. You can either drop off a donation at the *Moses Greeley Parker Library* or the *Dracut Fire Station*.

Dracut Rotary Club

The Dracut Rotary Club has donated much generosity and support to projects benefiting families, youth and elderly in need as well as the Dracut community. Some of these projects include:

- Annually donating thousands of dollars for college scholarships and causes benefiting children and Thanksgiving dinners for families in need.

- Funding the Dracut tercentennial monument at Dracut Center and handicap access doors at the Dracut Senior Center

- Supports the annual Dracut Summer Concert Series and the Lakeview Avenue Gazebo.

- Funded project recovery and the drug abuse hotline.

- Support local fundraisers like Salvation Army Kettle Drive & March of Dimes.

The rotary club also supports causes throughout the country and the world. This includes bringing water, needed supplies and electricity to the people of Haiti, sponsoring an exchange student from Ecuador and sending over \$38,000 in flood relief to the mid-west.

For more information on the Dracut Rotary Club, weekly meetings are held at *Coyle's Tavern* every Tuesday at 12:15pm or you can email: info@dracutrotary.org

Time to Chill

If you're the outdoors type, even during the winter temperatures, here's an idea: Beginning December 1st thru the 19th, the Dracut Recreation Department is accepting registrations for a *Skiing & Snowboarding Program*. Times of registration are Monday thru Friday, 8:30am to 12:00pm and 1:00pm to 4:30pm.

The program includes three different options: A \$65 lift ticket without skiing or snowboarding lessons.

The second option is a \$90 lift ticket along with ski lessons. The final option is a \$95 lift ticket with snowboarding lessons. The ski and snowboard lessons are for children ages 5-17. The valid dates of the ticket are one of four following Fridays: January 9th, 23rd, 30th and February 6th. The location is Bradford Ski Area and times are 6:00pm - 10:00pm.



For more information, contact the Recreation Department at 11 Spring Park Avenue or call (978)458-4478

Over 30 Basketball League

Calling all adults 30 years old and older interested in

playing recreation basketball. There are registration forms available on www.dracutbasketball.com.

Forms can be mailed to: Dracut Recreation Office, Town Hall Annex, 11 Springpark Avenue Dracut, MA 01826.

You can also drop a check off for \$75, made payable to Dracut Recreation.

The season begins January 4th and teams will be formed dependant on registration volume. All games will be played Sunday nights from 5pm to 9pm.

Booking New Programs

New young adult reading programs recently commenced at the Moses Greeley Parker Library.

Mother and Daughters Altered Book Club- This club is intended for mothers with daughters ages 11-18. Members of the club are encouraged to bring in hardcover books from home and let their imagination run wild by designing the book into a form of artwork. Location of sign-ups is the reference desk on the 2nd floor of the library.

The club will meet every other Monday at 6:30pm in the Children's Craft Room.

Twilight Party - The famous, vampire love flick *Twilight* is sweeping the nation. For the avid *Twilight* fan of any age, the Moses Greeley Parker Library is offering the perfect party. On December 20th at 1:00pm you can celebrate the books and

the movie. Feel free to arrive, dressed as your favorite *Twilight* character. The party will also feature snacks, and lots of *Twilight* related fun such as trivia, a scavenger hunt and a costume contest.

Sign ups are the 2nd floor reference desk.

Fantasy Novel Club- The perfect club for kids between grades 7-12 who are interested in movies or books involving witches, dragons or wizards. There will be a weekly discussion of books, movies and TV shows including fantasy themes or elements. Members of the club are also invited to bring in their favorite fantasy novels or board games as board games could be played if requested.

The club will meet every Wednesday at 5:30pm at the Young Adult area on the 2nd floor.

No sign ups necessary.

Gaming Group for Ages 6-12- This club offers a variety of games including a Wii Game system with Guitar Hero and Dance, Dance Revolution. Other games offered include Twister, Chess, Checkers, Monopoly and several other Brain Teasers. The Gaming Group meets every Tuesday from 3:00pm-4:30pm. Starting January 6th, this program will then be offered every other Tuesday.

Make Junk Drawer Jewelry- Club designed for ages 12-17 and takes place December 9 and 11 from 3:30pm - 5:30pm. Also December 13 from 1:30pm-3:30pm

Holiday Library Hours

The Greeley Parker Library will be closing at 4:30pm on Christmas Eve and will not reopen 'til Monday December 29th. The library will also be closed on January 1st.



George Papoulias of Dracut is a graduate of Rivier College (B.A. in Communications) is currently a producer at WCAP for Merrimack Valley Afternoons, the Lowell Spinners, Devil's Hockey, Press Pass with Teddy Panos and Paying Attention! with Tom Duggan.

Prudential Real Estate announces association with Ben Consoli Real Estate in Bradford

BRADFORD - (Grassroots Newswire) - Prudential Real Estate Affiliates, Inc., a Prudential Financial, Inc. [NYSE: PRU] company, today announced the affiliation of longtime independent Ben Consoli REALTORS. The new affiliate will operate as Prudential Ben Consoli REALTORS, effective immediately.

Broker/Owner Paul Consoli said he chose Prudential Real Estate as much for its technological advantages as its brand recognition and marketing programs.

"We are positioning our company for long-term growth and we felt the best way to accomplish that is to align with a major brand," said Consoli. "We chose Prudential Real Estate for its proprietary sales systems and its significant presence on the Internet. Simply put, Prudential Real Estate will help us extend our reach and stature to the millions who shop for real estate online.

"Of course, the Prudential name offers us global brand recognition and one of the finest reputations for strength and expertise," Consoli continued. "I have always admired Prudential for its class."

Consoli anticipates a smooth transition as his company's core values and corporate culture match those at Prudential Real Estate. "Our companies are intensely focused on customer service with integrity, and on winning," said Consoli. "We are

eager to go forward as a member of the Prudential Real Estate network."

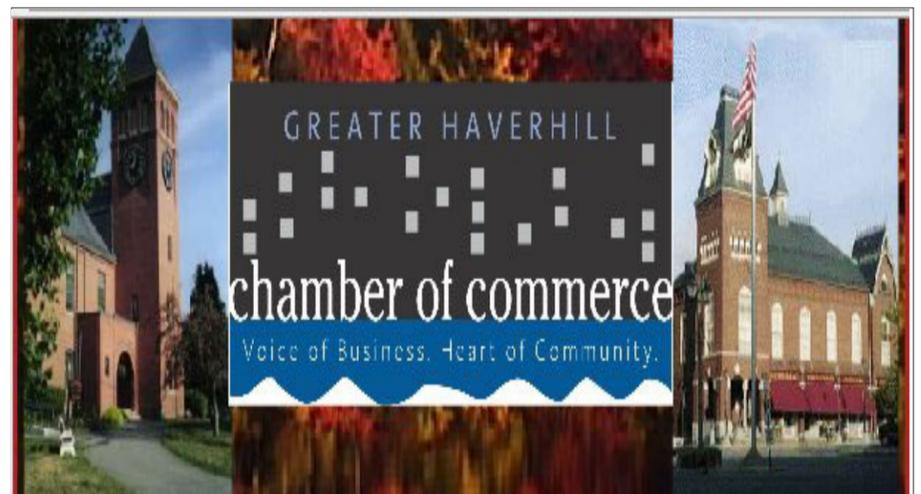
Prudential Ben Consoli REALTORS, founded in 1972, specializes in residential, land, investment property, new construction and small commercial sales in greater Haverhill, Merrimack Valley and south New Hampshire. The company plans to add new markets and grow its sales team by half over the next year.

"We are no longer a single agency slugging it out with the giants," Consoli said. "We are part of one of the finest affiliate networks in the business. In particular, the Prudential Real Estate affiliates in our area do a fantastic job, and were proud to be a part of that team."

Laurie Keenan, president of Prudential Real Estate Affiliates, Inc., welcomed Prudential Ben Consoli REALTORS to the network.

"Paul and his company are the local-market experts with a wonderful reputation for customer service and community outreach," Keenan said. "The company is a vital part of the greater Bradford community and we're happy they've joined our network."

Prudential Ben Consoli REALTORS operates at 297 South Main St. Bradford, Mass., 01835; (978) 372-9171; www.consoli.com.



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HAVERHILL ON THE MOVE

Haverhill Mayor Fiorentini explains your local taxes

Jim Fiorentini
HAVERHILL MAYOR

Tax Classification Explained

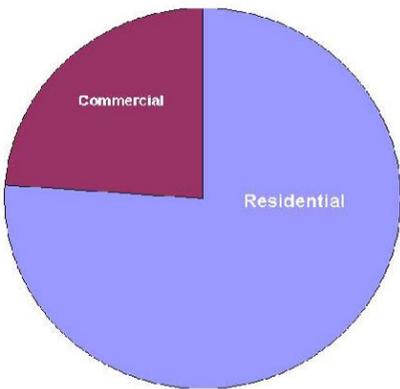
Tax Classification Has Nothing to Do with Raising Money

Tax classification is a mystery to most people. People tell me their eyes roll over when we try to explain it. Let me try my best.

State law allows cities to set a different tax rate for businesses than they do for residents. Nearly all cities our size take advantage of this law and shift some of the tax burden onto business. Our shift is lower than the shift in most industrial cities.

The tax classification hearing has nothing to do with raising money for the city. The pie chart below explains it:

The blue part is the amount of the total tax levy in the city paid by residents. The red part is the part paid by business. Tax classification can shift things within the



pie chart, but it can not change the size of the chart.

Tax classification does not raise money for the city, it simply shifts the burden. What the Numbers Mean

At the the hearing, you will hear numbers like "150" and "140" being mentioned. The higher that number, the higher the tax on business and the lower the tax on residents. That's the easy part. Exactly what the numbers mean is complicated, and even people who think they understand the system often do not.

Start by thinking of a hypothetical system without tax classification --without any shift to business. The number "150", the shift Haverhill is at today, means that businesses pay 150% of the hypothetical rate that would be charged if there was no tax shift. Residents pay about 90.5% of that hypothetical rate. [Note that this is NOT the same thing as saying that businesses pay 150% of the residential rate, it is 150% of the hypothetical rate.]

The number 140 means that businesses pay 140% of the rate that would be charged if there was no shift.

Currently Haverhill is at 150, the maximum rate we can charge. Other industrial cities are allowed to charge higher rates, and most of them do. Cities like Lawrence, Lowell, Lynn,, Framingham, Quincy and Medford are at 175, Salem and Methuen are at 165, Andover is at 146. Smaller towns generally do not have classification at all (Newburyport) or charge a very low rate (Amesbury, 115.)

The Big Picture, Taxes are Shifting from Homeowners to Business

Assuming the tax classification rates remains about the same at the meeting, residential tax bills will remain fairly level, and business taxes will go up.

The reason is simple: reflecting national trends, residents lost value on their homes, business values stayed about constant.

The Proposed Increases

The proposed increase is for the average residential tax bill to rise by 1.1%, an average of \$34 over a year.

Residential taxpayers means all residential dwelling units-- single family homes, condos, and multifamily dwellings.

When we look at just single family homes, the results are about the same.

The average single family homeowner will see an increase a 2.14% increase, amounting to \$71 a year on average.

While residential values were dropping, resulting in a lower increase for residents, commercial properties held their own value wise. Their values did not drop and their average increase is \$1,100. The tax on the average industrial property increased by \$1,700.

The "average" business is valued at over \$600,000, and, of course, some businesses are valued a great deal less so their increase is less.

A Brief Explanation of Proposition 2 and a half

Under Proposition 2 and half, the most we can raise taxes overall throughout the city without an override is 2 and a half percent.

This limit applies to the total tax levy in the city, not to individual bills. Individual

bills can go up by more, or less than 2.5%, so long as the total amount of taxes the city raises does not go up by more than 2 and half percent.

Go back to that pie chart. Proposition 2 and half means that the total size of the pie chart can go up by 2 and half percent. Prop 2 and half has nothing to do with what happens inside the pie chart.

New growth

One exception to Proposition 2 and half is what is called "new growth"-- new additions to the tax bill because someone built or renovated a building for a new home or business. A city can raise revenues by 2 and half percent PLUS new growth.

New growth, if done correctly, helps a city and helps keep your taxes at a reasonable level.

In Haverhill, we had the lowest residential tax increase in the region two years in a row.

A primary reason is because of the new growth of businesses like Target, Lowes, Magellan Aerospace, and our newest edition, Retail Brand Alliance, makers of Brooks Brothers suits. We are very aggressive in recruiting new businesses, because that provides jobs, opportunity and new tax revenue to keep your bill reasonable.

Answers to Some Common Tax Questions

How can I check the value of my home or business?

I have asked the assessors to put the information about the value of your home on line as quickly as possible.

FIorentini, page 28

MICHITSON NEWSLETTER

Dear Haverhill Citizen,
I am John Michitson, Candidate for Mayor of Haverhill.
A lifelong resident, I live here with my wife Heidi and our 2 children.
Just as my parents and grandparents did, I love this city. I believe I have the vision and the skills to be your Mayor.
Please take a moment to read this first issue of my newsletter.
This issue will catch you up on recent events including my presentation to the City Council on Economic Development.
My Long Range Plan will continue to evolve in subsequent issues of this newsletter.
Sincerely,
John Michitson
2009 Candidate for Haverhill Mayor

Highlights from 10/16/08 Fundraiser
On October 16th we had a terrific fundraiser at Michael's Function Hall (formerly Pat's Beef House). Those present were abuzz with their support.
Below is synopsis of the message they heard.
"I believe we have a city straining to release itself from the shackles of budget woes and poised to reemerge as a place that all the residents will be proud to call their home.

I believe I can take charge of that reemergence and do it with an energetic approach that is unafraid to:
* Reach for a lofty goal;
* Stumble along the way;
* Start over with a fresh idea;
* Disregard my own political future;
I will insist that all in government, education and business engage in a journey with Citizens that will create

renewed pride in Haverhill. This journey will not be an easy one, but in the end the changes, and yes, sometimes, the sacrifices, will make Haverhill a gem in the region.

We must focus on strengthening the fundamentals needed for success - professional management, collaborative economic development, an education system second to none and a high quality of life for all of our citizens.

I ask all our citizens: TAKE PRIDE, TAKE CHARGE. Together we can create a great future for this great City."

Helping Those in Need

I participated in two fundraisers to help those in need especially during the Holidays. I was honored to ask for pledges at the annual Emmaus House fundraiser breakfast and was a fashion model (yeah - I'm a slave to fashion) at the annual Community Action, Inc. fashion show fundraiser - both of which were held at DiBurro's.

The Emmaus House provides the shelter and food for Haverhill's homeless, which is an essential service for our community, especially during the cold Winter and has touched people in my life. Community Action Inc. is a human service provider that includes the Head Start program. I worked closely with Community Action Inc. in the 1990s to attain a Federal Funding grant for Danny's Mentoring/Tutoring program. My wife, Heidi, served on the Community Action Board of Directors.

I salute both organizations for the essential services that they provide our community.

MICHITSON, page 28

Little Sprouts opens their 9th School



On Monday November 24, 2008, Little Sprouts opened the doors to their ninth early education school in Haverhill, MA. This is Little Sprouts' second school in the Haverhill community- on the campus of Northern Essex Community College and now at 443 West Lowell Ave. in Haverhill.

This new addition has the capacity to educate 157 infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and school age students. "Little Sprouts has been part of Haverhill community since 1995," noted Susan Leger-Ferraro, President and Founder of Little Sprouts.

"It is truly an honor to expand the educational advancement in the city of Haverhill. Little Sprouts has created the opportunity for admission of 150 students infants through school ages, added 50+ jobs and built a gorgeous \$2.5mm piece of real estate that focuses on family and educational services. We are delighted

our expansion will grow our legacy within Haverhill and the Commonwealth."

To find out how you can enroll your child at any of the 9 Little Sprouts schools please visit www.littlesprouts.com

About Little Sprouts Inc.: Little Sprouts has been a leader in providing award winning early education since 1982. Little Sprouts, 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, and believes in the commonality in humanity. We embrace that unity is best achieved by celebrating diversity. Little Sprouts has 9 schools in Massachusetts supporting families that reflect 32 cultures speaking 23 languages from all walks of social, economic, religious and ethnic backgrounds.

To learn more about how you can join us in making the world a better place, visit us at www.littlesprouts.com

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PHOTO: COURTESY

Seeking Shelter to be used as a tool in humane education throughout the region

Kelley Library's Director, Allison Baker, is pictured here with Ray Denis, Director of Development for Salem Animal Rescue League, accepting a copy of SEEKING SHELTER, the booklet written by SARL volunteers.

The shelter will be donating to public libraries in each of the eighteen communities that SARL serves, copies of SEEKING SHELTER, to be used as a tool in humane education throughout the region.

The book is a compilation of volunteers' personal animal stories, original poetry, history of the rescue league, an original watercolor, and thought provoking essays dealing with sheltering animals who have been victims of abandonment or abuse.

Through the efforts of Salem Animal Rescue League staff and volunteers, these dogs and cats have been provided medical care, shelter, unlimited love and compassion, and finally found their forever homes. Ray Denis states, "our purpose is to raise the public

consciousness regarding animal welfare with the goal of eradicating animal abuse and increasing the number of adoptions at the shelter.

Over seven hundred animals came through our doors last year. Sad to say, that number has increased in 2008."

SEEKING SHELTER will be available to the public for \$10 at SARL's Holiday Craft Fair held at the shelter on December 5, 6, 7 from 10 a.m. - 4 p.m., along with homemade bakery, holiday decorations and craft items, jewelry, and pet boutique.

"All proceeds from this event will go to help the animals in need," said Denis.

"Our fair has been a holiday tradition for shelter supporters for over sixteen years. It's a fun way to help the animals." Salem Animal Rescue League is located on Route 28 in Salem, NH directly behind Baron's Appliances. Shelter adoption hours are Thursdays from 12 - 8 p.m., Fridays, Saturdays, and Sunday from noon - 4 p.m. To speak with Director, Ray Denis, call 603-893-3117.

Purchase unique holiday gifts and support the Merrimack River Feline Rescue Society

Get into the holiday spirit without braving the mall crowds by supporting a local animal charity caring for cats in need. The Merrimack River Feline Rescue Society (MRFRS) is offering unique gifts this holiday season with proceeds benefiting the charity. A \$500 donation allows the donor to name a Feral Cat Clinic in honor of a person or kitty while a \$150 donation purchases a leaf on the MRFRS giving tree. Donors can choose a cat at one of the MRFRS facilities to sponsor for one year for a \$120 donation (just \$20 a month) and \$50 will allow the donor to name one of the charity's nine feeding stations with proceeds going to the year-round upkeep and maintenance of the stations.

Other gift items include MRFRS T-shirts available for \$15 at MRFRS headquarters in Salisbury, the 2009 MRFRS Cat Calendar for \$15, and handmade cat toys



PHOTO: RACHEL PORTEN

starting at just \$1. Please visit www.mrfrs.org or call 978-462-0760 for more information. MRFRS is a nationally recognized, non-profit volunteer organization committed to ensuring the health and welfare of feral and domestic cats and kittens by promoting proactive, compassionate, no-kill programs.

Dogs, cats, and other people by Matthew Margolis

Holiday Puppies

Matthew Margolis
SYNDICATED COLUMNIST

Warm and cute. Wide-eyed and innocent. Peering out of a box once tied with a big red bow. Who wouldn't want a puppy for Christmas?

But that's not the question. The question is: Who's a good candidate to receive such a gift?

The problem with holiday puppies has everything to do with the holidays. It's a chaotic time, and puppies need stability and routine. They require significant one-on-one attention, which is hard to give while prepping hors d'oeuvres, filling glasses and basting a turkey.

And it's even harder to give en route from JFK to LAX with a connecting at O'Hare. Holiday travel simply leaves no time for puppy.

But even for those staying put for the holiday season, the home itself is often turned on its head, filled with strange people coming and going, doors opening and closing, lights blinking, candles burning, cords tangled up behind that irresistible glowing tree playing host to a cornucopia of bite-sized glass ornaments. All dangerous for puppy.

People who give the gift of a puppy often have their hearts in the right place. In many ways, a puppy embodies the spirit of Christmas: hopeful, playful, joyful, and full of life and love.

But a puppy isn't merchandise that can be returned like a lamp. A dog of any age is a living, breathing, sensitive creature that demands and deserves the time and attention it takes to make him a welcome and permanent member of the family.

The frenetic nature of most households during the time leading up to Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's in no way lends itself to the essential introductory and bonding period that forms the foundation of the human-canine relationship. Strike one.

Then there's housebreaking. If the dog owner is consumed with cleaning, cooking, shopping and wrapping, the dog probably isn't steeped in the Feed-Water-Walk system that leads to successful housebreaking.

Strike two.

And from a motivational standpoint, if it's 28 degrees outside, it's that much more unappealing to get up and take puppy out two or three times between sundown and sunrise. Strike three. Why don't people give puppies for the Fourth of July?

The reality is that many — far too many — holiday puppies are returned to pet stores or abandoned in shelters come January. This being the case, the description of the best candidate to



PHOTO: COURTESY

receive a puppy for Christmas looks something like:

- has very few friends
- has no travel plans
- received minimal party invitations
- loves freezing walks in the dead of night
- hates holiday decorations, doesn't open the door to carolers, and refuses to buy or bake sweets of any kind, but especially those containing chocolate.

Lucky pooch.

All that considered, a puppy is still a personal choice. Not everyone wants one. Not everyone can take care of one. And those who want and are able to care for one will also want to be involved in the process of finding their perfect pup.

This year, instead of giving an actual puppy, why not give a puppy starter kit to someone you suspect might really love to have a dog? The kit could include a few books or videos on dog training, a soft chew toy, a blanket, a crate with good visibility, and a gift certificate for a trip to a shelter or rescue on you — or any combination of the above!

In the end, if it turns out that puppy person is actually a cat person, no harm done. Everything in the box wrapped with the big red bow is as it should be — merchandise that can be returned.

Woof!

Dog trainer Matthew "Uncle Matty" Margolis is co-author of 18 books about dogs, a behaviorist, a popular radio and television guest, and host of the PBS series "WOOF! It's a Dog's Life!" Read all of Uncle Matty's columns at the Creators Syndicate website at www.creators.com, and visit him at www.unclematty.com. Send your questions to dearuncle.gazette@unclematty.com or by mail to Uncle Matty at P.O. Box 3300, Diamond Springs, CA 95619. COPYRIGHT 2008 CREATORS SYNDICATE, INC.

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Donations Needed!!!



Needy animals are asking for your help! One Tail at a Time Rescue in Haverhill, MA rescues puppies and dogs from high-kill shelters in the South. We are always looking for donations, especially during the winter months. A list of what we could use is below. I've started a pile of things that I don't need anymore and instead of throwing things away, it goes to good use!

Thanks in advance for anything you might be able to donate! -Kate Whitney

- *Sheets *Towels *Blankets *Paper towels *Newspapers (we really need these!)
- *Dog crates/Cat carriers *Dog or Cat food (dry or canned)
- *Toys/Chewys/Treats *Monetary donations are always welcome

If you have any questions, please contact The Valley Patriot's Puppy Girl, Kate Whitney at kahw313@aol.com or 978-808-4893

PUPPY LOVE! with Kate Whitney

Some holiday tips and reminders for dog owners

Kate Whitney

VALLEY PATRIOT PUPPY COLUMNIST

I hope everyone and their pets had a wonderful (and tummy filling) Thanksgiving!

It was my first Thanksgiving with my dogs, Dash and Honey, so it was particularly special for me. I can't believe it's already come and gone and we are now on to December. With that in mind, I wanted to talk about puppies and presents. This is a BIG no-no for many reasons. I understand that there's nothing cuter than a little puppy with a red bow on its neck. On every child's Christmas list there is usually some type of animal listed. The suggestions in this article are for any type of animal, but for this column I'm using a dog for my examples (after all, my nickname is puppy girl!)

The people who work and volunteer in shelters and rescues know what I'm talking about when I say that especially after the holidays we see a huge increase in unwanted dogs being dropped off at shelters. A lot of these dogs and puppies that come in were given as gifts. If you want to get someone a dog as a present, *please please* make sure you have thoroughly thought the idea through and also think carefully about the following: Make sure the person is ready for the responsibility and commitment that comes along with a new puppy. If you fail to do this it will be horribly unfair to both the puppy and the person. Remember that this will be a life-changing present; not only immediately, but for year's to come. Dog's can live for a long time; plan on at least 10 years. A dog is a living being that needs a lot of time and attention. Does the person have this time to dedicate to a new dog? To housebreak a puppy is a process that takes time, patience, and consistency. This process needs to start as soon as the new puppy comes home and may take up to a year to complete, sometimes longer. The holidays are a very busy time, and most people can't imagine bringing in something new that requires constant supervision and care. Can the person provide the puppy what it needs? On top of money recently spent on holiday purchases, the new pet will require



PHOTO: COURTESY

additional immediate spending. Can the person take on another big expense? Vets bills, monthly heartworm medication and flea/tick preventative are costly. Don't forget about food, treats, toys, beds, collars, etc that will also add on more than a few bucks.

To take care of a dog responsibly is not easy or cheap. If you can't take care of your dog the way that it deserves to be taken care of, it's not time for you to bring one into the family or to give to someone else. If you are thinking of giving a puppy as a present, make sure you know what's going on in the recipient's life. Do they have a stable job so money won't be a problem? Do they have stable housing that allows dogs? Are they planning on having kids? Some breeds are better suited for young kids and babies; make sure you do some research. Although dogs can bring happiness and joy, sometimes they can bring added stress because it's an additional responsibility and to care for them properly takes time. I think that having any type of pet is great, but make sure that it will not become overlooked once the novelty wears off. After considering all these things and weighing all the responsibilities, if you do decide to go get a puppy, please make sure that you don't leave it in a small box all day waiting for the right moment. Remember, it needs lots of oxygen and will need to potty, so keep your eye on it!

With this said, please only get a dog as a gift for your own family or someone very close to you. Also be sure that the recipient truly would love to have the dog and, again, is capable and ready to care for it responsibly. Make sure you also know what type of dog they were interested in. Don't get them a Great Dane if they like a smaller breed dog. If you are getting a new puppy for your kids, realize that the novelty will wear off and most likely YOU will be the one caring for the puppy. Don't get a new dog thinking that it will be the kid's responsibility to care for it. To make sure the dog is cared for properly, show the kids what good animal care is and supervise to make sure it gets done and gets done right. Getting a new puppy for yourself or someone else should be a well-researched, thought out process. Please remember that giving a pet as a present lasts longer than just that special day, it lasts *forever*.

With that said, I also wanted to share with you my top favorite doggy items that should be on every dog's wish list this holiday season.

- 1.) **Interceptor:** These flavor tabs for dogs prevent deadly heartworm disease, while protecting your dog against roundworms, hookworms, and whipworms. Every dog should be on this or some type of heartworm preventative all year long.
- 2.) **Frontline:** This product kills up to 100% of existing fleas in less than 24 hours and continues to provide fast-acting, long-lasting flea and tick control. Frontline will

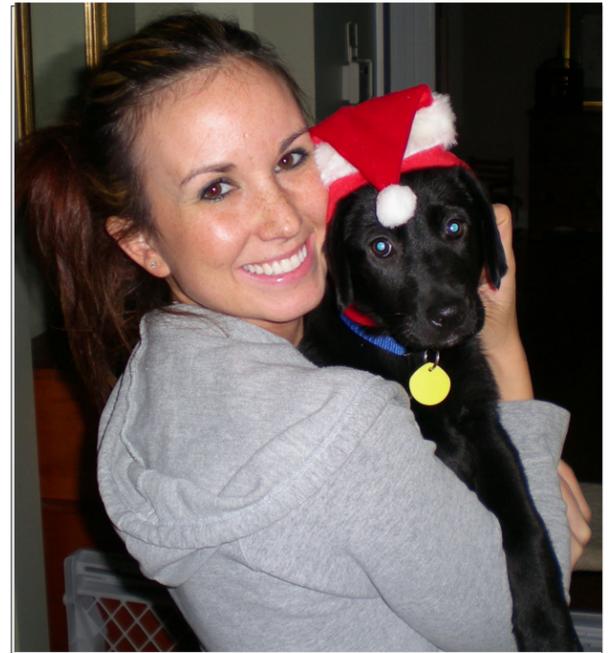


PHOTO: TOM DUGGAN

Boxford resident Kate Whitney and Honey get ready to celebrate the holiday season.

remain waterproof and won't rinse off even after your dog's monthly bath or swim. In fact, frontline doesn't stop working for an entire month, giving your pet non-stop flea and tick control.

3.) **Training Treats:** These are the little tiny treats that you can buy at any pet store. They come in different flavors, like peanut butter, chicken, beef, etc. They are moist so they are easily chewed and digested. They are perfect for training because they are so tiny but still provide a reward.

4.) **Jar of Peanut Butter:** My dogs love peanut butter. Use it sparingly as a reward or inside a Kong.

5.) **Kong:** My dogs love their Kongs! These toys are bouncy and irresistible for most dogs. You can buy the suggested cookies and stuffing for the Kong, or you can put some of your own dog food, dog cookie, and peanut butter inside. Pack it full and it will give your dog something to do for a while. A Kong helps with boredom, separation anxiety, and other behavior problems because it keeps your dog occupied while something pleasurable.

6.) **Squeaky Toys:** My dogs and all my foster puppies LOVE squeaky toys. They have new ones that are stuffing free, so they last longer. Make sure to watch your dog when they play with these because sometimes they will chew them and the squeaky will come out.

I hope everyone has a safe, and happy holiday season. Seasons Greetings to you and your furry friends!

Mayoral candidate Israel Reyes in property dispute: From page 1

labor because Reyes Group refuses to disclose any written verifications of the workers and their costs. Also, according to the answer, May Street Partners has been notified that certain workers hired by Reyes Group to work on the premises have not been paid.

To date, May Street Partners have paid Reyes Group \$512,250.

In their counterclaim, May Street Partners is claiming breach of contract, breach of fiduciary duty, misappropriation of funds, violation of MGL ch93A and slander of title.

A Mechanics lien is a lien which is placed on property for the amount of money in dispute and registered with the Registry of Deeds so that when a title search is done on the property the lien will appear and must be cleared before the property is sold.

The mechanics lien is in the amount of \$44,000.

May Street Partners claims that the information contained in the recording of the mechanics lien is an intentional and false misrepresentation of the facts and the amount claimed.

The breach of fiduciary duty claim arises from the allegation that The Reyes Group falsely communicated

with the Southern Bank of New Hampshire regarding payments made by May Street Partners, that Reyes Group "walked off" the construction site of the premises and that Reyes Group refuses to disclose financial information, its record keeping, disbursement, and bookkeeping to May Street Partners.

May Street Partners is demanding \$60,000 from Reyes Group for each counterclaim, with triple damages, attorney fees, costs and other damages the Court deems appropriate.

A Status Conference on this case is scheduled this month in Essex Superior Court in Newburyport.

Reyes refused to be interviewed for this story.

A former member of the Planning Board, and a former candidate for State Representative, Reyes is considered a serious contender for mayor in 2009.

Running against Reyes are: City Council President Pat Blanchette, Pedro Payano, State Rep. Willie Lantigua, Former Mayor Marcos Devers, Julia Silverio, and Nunzio DiMarca. Considering a run for the corner office are Police Chief John Romero, District "E" Councilor Dave Abdo, former Councilor Carlos Matos.

The Valley Patriot will be following the Reyes case and follow up stories will be filed.

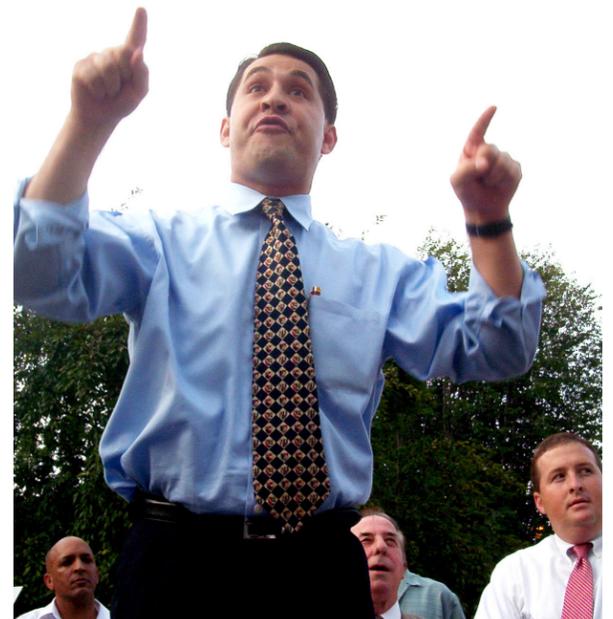


PHOTO: TOM DUGGAN

Israel Reyes advocating for Lawrence workers on the common. Behind him are two of his rivals for mayor, Willie Lantigua (l) and Pat Blanchette (r).

TOM DUGGAN'S NOTEBOOK

Dr. Smith and Beninato move practice to Riverwalk

Sal Lupoli, President/CEO of Sal's Pizza Retail and Wholesale Divisions, Salvatore's Restaurants and Riverwalk Properties is proud to announce that Dr. Howard Smith, D.D.S and Dr. Joseph Beninato D.M.D.,P.C., have moved their dentistry practice to 354 Merrimack Street at Riverwalk Properties.

Dr's Smith and Beninato had been previously practicing dentistry at the Holy Family Medical Center from 1989 until now. Originally from Lawrence both are anxious to return to their roots. Dr. Smith and Dr. Beninato are extremely excited to be at their new offices at Riverwalk, excited about the cities renaissance and are both incredibly impressed by the vision and energy that Sal Lupoli has shown at Riverwalk Properties.

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. Today Sal's Pizza and Salvatore's Restaurants make thousands of pizzas a week! Riverwalk Properties is one of the largest pieces of office and retail space in all of Massachusetts.

Secret Santa
With the Christmas Season upon us, I made a few phone calls to some of our confidential sources at the North Pole and asked if we could get our hands on an advanced copy of Santa's gift list for local newsmakers in the Merrimack Valley. Not surprisingly, at least two sources came forward on the promise of anonymity and shared Santa's final lists. Here is but a few of the highlights:

Methuen Mayor Bill Manzi:
An end to term limits in Methuen so that he can run for as many terms as he wants, and bridge named after him.

Methuen State Rep. Linda Campbell:
A little more loyalty from State Senator Steve Baddour.

North Andover School Committeeman Chuck Ormsby:
A little more help on the School Committee when the March '09 town elections are over.

Lawrence Mayoral Candidate Israel Reyes:
Nothing! He already has Patricia Sanchez, he doesn't need anything else.

Lawrence State Rep. Willie Lantigua:
A two headed coin for when he has to decide whether to stay as a Representative or be mayor of Lawrence.

Lawrence City Councilor Grisel Silva:
A bumper car for ramming and a gift certificate to the Greater Lawrence Psychological Center.

Lowell City Councilor Kevin Broderick:
A special watch to send and receive text messages so that his colleagues can't tell that he is texting during meetings.

Haverhill Mayor Jim Fiorentini:
A week without having to hear the words Scott Wood or Jim Donoghue.

Lowell City Councilor Rita Mercier:
The love of her community as she struggles through a tough holiday season.

Methuen State Senator Steve Baddour: A live camera crew that follows him around and continuously records him as he goes through his day.

Lawrence City Councilor Patrick Blanchette:
Ten more campaign workers Like Frank McCann and Andrea Traficanti.

Haverhill City Councilor Bill Ryan:
Some loyalty to the Republican Party.

Andover State Rep. Barbara L'Italien:
A new "Church" that encourages abortions, multiple sex partners, no

definition of marriage at all and a doctrine of "If it feels good it's O K!"

Former Methuen Councilor Kathleen Rahme:
A little more time to write columns for the Valley Patriot.

Lawrence Police Chief John Romero:
The good sense to run for mayor, and a cell phone with The Valley Patriot newsroom number programmed into it.

Former Methuen Police Chief Joe Solomon:
Shares in whatever company buys the Eagle~Tribune next year.

North Andover Selectman Dan Lanen:
A one week vacation without having to hear the name Richard Stanley.

Valley Patriot Editor Tom Duggan:
A Part time job as the HR director at Tens in Salisbury.

Dracut's Warren Shaw:
A one-week extreme survival vacation on an island with DJ Deeb.

Lawrence Superintendent Wilfredo Laboy:
A personal driver who's a former cop so he can run all the blockades he wants.

Former Dracut School Committeeman DJ Deeb:
A four hour radio program on WCAP right after Warren Shaw's

Former North Andover School Committeeman Al Perry:
COAL

Lawrence City Councilor Nick Kolofoles:
Larengitis (actually this is a gift for the people of Lawrence.)

North Andover State Representative David (Where-is-he) Torissi:
A GPS locator so he can find Lawrence in between elections.

Andover State Senator Sue Tucker:
Tickets to Foxwoods with a 300% room and meals tax.

Andover State Rep. Barbara L'Italien (she was extra good this year):
A contract with Geffen Records; her

Support the Troops?
Here's something you can do!
When doing your Christmas cards this year, take one card and send it to this address. If we pass this on and everyone sends one card, think of how many cards these wonderful special people who have sacrificed so much would get.
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Happy Birthday Señor Coño!



NOTEBOOK: Cont.

first single being the Barney song (I LOVE YOU ... You love MEEEE!)

N. Andover School Chair Barbara Whidden:

A gift certificate to the Emily Post School of etiquette and public decorum.

The People of South Lawrence:

A fountain the works and a city councilor who also works.

Lawrence Mayor Mike Sullivan:

A DPW Director who does what he is told and doesn't do what he is told not to do.

Eagle Tribune Reporter Mark Vogler:

A pillow and a blanket to make all those public meetings he covers a little more comfortable.

Lawrence Planning Director Mike Sweeney:

A time machine so he can go back and change his mind about leaving the State Treasurer's office



Spenser Stone NY Santa Claus Suit

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The Valley Patriot is always interested in reader suggestions for future, local, political cartoons (valleypatriot@aol.com)

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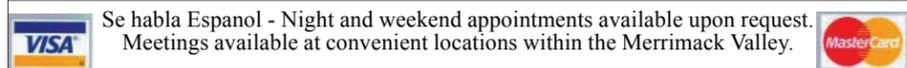


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2009

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>>>Lawrence Mayor Michael Sullivan announced that the winner of the "Storefront of the Month" for November 2008 is Mendez Flowerloons at 152 Broadway.

Méndez Flowerloons has made great efforts to keep its property free of litter, right out to the street, often removing litter in front of neighboring stores. Méndez Flowerloons has a reputation for its beautiful seasonal floral displays and a welcoming storefront for shoppers to enjoy.

"Méndez Flowerloons constantly shows great creativity and pride in its storefront, which has earned it the Storefront of the Month Award for November 2008."



Frank O'Connor from the City of Lawrence's Community Development Department with the owners of Mendez Flowerloons on Broadway in Lawrence



PHOTO:TOM DUGGAN

Former candidate for school committee James Blatchford was appointed to the Lawrence Planning Board. Above right, Leslie Melendez, who was reappointed to the Planning Board last month. Melendez is also a member of the non-profit Groundwork Lawrence.

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PHOTO: COURTESY

Former Methuen Mayor Sharon Pollard at the Festival of Trees with another successful season!

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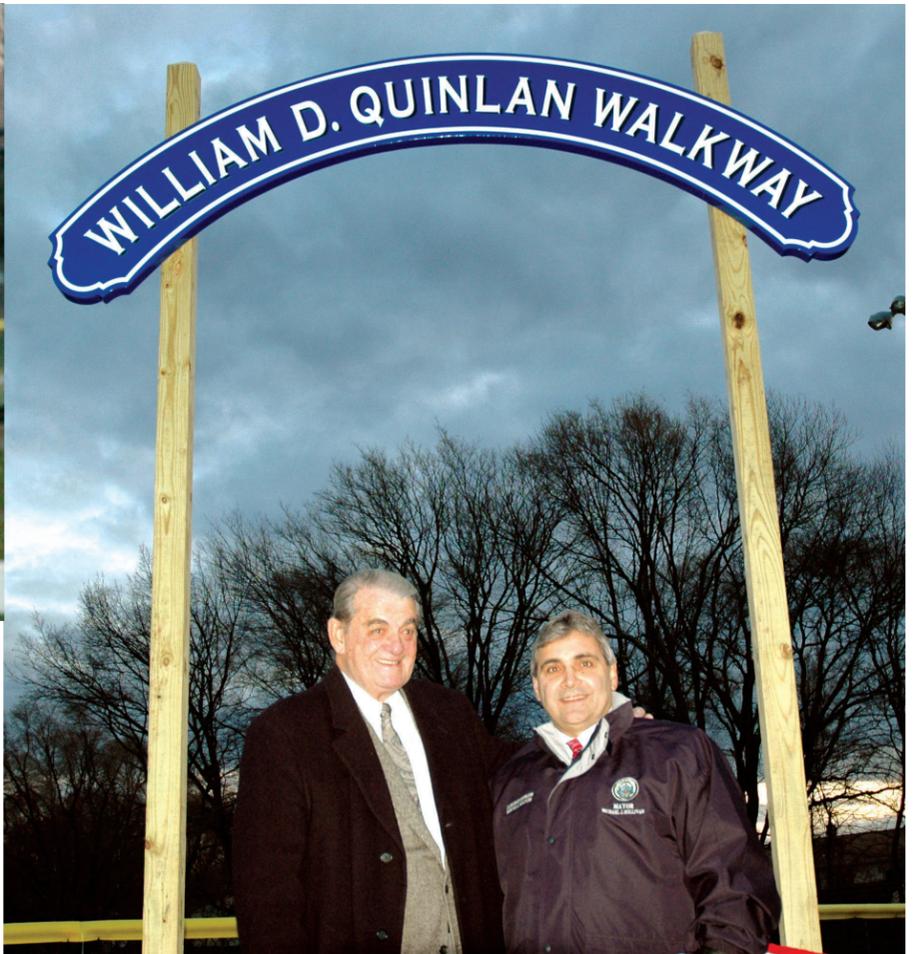


City of Lawrence names walkway pavilion for former Green Bay Packer, Bill Quinlan at Vernon Park



PHOTOS: COURTESY

(Above) State Senator Sue Tucker (D) Andover presents a proclamation to Lawrence Native and former Green Bay Packer football great, Bill Quinlan at the Mount Vernon Ball Field. Lawrence Mayor Mike Sullivan named a 1/4 mile walking path around the Mt. Vernon Park. (Right) Mayor Mike Sullivan stands with Quinlan at the newly unveiled walkway named in his honor last month.



Andover's Woodhill Middle School students land roles in ad campaign; promote active lifestyles to prevent drug and alcohol use

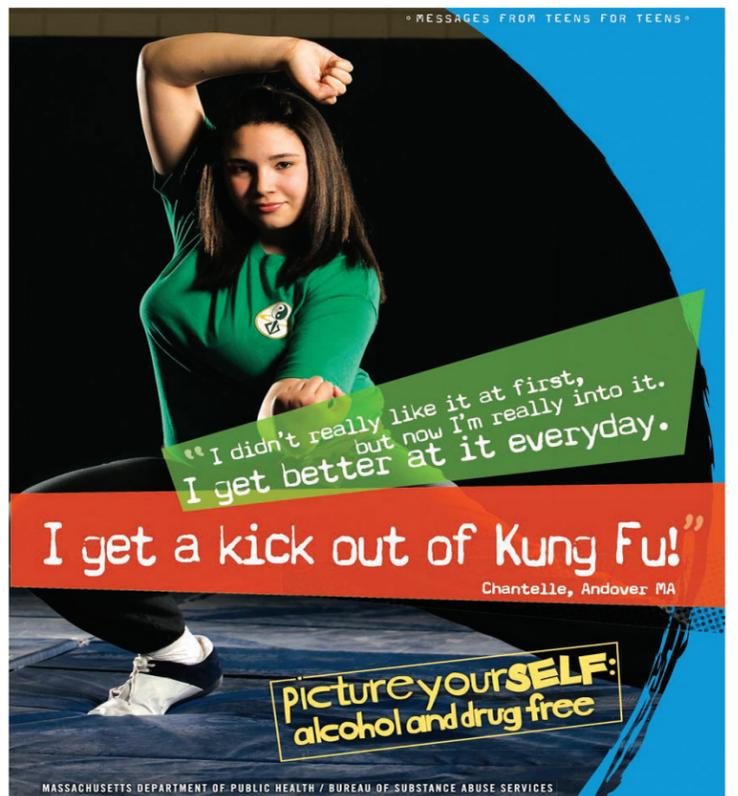
Last fall Chantelle and Sean, 7th and 8th graders at the Woodhill Middle School in Andover, were among 2,100 students who filled out casting cards asking why they should be featured in the "Picture Yourself: Alcohol and Drug Free" campaign. The casting call contest was part of an innovative alcohol and other drug prevention pilot program by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health that brings messages developed with teens directly into the selected public schools. In her entry Chantelle expressed a love of kung fu, while Sean wrote that ultimate frisbee, his friends and music keep him

from doing drugs. Their responses impressed the "Picture Yourself" project staff. Chantelle and Sean made the cut as the field was narrowed to ten winners. This year, posters featuring Chantelle getting a kick out of kung fu and Sean engaged in the ultimate competition will hang everywhere on the walls of Woodhill Middle School. The posters have been causing a buzz around the school. In fact, James Saalfrank, Physical Education Teacher, noted that other students wished that they could be in the ads themselves. Saalfrank added, "Staff and students agree that this campaign is great at inspiring kids and giving

them ideas of what they can do to stay drug and alcohol free."

Research shows that youth who are involved in activities are less likely to start drinking and doing drugs. The "Picture Yourself: Alcohol and Drug Free" campaign taps into the positive side of peer pressure by featuring kids whose active participation in healthy activities keeps them away from alcohol and drugs.

To find out more about activity programs for youth, check out your town's recreation department or your local library. You can also visit www.mass211help.org or call (toll free) 1-877-211-6277 (TTY 1-617-536-5877).



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Ranting through the Merrimack Valley

Ronnie Ford

VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

I attended the American Red Cross tribute to the Veterans on the third of November at the Wyndam Hotel. It was an extravaganza of flags, guidons, uniforms and everything else to make your heart pump faster and send tingling flashes through out your entire body. Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Guardsmen, and Reserves were there. Also, a large contingent of civilians wearing their lapel wings, combat badges, and medals of all types. Veterans All! I met a Sheila Van Dyke, who is a comedienne, and who entertained the troops in Kosove, and other countries where our fighting people were or are. I sat with my old friend Luther McAlwain, one of the last Tuskegee airmen left. They are the airmen of WW2 fame, who flew P-51 fighters in support of our B-17 bombers. By the way, they were all Afro Americans and never lost a ship. It was a wonderful time and a great tribute to our service men and women.

Yippee! The gas is falling as quickly as a summer shower. Wonderful! However,

the market price on our entire foodstuff that was raised because of the gas hike remains the same. Not so wonderful. Once the food is marked up for whatever reason, it seldom comes down. They also put less in the cans and packaging, and call it new and improved, and charge more. Ha! Why is this? Why are we taking it? Why are we not complaining? Why are we so complacent? Now they want to go up on the tolls, and it will affect a great number, but not all. How fair is that? How about a gas tax so that everyone pays? That is much fairer.

The perks the Mass senate and house representatives receive should be rescinded. Examples: gas allotments, car expenses, not paying tolls. What normal working slob gets these?

Why are we quiet about so many wrongs? The poor do not care, they receive Medicaid and food stamps, the rich do not care, they can afford it. The middle class who has carried the country on their backs for eons should care! They are squeezing us dry! Why are we not bombarding our elected representatives, who should be doing the peoples business, with our complaints? Come on

Merrimack Valley People, Get Mad! Call your representatives make them work for their salary and magnificent benefits! Let us start holding them to a higher standard. Do our fearless leaders think that Mr. and Mrs. Joe Public just fell of the turnip truck? They must, because we are soooo quiet. Hello out there!

While on my soapbox, what is this nonsense regarding the Methuen Hockey League and their ice time? People who want to be on committees, selectmen, and representatives state and federal, councilors, mayors, town managers, and school committee people ect. should be required to take an IQ test and a common sense test. Some people just throw their hats into the ring for any given public office, and expect to be elected. What experience do most of them bring to the table? Little or none. Some people are very intelligent, but, common sense stupid. The ice time belongs to the Methuen Hockey. After all, Methuen residents pay taxes to support the ice rink. Let No. Andover have another time slot. At this writing, the superintendent of schools is looking into this and hopefully she will resolve this goof on the Methuen Hockey League side.

I certainly hope that all you folks had a very happy Thanksgiving. We tend to forget just how fortunate we are here in the USA. Even though we are at war, our economy is in shreds, the housing situation is in shambles, and a myriad of other social ills, we still live in a country that we can pretty much say and do what we want. We live free! As we look forward to the special season of Christmas, and the coming New Year, and a new administration, we hope that God will look with favor upon our country and us. My family and I wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy Healthy New Year.

May the good Lord take a liking to you, do something nice for someone today, and we wish you enough.

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



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ANOTHER POINT OF VIEW

Extreme Makeover

Mark Palermo

VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

My wife watches a TV program called *Extreme Makeover*. Perhaps you have seen it.

They take unattractive people and improve their looks, sometimes dramatically. Most contestants are not really bad looking to start with, but they usually lack fashion sense, or they need a diet or new hairstyle- but that would be too easy. Instead, the program strives to evoke a certain pathos and involves the contestant in a process of ameliorating the ancient problem of a flawed, unwanted self. The makeover team builds the drama by first showing the participants in unfulfilled, somewhat empty lives. All of which drives the process toward its culmination: the nervously anticipated presentation of the contestant to an exuberant crowd of approving family and friends, a ritual initiation of inclusion into the waiting world of "beautiful people."

(Another myth... Look at the next ten people you see on the street and chances are that at least nine will be ugly.)

My wife reminds me that there is nothing wrong with people aspiring to look their best. She is right of course. But given the American proclivity for excess and commercial exploitation, this quest exhibits its own quirks and peculiarities... Personally, I find the program strange.

Each time I watch it, I hear an inner voice ask, "What if..." What if people redirected part of that energy to developing their minds? What if the audience applauded her emotional growth, her spiritual advancement, or even her newfound political consciousness?

My version of *Extreme Makeover* unfolds this way: Instead of the contestant starting out as a wallflower, later to become beautiful, she is beautiful *before* she becomes a contestant, but she is dumb, unconscious and superficial.

In my pilot show, a young woman named "Jane Doe" transforms herself through rigorous study, discipline and self reflection. After the months-long

process, the day arrives for her presentation. Her family and friends are in the studio audience anticipating the unveiling of Jane's new "self." A nervous buzz pervades the air. Finally, the curtain is opened for all to behold the transformation.

On a stage, dressed in jeans and a black turtle neck sweater, Jane is seated at a conference table surrounded by Bulgarian art students, anarchists and homosexual poets. She is shapely, slightly plump; but somehow more attractive than the skinny, tense person she had once been. Her face is relaxed, shows more character and- can this be said in America?- she is more womanly, radiating a mature, but earthy feminine essence. She looks up, faces the camera.

"Just think, I used to be a slave, oriented toward mindless consumption of fashion and beauty products; preoccupied with my looks and status. It's no wonder I needed antidepressants. And of course the only guys I attracted were either cruel, self-absorbed, or both. And I blamed all men for my malaise because it was easier that way. *The crowd applauds politely. It is clear that so far, they approve.*"

The camera moves in closer: "I have read 41 books in the past year and developed my intellect, my world view, and my political consciousness! She presses on, "I used to blow hundreds of dollars on clothes each month trying to fill my existential emptiness. I affected an attitude of cool detachment, while being eaten up by feelings of inadequacy. I wore the mask of false confidence, but I was an impostor. Never seeing the suffering in the world, I actually thought that old age, sickness, loss and death were not my lot in life; that these only happened to others. And that they deserved it- unlike the beautiful people I was a part of. The audience is applauding, this time more loudly. She has touched them. Her parents are weeping with happiness.

Now the MC is interviewing Jane's Mom. "We were always worried that our

PALERMO, page 28

PONDERING WITH PAUL

New Year ponderings...

Paul Murano

VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

Does it seem a bit odd that a white man of South African decent is an African American while a black man of Haitian descent is not?

Why is "colored people" derogatory but "people of color" is not?

Isn't it ironic that Latinos and blacks that came out in droves to vote for Obama in California and Florida are the reason that same-sex marriage was defeated in both states?

Might there be a connection between hope in a political Messiah (as in J. F.K. and Barak Obama) and the non-recognition of a religious One?

What'll come first, disillusionment or denial, when the "Change We Need" does not fulfill the emptiness in their hearts?

The good news is that black people now have something very high to aspire to; the bad news is that their role model in the White House supports legalized killing of the preborn while refusing to defend the postborn who have survived abortion attempts.

Since a disproportionate percentage of black children are aborted due to the targeting of minority neighborhoods, you would think Obama's first order of business would be to stand against what the organization *Blacks for Life* calls the black genocide.

Why wasn't it ever taught in school that talking to women the same way you talk to men will invariably get you in trouble?

It is no coincidence that when western culture began defining love as a feeling the divorce rate began to skyrocket.

In a society that accepts no-fault divorce and same-sex marriage is anyone surprised there is now a website selling discreet adulterous hook-ups to the married on popular radio stations?

Here's a new trend. Planned Parenthood of Indiana is now selling Christmas gift certificates that can be used to get abortions. Quite a way to celebrate the birth of Christ.

When it comes to eating and sex why is it so difficult for people to see that intentionally interrupting the act already begun is essentially and morally different than to not begin the act?

Simply speaking, the sixth commandment can be compared to food: Using contraception is sexual bulimia while Natural Family Planning is being on a diet. Premarital sex is eating cookies off the store shelf without purchasing them, whereas homosexual activity is akin to eating sand. Adultery is stealing someone else's dinner while divorce is demanding your money back from the restaurant after eating your own. All are injustices that make a beautiful thing ugly.

"Relationships" are training for divorce. As they became the popular cultural practice beginning in the 1970's inevitably the exclusive permanent commitment of marriage began to lose its meaning. It's like telling an athlete at the Olympics that he must now run the Marathon after training years for the 50-yard dash.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year? Call me a contrarian, but this year I am determined to have a Happy Christmas and a Merry New Year.

A couple of years ago I succeeded at having a Joyous Christmas and a Fine New Year.

Does anyone other than those that want a day off from school really celebrate Kwanza?

Thanks for reading my articles this past year that were sometimes silly, often politically incorrect, and always truth-seeking. *Somebody's* got to tell the proverbial emperor he's got no clothes on.

My new year's wish for you: May the best day of your 2008 be equal to the worst day of your 2009!



Paul Murano teaches theology and philosophy at Assumption College and Northshore Com. College. He is also a co-host of *The Paying Attention!* radio program on WCAP. You can E-mail Paul at PJDM@aol.com

Freedom and the philosophy of the American Left

Thomas Sowell

SYNDICATED COLUMNIST

Most people on the left are not opposed to freedom. They are just in favor of all sorts of things that are incompatible with freedom.

Freedom ultimately means the right of other people to do things that you do not approve of. Nazis were free to be Nazis under Hitler. It is only when you are able to do things that other people don't approve that you are free.

One of the most innocent-sounding examples of the left's many impositions of its vision on others is the widespread requirement by schools and by college admissions committees that students do "community service."

There are high schools across the country from which you cannot graduate, and colleges where your application for admission will not be accepted, unless you have engaged in activities arbitrarily defined as "community service."

The arrogance of commandeering young people's time, instead of leaving them and their parents free to decide for themselves how to use that time, is exceeded only by the arrogance of

imposing your own notions as to what is or is not a service to the community.

Working in a homeless shelter is widely regarded as "community service"—as if aiding and abetting vagrancy is necessarily a service, rather than a disservice, to the community.

Is a community better off with more people not working, hanging out on the streets, aggressively panhandling people on the sidewalks, urinating in the street, leaving narcotics needles in the parks where children play?

This is just one of the ways in which handing out various kinds of benefits to people who have not worked for them breaks the connection between productivity and reward, as far as they are concerned.

But that connection remains as unbreakable as ever for society as a whole. You can make anything an "entitlement" for individuals and groups but nothing is an entitlement for society as a whole, not even food or shelter, both of which have to be produced by somebody's work or they will not exist.

What "entitlements" for some people mean is forcing other people to work for their benefit.

As a bumper sticker put it: "Work harder. Millions of people on welfare are depending on you."

The most fundamental problem, however, is not which particular activities students are required to engage in under the title of "community service."

The most fundamental question is: What in the world qualifies teachers and members of college admissions committees to define what is good for society as a whole, or even for the students on whom they impose their arbitrary notions?

What expertise do they have that justifies overriding other people's freedom? What do their arbitrary impositions show, except that fools rush in where angels fear to tread?

What lessons do students get from this, except submission to arbitrary power?

Supposedly students are to get a sense of compassion or noblesse oblige from serving others. But this all depends on who defines compassion. In practice, it means forcing students to undergo a propaganda experience to make them receptive to the left's vision of the world.

I am sure those who favor "community service" requirements would understand the principle behind the objections to this

if high school military exercises were required.

Indeed, many of those who promote compulsory "community service" activities are bitterly opposed to even voluntary military training in high schools or colleges, though many other people regard military training as more of a contribution to society than feeding people who refuse to work.

In other words, people on the left want the right to impose their idea of what is good for society on others—a right that they vehemently deny to those whose idea of what is good for society differs from their own.

The essence of bigotry is refusing to others the rights that you demand for yourself. Such bigotry is inherently incompatible with freedom, even though many on the left would be shocked to be considered opposed to freedom.

To find out more about Thomas Sowell and read features by other Creators Syndicate columnists and cartoonists, visit the Creators Syndicate web page at www.creators.com. Thomas Sowell is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University, Stanford, CA 94305. His Web site is www.tsowell.com.

CARING FOR OUR VETERANS

The holiday season is a great time of year

John Lenotte

VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

It starts with Thanksgiving and leads into Christmas and New Years.

And let's not forget Chanukah.

Even with the economic crisis we are in, there is still plenty to be thankful for. Let's start with family and friends.

The holiday season is a time to connect with those we have not seen or heard much from throughout the year. We call, write or visit. Some are close in distance, some are far away. It is a time to think about our health. Staying healthy, getting checkups, being healthy.

The holiday season is also a time of reflection on how the past year has been for us and how the new year will be. A time for New Year's resolutions to be kept and to be broken!

But let us not forget that whatever our own fortunes are; we do have our service men and women and their families who need us at this time of year. Many of them are unable to visit except by phone or internet because their loved ones are overseas. In this time of giving, don't forget them. An easy way to help is by donating to local organizations that already have a system in place to send packages. Operation Troop Support, based in Danvers, is one way to help. They can be reached at <http://www.troopsupportusa.com> or 978-774-5983.

There is another organization based in Wilmington, Local Heroes, that can be reached at <http://mass-localheroes.org> or 978-658-3000. We also have the Northeast Veterans Outreach Center in Haverhill and they can be contacted at <http://www.northeastveterans.org> or 978-

Go Green: From page 4

including cylinders, spark plugs, and exhaust systems. Fuel is only partially combusted when idling because an engine does not operate at its peak temperature. This leads to the build up of fuel residues on cylinder walls that can damage engine components and increase fuel consumption.

Myth #3: Shutting off and restarting your vehicle is hard on the engine and uses more gas than if you leave it running.

Reality: Frequent restarting has little impact on engine components like the

521-9668. Local veterans agents are another resource.

On a national level, the American Legion has several ways to donate and can be reached at <http://www.legion.org> or locally at <http://www.masslegion.org>. This is additionally a way to reach veterans families through Legion programs like the Family Support Network and help children in general through the Child Welfare Foundation.

Whatever you do this holiday season, remember that our service men and women and their families are making sacrifices each and every day for each and every one of us. Not for glory, not for pay but for love of country. Fortunately, most of us learned from the Vietnam War that we can choose whether or not we want to support the war but we MUST support our troops. They are our friends, neighbors and family. They are OUR men and women who are guarding our rights and freedoms in a not so friendly world.

This holiday season, let us take but a moment to pause, reflect and give thanks to our service families. We owe them a debt that can never be repaid. They have volunteered to defend our land. Let us volunteer to defend their rights and benefits. For all gave some, but some gave all. God bless America and the troops who defend us.



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

battery and the starter motor. Component wear caused by restarting the engine is estimated to add \$10 per year to the cost of driving, money that will likely be recovered several times over in fuel savings from reduced idling. The bottom line is that more than ten seconds of idling uses more fuel than restarting the engine.

To learn more, please visit www.ConsumerEnergyCenter.org, and the Environmental Defense Fund at www.EDF.org.

Wishing you Joy and Peace this Holiday Season and Throughout the Year



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State Representative Linda Dean Campbell has office hours in Methuen every Friday.

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Methuen Exchange Club presents awards to police, firefighters and community activists



The Methuen Exchange Club presented their annual awards last month at their 14th annual recognition dinner. The event was held at the Knights of Columbus on Broadway.

Methuen resident and former Lawrence Veterans Services Director Robert McCann (pictured, top left photo) was honored for his dedication to veterans and his continuing patriotism. McCann was presented his award by Arthur Hutton, president of the Exchange.

The Police Officer of the year award was presented by Chief Kathy Lavigne (top right) to Christine Nicolosi. Nicolosi was honored for her work in preventing a suicide last year. This is the second time Nicolosi has been honored with this award.

Also honored as police officers of the year were Eric DeLeon, Stephen Hatem and Mike Farelli (pictured at right) for their efforts in September 2007, when a 1400 pound gate fell on two children

playing at the Tenny School. Officers saved the life of eight year-old Andrew DiLeo. His eleven year-old brother Timothy died from injuries in the incident.

The Exchange club also honored Methuen Firefighters Deputy William Barry, Lt. Scott Sullivan, Firefighters James Clarke, Ryan Fortune, Michael Giarrusso, Jonathan McGhee, Juan Posada, Sean Quick and Robert Scarelli (pictured middle row at right). These firefighters were honored for their bravery in saving the lives of a woman and her baby, a handicapped woman and several others on June 15th, 2007.

The Exchange club also presented the Book of Golden Deeds award to Jim Wareing for his tireless dedication and volunteer work sending care packages to servicemen in Iraq and Afghanistan. Wareing also is responsible for the patriotic displays on highway bridges and overpasses throughout the state.



PHOTOS: TOM DUGGAN

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PHOTO: COURTESY

Mayor Manzi names Joan Rademacher as December's artist of the Month

Methuen Artist's Work on Display in the Mayor's Office

Mayor William M. Manzi has named Joan Rademacher as December's Artist of the Month. Joan is a long-time Methuen resident and has been painting all of her life. She is a graduate of the Art Institute of Boston and a former commercial artist. She now is fine artist working primarily in watercolor. She is a member of the New England Watercolor Society, the North Shore Art Association and the Concord Art Association. Her paintings are in corporate and private collections throughout the United States and abroad.

"I am constantly focusing on capturing the light that adds dimension to my pieces," Rademacher said. "This has been such a joy for me as I continue on my journey as a painter."

Mayor Manzi stated, "I have heard so many good things about Joan's paintings through the years, and I am thrilled to display her work in my office. I encourage the public to come by City Hall and view her colorful paintings."

The Methuen Artist of the Month Program was created by Mayor Manzi over two years ago in order to give members of the Methuen Arts Community a forum to display their work and to encourage participation in Methuen's growing creative economy. Methuen artists interested in being considered for Artist of the Month should contact the Mayor's Office.

Governor Patrick awards \$1.3 Million in Gateway plus Action Grants to bolster economic revitalization efforts

Funds from newly launched program awarded to 18 gateway cities

State Representative Linda Dean Campbell (D-Methuen) announced last month that Governor Patrick has awarded \$1.35 million to 18 cities to spark urban revitalization efforts. Through a new state program designed to support affordable housing and economic development opportunities for mixed-income communities across Massachusetts, funding from the new Gateway Plus Action Grant (GPAG) program will help recipient cities identify their specific housing or mixed-use development needs to enhance their economic vitality and the quality of life for all residents. Methuen will receive \$75,000 to develop a mixed use/residential plan to identify viable affordable housing sites and to look into the impact of foreclosures on the area.

"These grants for both Methuen and Lawrence come at a crucial time as we continue to progress on revitalizing downtown Methuen and do everything possible to prevent additional foreclosures in the Arlington Neighborhood," Campbell said.

Methuen Mayor William Manzi credited Campbell and the Methuen Community Development Department in obtaining the grant.

"Affordable housing and downtown revitalization are two of my top priorities. This grant will be put to very good use," Manzi said.

Gateway Plus grants provide assistance for neighborhood or downtown planning activities that expand housing opportunities and that support the revitalization of neighborhoods, including efforts to:

- * Identify appropriate sites and strategies for a broad range of housing opportunities, either rental or ownership, including affordable, market-rate, workforce, employer-assisted, elderly or special needs.

- * Expedite housing construction or rehabilitation through regulatory mechanisms such as changes to zoning, streamlined permitting and use of comprehensive permits.

- * Revitalize neighborhoods that support affordable and workforce housing.

- * Minimize the impacts of foreclosures.

- * Expand housing opportunities in downtowns or neighborhood commercial areas.

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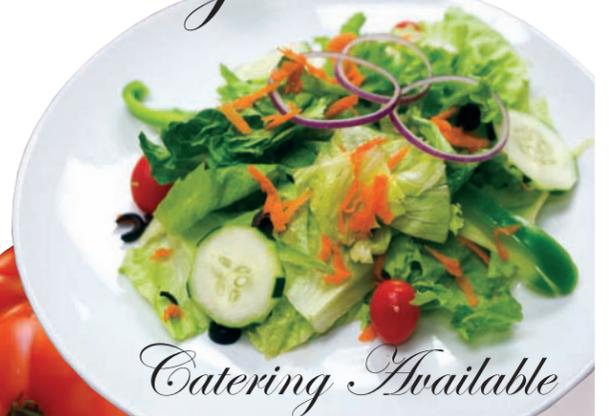
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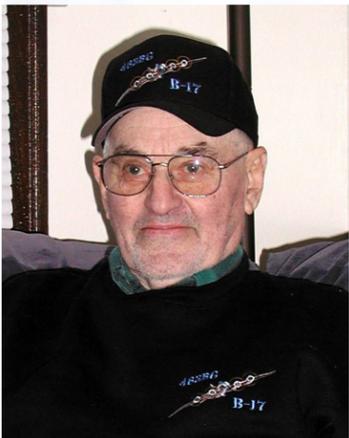
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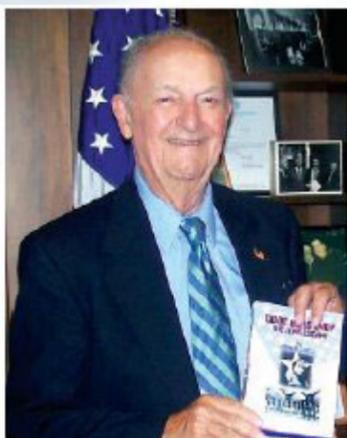
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Alex Jimenez

From a grateful community and a grateful nation!

Jim Wareing: Honorary Valley Patriot of the Month: From Page 1

returning troops posted on highway overpasses and bridges across the state.

With no personal interest or gain for himself, Wareing has designed and lobbied for a "Support the Troops" license plate in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the proceeds of which will go towards additional care packages to service men and women in the Middle East.

Wareing also established New England Caring for Our Military an organization established to network with military families, help the families of deceased military personnel and raise awareness of the needs of returning vets.

Last summer, Wareing volunteered his time, efforts and energies to help the family of slain American Hero Sgt. Alex Jimenez who was killed by terrorists in Iraq. Wareing spent countless hours with the grieving family of Sgt. Jimenez,

organized the funeral and public services and served as the family spokesman with the press, shielding them from the onslaught of publicity associated with those services.

If all this wasn't enough, Jim Wareing suffers from Multiple Sclerosis, a debilitating and painful disease that makes ordinary daily tasks difficult if not impossible for some.

Given his personal limitations it is nothing short of amazing that Jim Wareing has been able to accomplish all that he has to honor the men and women in our armed forces putting their lives on the line for our country.

With his health failing, Jim is now embarking on a new endeavor in the name of our troops and their families by lobbying congress and the public to defeat the cleverly named Fallen Heroes Commemoration Act (HR6662).

If passed, this bill would give the press unrestricted access to military bases when the bodies of fallen soldiers are returned home for burial services. Currently, the decision to allow or restrict the media is left to the grieving families, many of whom prefer to have private time alone with their loved one when they arrive back in the states.

Jim Wareing has been honored by President George W. Bush and former Secretary of State Don Rumsfeld for his unending dedication to our servicemen and his efforts to make their and their families lives a little more comfortable.

For these reasons and so much more the Valley Patriot is proud to name Jim Wareing as our very first (and possibly last) Honorary Valley Patriot of the Month. The amount of care and compassion Mr. Wareing has provided to our brave troops can never be measured.



PHOTO: TOM DUGGAN

Methuen resident Jim Wareing accepts the Book of Golden Deeds Award from Arthur Hutton of the Methuen Exchange Club last month (See story page 22).

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Michitson newsletter: from page 13

Economic Development Strategies
The Merrimack Valley Planning Commission invited me to help develop an economic strategy for the region

On Tuesday, October 28th I was pleased to make a presentation to the City Council about leveraging innovation and collaboration to attract and retain emerging industries in our City. In addition to growing our traditional commercial base, such as our Food Manufacturing Center, these emerging industries will provide Haverhill with a diverse business base.

Nearly 5 years ago while President of the City Council, I urged business leaders and city officials to look at bio-tech and green technology as well as other emerging industries that continue to appeal to venture capitalists even during

these difficult times. The diversity provided by this broad range of businesses protects the City from some of the economic downturns experienced lately.

Since then, our sister cities and towns in the Merrimack Valley, such as Lawrence, have reaped the benefits of emerging industries. Haverhill has not. So far, the City has missed opportunities to provide good jobs for our children and grandchildren in emerging technologies and the associated trades.

My proposal encourages the City and Business Community to begin an aggressive marketing campaign on a local and regional basis. We will create a plan to outline the steps we need to take to make Haverhill a bright light on the radar

screen of all who are seeking the ideal place for their business. Despite the current economic environment there is and will be opportunities for the city to take advantage of.

The Council will be forwarding a letter to the Greater Haverhill Chamber of Commerce. We have much to offer and we must continue to pursue the characteristics necessary to be a successful and viable Gateway City as designated by Governor Patrick.

Some Thoughts on the Budget
Despite the recently expanded vocabulary at City Hall, it is important for you to know that for many years I have proposed that Mayors' need to manage the budget, not just balance the budget. More than ever in this trying economic time, a performance based budget with measurable results is critical to our survival, the integrity of our infrastructure and to any progress we wish to make. We need a long range plan to address our financial needs. Haverhill's taxpayers deserve the greatest value at the lowest cost.

Management Tip: Change the Budget Process:

In the current budgeting process practiced for decades, the Mayor and Council meet several nights a week

"counting beans" to determine the one-year budget for the next fiscal year. Mayors' tally up the number of workers and their associated costs, capital outlays (e.g. new roof) and expenses (e.g. supplies) in each department without first discussing the expected service levels and the measured results. They focus the budget review on the resources, instead of the quality of the services.

In my administration:

* We will define the expected service performance (e.g. desired fire/police emergency response times in each neighborhood);

* Determine the resources needed to provide the acceptable level of service and prioritize;

* Look at measured results to determine if adjustments are needed.

This is a fundamental best practice in high performance cities and private industry.

I am proud of the city of Haverhill and where I can take this city in the future. This newsletter is paid for by the Committee to Elect John Michitson, Heidi Michitson, Treasurer. Haverhill, Massachusetts.

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FIorentini: FROM PAGE 13

To check last year's valuation of your home, click here. Be patient. Put that link into your favorite places, wait about three to four weeks and try it again. You will know it is up to date when it says it is for Fiscal year 09.

What if we over valued your property?

When you get your bill in January, if you think we made a mistake, you have until February to apply for an abatement of our taxes. I'll have more about that in a future edition.

Does the Tax Bill Reflect the Current Value of my property?

No, there is always a lag between when we inspect properties and when we bill.

By State law, tax values are set at the value in the calendar year 2007-- one year behind. If your property value dropped in 2008, that will not be reflected on this year's assessment. Look at it this way, when values were going up, your increased value did not show up for a year so it evens out.

If the value of my home is going down, why aren't my taxes going down?

If every person's value goes down, as happened here, we could not give everyone an abatement unless we either cut services dramatically or bankrupted the city-- neither of which is advisable.

We can not run the city without money and it has to come from somewhere.

Lowest increase in years is nice-- but why are taxes going up at all?

Residential real estate taxes have gone up every year since Prop 2 and half was instituted in the 1970's. The costs of running a city go up every year just like the cost of running your household goes up every year.

This is the lowest increase for residents in years, but we recognize that any increase is a hardship for some people.

Where we are allowed to do so by law, we have set up a series of "tax exemptions" to help certain groups of widows, veterans and low income elderly people pay a portion of their bill.

By State law, tax values are set at the value in the calendar year 2007-- one year behind. If your property value dropped in 2008, that will not be reflected on this year's assessment.



Jim Fiorentini is the mayor of Haverhill and is serving in his third term. You can email him at jimfior@aol.com

PALERMO: FROM PAGE 22

Janey would become just another mindless pyramid builder in the New World Order. But now that she is emerging as an autonomus, self reflective person that shows solidarity for the proletariat... Well, my husband Ted and I are just so pleased..." *She dabs a tear from her cheek.*

The camera returns to Jane, who is smoking an unfiltered French cigarette. offered was to become a cheerleader. But in doing so, I found that I'd age, sickness, loss a "Now that I am self reflective, I'm reading Spengler's Decline of the West; next month I am tackling Proust. I am questioning my teachers, my government, and most of all, myself. I am even planning a trip to Cancun, not just to lie on the beach, have anonymous sex, and drink in clubs, but to immerse myself in the folklore and culture of Mexico, where

I'll actually stay sober and visit the pyramids!

The studio audience rises from their seats. Some men whoop and stamp their feet. Women swoon. Other men stare in amazement - as if in the presence of the sacred or profane. The resounding applause shakes the very rafters.

What a makeover. Jesus, Mary and Joseph! A young soul has bloomed: and a provincial girl has become a self reflective woman... Homeland Security has already been notified.



Mark Palermo is a professor at Northern Essex Community College in Haverhill. You can email him at markpalermo@gmail.com. Visit his website at <http://markpalermo.tripod.com>

TELEVISION: FROM PAGE 3

now own on DVD for anytime viewing. *A Charlie Brown Christmas.*

Nobody makes you appreciate the true meaning of Christmas more than that obsessive blanket carrying kid Linus.

How The Grinch Stole Christmas. My heart grows three sizes by the conclusion of this classic.

The Instant Classics

There are just a few from the past ten years or so that have been worthy of Classic status. *Elf* is one of those movies that make my list. The 2003 Will Farrell flick about Buddy, the human raised by elves in the North Pole, who ventures out into the real world to find his biological father. There's an innocence about the adult-sized Buddy that we all long to recapture. Snowball fights, visits from Santa, singing carols and even the simplest of activities like smiling (one of Buddy's favorite things to do) will make it one of your classics this season.

The Polar Express is a given. Based on the classic bedtime storybook, this one is both visually and spiritually uplifting.

Some honorable mentions from the past decade on my list include *Shrek the Halls*, a TV special with your favorite characters from the *Shrek* movies, and *Bad Santa*... not one for the kids!

The-So-Bad-You-Have-To-Watch-It-Every-Year-Classics

These specials and movies usually creep up on me every season. Forgotten guilty pleasures that are always good for some holiday cheer... at least once. I think the titles say it all... *A Very Brady Christmas*, *Eight is Enough: Yes Nicholas*, *There Is A Santa*, *Christmas With The Cranks*, *He-Man and She-Ra: A Christmas Special*, *Jingle All The Way*, *Jack Frost*.

Well we covered more ground than Santa delivering his gifts. Now go forth and have yourself a merry little viewing of these holiday classics.

Merry Christmas, Happy Chanukah, Happy Kwanzaa and Festivus (for the rest of us)! I hope whatever you choose to celebrate this season it brings you and yours happiness and joy.



Ray Shackett is the co-host of Merrimack Magazine Afternoon Edition and host of Living For The Weekend on 980 WCAP. For questions, comments or suggestions, email Ray at ray@980wcap.com

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3. Prepares and submits written reports including worker's compensation, EED, insurance, etc., as required and maintains city human resource records in a safe, detailed and accurate manner.
4. Develops and administers a training and education program for all city employees.
5. Provides direct support to employees in the administration of the city's employee benefits program.
6. Oversees and participates in the recruitment, screening, hiring and orientation of all new city employees.
7. Participates in the city's collective bargaining negotiations as a representative of the city.
8. Maintains employment applications, establishes and maintains employee records and personnel transactions such as hiring, promotions, transfers, performance reviews, terminations, references and credit checks.
9. Hear and reply to employee grievance through a set process.
10. Attend arbitration meetings as the point of contact for the city.
11. Provide guidance to appointing authorities on Civil Service Law, examinations, etc.
12. Study, develop, establish and coordinate a safety program for the city as required by state and federal laws.
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Qualifications: Bachelors Degree in Human Resources, public administration or related field; five to seven (5-7) years of personnel administration experience, preferably in the public sector; or an equivalent combination of education and experience. Certification from the Society of Human Resources Management in PHR or SPHR preferred.

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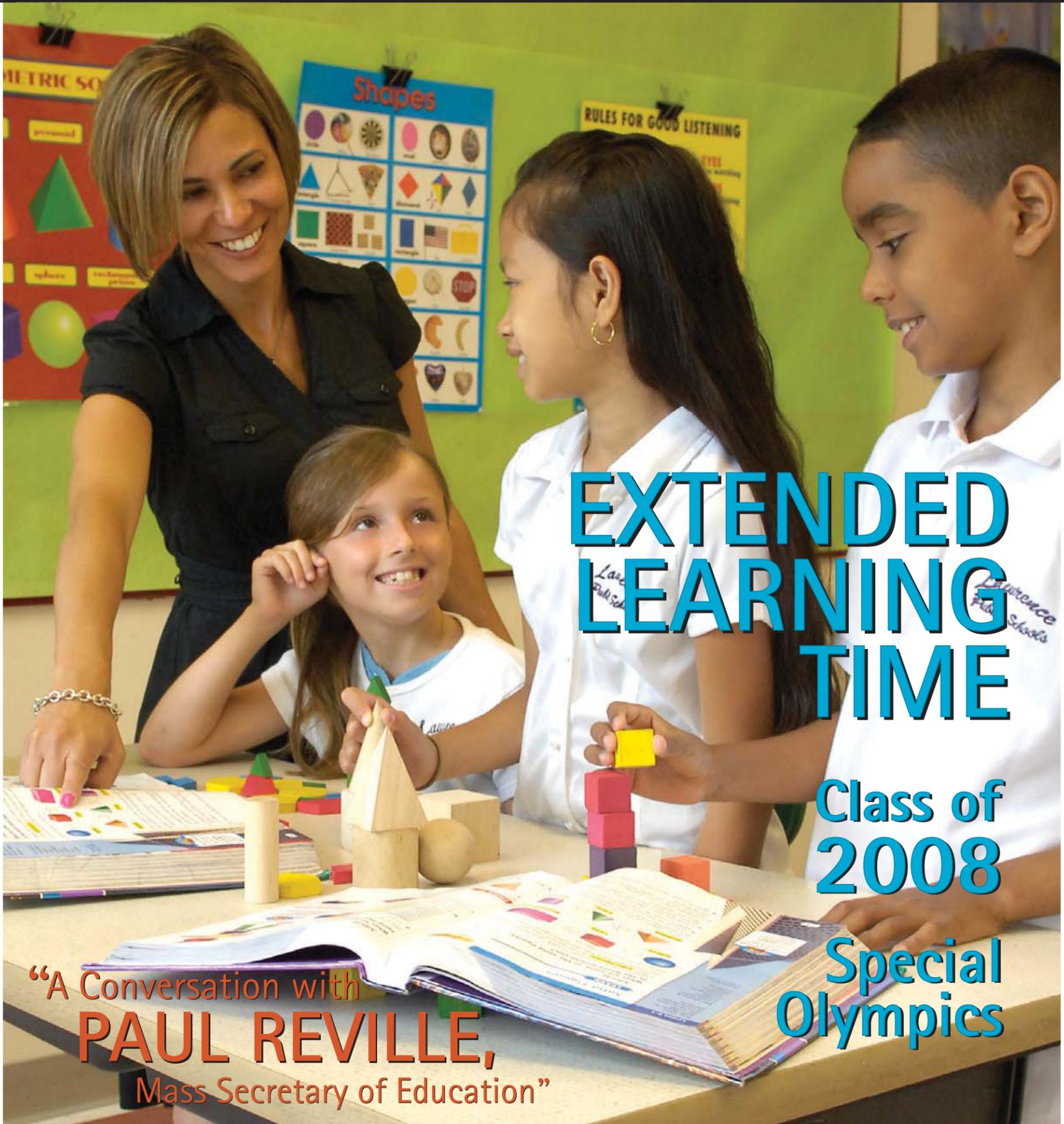
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THE DOCTOR IS **ON**

People who suffer from headaches ... 2

Rami Rustum, M.D.

VALLEY PATRIOT MEDICAL COLUMNIST

This month, we continue our discussion about headache presenting the possible strategies for diagnosis and available treatments.

How is headache diagnosed?

Since headaches arise from many causes, a physical exam assesses general health and a neurologic exam evaluates the possibility of neurologic disease that is causing the headache. This step is the cornerstone of the diagnosis and the treatment.

If the headache is the primary illness, a doctor elicits a thorough history of the headache. Questions revolve around its frequency and duration, when it occurs, pain intensity and location, possible triggers, and any prior symptoms. This information aids in classifying the headache.

Warning signs that should point out the need for prompt medical intervention include:

* "Worst headache of my life." This may indicate subarachnoid hemorrhage from a ruptured aneurysm (swollen blood vessel) in the head or other neurological emergency.

* Headache accompanied by one-sided weakness, numbness, visual loss, speech difficulty, or other signs. This may indicate a stroke. Migraines may include neurological symptoms.

? Headache that becomes worse over a period of 6 months, especially if most prominent in the morning or if accompanied by neurological symptoms. This may indicate a brain tumor.

* Sudden onset of headache. If accompanied by fever and stiff neck, this can indicate meningitis.

The physician might use or suggest diagnostic tests such as:

* A cranial CT scan, or examination of the head with a special three-dimensional X-ray

* A cranial MRI, which is a special three-dimensional image made using a magnetic field

* An electroencephalogram or EEG, which is a recording of brain waves



PHOTO: TOM DUGGAN

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

* Skull X-rays

* A spinal tap

* Which involves removing a small amount of cerebrospinal fluid with a thin needle

* An electromyogram or EMG. This test is a recording of the electrical activity of selected muscle groups.

* Biopsy of the arteries in the head. This test involves collecting a piece of the artery and examining it under the microscope.

* Testing of levels of certain drugs or toxins in the blood

Again, a careful and detailed patient interview may yield more helpful information than a million-dollar work up!!

How is Headache Treated?

It has been said that Headaches can't be cured, but they can be controlled!

There are many medications that can either stop the pain associated with

headaches or stop the symptoms, like nausea, that accompany them.

Using medication should be only one part of a wellness program. Life-style changes—such as avoidance of any known headache triggers, personal and family counseling, stress management, and relaxation therapy—should accompany any drug plan your doctor prescribes.

In order not to cause any confusion, Will discuss very briefly and without any details the most common medications:

It's important to remember that what works for one person may not work for another. However, almost all practitioners consider relaxation beneficial for tension and migraine headaches. Regular aerobic exercise is a mainstay of headache management.

Most tension headaches can be helped by analgesics such as aspirin, acetaminophen, or ibuprofen. But be careful! Taking too many of these easy-to-buy pills is a major cause of new, more-difficult-to-treat headaches called

withdrawal headaches. If you need to take these drugs often, see your doctor.

A number of medications can help treat and prevent migraines and tension headaches. Decongestants — and sometimes antibiotic treatment — can relieve sinus headaches.

If you have three or more severe, prolonged migraines per month, your doctor may suggest using preventive treatments on a continual basis. These include:

* Blood pressure drugs such as propranolol, verapamil, and others

* Antidepressants

* Antiseizure medications

* Muscle relaxants

* Relaxation and biofeedback techniques

New migraine drugs known as triptans have become the mainstay of migraine treatment. These drugs include Amerge, Imitrex, Maxalt, and Zomig.

Ergotamine is also an effective drug for many patients. It's available as a suppository if the vomiting caused by your migraines prevents you from keeping a pill down. A therapeutic nasal spray based on the serotonin-inhibiting drug dihydroergotamine (DHE 45) acts quickly to constrict blood vessels and reduce inflammation. Aspirin, and other NSAIDs if taken at the first sign of an attack, can be effective.

Simple analgesics do little for cluster headaches because they do not act quickly enough. However, doctors have found that inhaling pure oxygen can be highly effective in providing relief. A short course of corticosteroids, methysergide maleate, and lithium carbonate can help cluster headaches. So can some of the calcium channel blockers and vasoconstrictors that are used for migraines.

Keeping a headache diary can help you pinpoint the factors causing your specific headache patterns. This will help you avoid these "triggers."

Finally, it's good to know that dealing with headaches even by the most skillful clinicians in most of the times is a dilemma as Headaches can literally Turn Your Life Upside Down ... And Inside Out.



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Blue Cross Blue Shield Awards City of Haverhill

Tom Duggan

VALLEY PATRIOT REPORTER

The City of Haverhill was recognized last month by Blue Cross Blue Shield for their efforts in reforming the city's health care system.

Haverhill received the first "Innovation in Health Care Award" given out by Blue Cross, the award which was accompanied by a check in the amount of \$5,000, which Mayor Fiorentini says will be used to fund the smoking cessation programs.

"This check is going to be used to promote wellness in the city of Haverhill," Fiorentini said.

"We will give out rewards and awards to people who give up smoking and stay in shape or get in shape ... unlike me," he joked.

"But the award means just as much as the money does," he added. "Four years ago, I made health care reform a key goal of my administration. We have worked hard since then, we met with our insurance advisory committee and department heads to make health care reform our number one goal."

Fiorentini said that Haverhill consolidated five of the city's health care plans into one plan creating cost savings for the taxpayers of the city.

"We got the employees unions to pay more," he added, "which isn't easy because it meant getting them to agree to a pay cut. I don't think people really appreciate the significance of that."

Officials at Blue Cross Blue Shield looked at each community across the



PHOTO: TOM DUGGAN

Officials at Blue Cross Blue Shield awarded the City of Haverhill with the Municipal Innovation Award and a check for \$5,000. Blue Cross awarded five other communities in the state with the award including Lowell, Wakefield, West Springfield, Mansfield and the Wachusett Regional School District.

state and chose cities and towns that have taken it upon themselves to address health care issue and particularly reducing health care costs for their employees and their municipalities.

"Of all the communities in the state, certainly Haverhill came out on top," said one Blue Cross representative.

"As a company, we appreciate that you've done your homework and given us access to your employees," he added.

"A lot of people make quick decisions to jump into a program, but Haverhill has taken the initiative to work on their own with their own employees, doing I yourself and taking the steps necessary to address health care costs.

If every city and town did what Haverhill did we might not have a health care problem in municipalities so congrats to you and your staff."

Blue Cross Blue Shield awarded six communities with the Municipal Innovation Award. Other communities receiving the award were: Wachusett Regional School District, the communities of West Springfield, Wakefield, Lowell and Mansfield.

Mayor Fiorentini thanked his department heads, the city unions and his staff for working together on "this monumental task."

HEALTH & FITNESS

A well designed weight training program will keep you feeling young

Karen Bell

VALLEY PATRIOT FITNESS COLUMNIST

A long time member at The Club, Ed, told me that he had read my article in last month's Valley Patriot. He enjoyed it, (probably liked the blond joke), but said it really wasn't pertinent to him because he has been exercising for years and is way beyond the small steps advocated in the column. I agreed. I rarely write for the believers, and when I speak it is most often to enlighten and enlist couch potatoes. So, Ed, this one's for you and all the other lifters at The Club.

Ed and other knowledgeable exercisers have found the "fountain of youth," also known as weight lifting. Aerobic exercise alone will not keep you looking and feeling young, the addition of a well-designed weight training program will.

Aging females, particularly those approaching menopause and beyond experience the deleterious effects of a

dwindling supply of the female hormone estrogen. Testosterone levels, already 90% lower in females than males, also decrease. The result?...increased cholesterol, decreasing bone density, slowing metabolism and an increase in fat weight. Along with the fat comes the danger of metabolic diseases such as diabetes2. Studies also show that extra body fat increases one's susceptibility to several cancers including breast cancer. Ladies, you can change your aging profile by getting involved in a good weight lifting program. (Lifting the same one to five pound weights does not count as an effective means of increasing strength.) As strength increases so too does bone density, metabolism, self-esteem, and general health. Strong women stay trim and slim.

Guess what, men, there is a male version of menopause called andropause. Males lose about 50% of their

testosterone production between the age of 45 and 70. Testosterone is responsible for strength, youth, and virility. Other factors contributing to reduced hormone production include poor diet, obesity and lack of muscular contraction, all of which are in your power to change. So guys, unlike women who have no control over their hormones other than through hormone replacement therapy which is currently discouraged by doctors, you have the magic fix for aging. A good, effective weight lifting program increases testosterone production whether you are 20, 40 or 80. The result? Restored muscle strength, reduced belly fat, an increased sense of well-being, stress control and increased bone density. (Men lose about 25% of bone density by age 85. Osteoporosis is not relegated to females.) You will look better, feel better and have greater stores of energy. And if all those benefits are not enough, testosterone is directly related to your sex drive and

function. So get yourself to a good trainer and start pumping iron.

Is there anyone who should not weight lift? Yes. Prepubescent children, pregnant women during the third trimester, and people with certain medical conditions are not good candidates, particularly for free weights. There are, however numerous other ways to increase strength and endurance such as water exercise or Pilates. Check with your doctor for permission and then a reputable Certified Trainer for form and guidance. Get lifting and get young.

Next month's discussion will include nutrition tips to help you get and maintain a stronger more youthful body. Other topics and suggestions are welcomed.

Karen Bell can be contacted by email: Karen@theclub-lowell.com



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YOUR HEALTH WITH DR. RALLIE MCALLISTER

Hot chocolate is a great winter treat ... and will boost your health

Dr. Rallie McAllister
SYNDICATED COLUMNIST

If you're looking for a hot drink to warm you up on cold winter days, a cup of cocoa is an excellent choice. The tasty beverage is more than just a decadent treat, it's actually good for your health.

Cocoa owes many of its health-promoting properties to its rich supply of flavonoids, plant-derived compounds that are also present in red wine and green tea, as well as fruits and vegetables. Flavonoids are known to boost levels of nitric oxide, a chemical that helps dilate blood vessels and increase blood flow throughout the brain and body.

In humans, flavonoids act as natural antioxidants, combating the cellular damage inflicted by disease-causing free radicals. Diets rich in antioxidants can help reduce the risk of cancer, cardiovascular disease and Alzheimer's.

Although it may seem surprising, cocoa is an excellent source of antioxidants. According to the results of a study published in the *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry*, a cup of hot water with two tablespoons of pure cocoa powder has two to three times more antioxidants than a glass of red wine, and as much as five times more than a cup of black tea.

Drinking a cup of cocoa may boost your brainpower. Researchers at the University of Nottingham in England found that consumption of flavonoid-rich cocoa resulted in significant increases in cerebral blood flow.

Using magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), the scientists demonstrated that study participants who drank cocoa had greater blood flow and increased levels of activity in specific areas of the brain. The beneficial effects lasted for up to three hours following cocoa consumption.

Several studies have documented the blood-pressure-lowering effects of cocoa. Scientists at the University Hospital of Cologne in Germany reported that the effects of regular cocoa consumption on blood pressure are comparable to those produced by some prescription medications.

The flavonoids in cocoa also appear to have beneficial effects on cholesterol. Cocoa consumption has been shown to increase levels of heart-healthy high-density lipoprotein (HDL) and reduce levels of low-density lipoprotein (LDL), a type of cholesterol known to contribute to cardiovascular disease.

Although cocoa tastes great hot or cold, the heated version offers more pronounced health benefits.

Higher temperatures trigger a greater release of disease-fighting antioxidants.

To keep your cocoa delicious and nutritious, try making it with low-fat milk and just a pinch of sugar. While you're at it, you might want to steer clear of the marshmallows.

If you're not in the mood for cocoa, a cup of green tea is an excellent alternative. In recent years, hundreds of studies have proven its health-promoting properties.

Green tea is well known for its ability to ward off various types of cancer. Tea contains epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG), a chemical compound capable of killing

cancer cells without harming healthy body tissues.

In a study published in the *Archives of Internal Medicine*, researchers reported that women who drank two or more cups of tea per day had a 45 percent lower risk of ovarian cancer compared to women who never drank tea. Each additional daily cup of tea was associated with an 18 percent reduction in the risk of developing the cancer.

A cup of green tea can boost the protective powers of the immune system. Drinking tea has been shown to increase production of interferon, a substance known to play a key role in reducing the risk of infection.

Green tea may also be useful in the fight against drug-resistant super-bugs. Recent research suggests that natural compounds in the beverage dramatically enhance the action of antibiotics, making them up to three times more effective at killing disease-causing bacteria.

Drinking green tea may prove to be a simple, inexpensive way to help prevent diabetes and many of its complications. Scientists at the University of Scranton in Pennsylvania found that when diabetic rats drank the human equivalent of five cups of green tea daily, their blood sugar levels dropped significantly. In addition, the tea-drinking rodents experienced a reduced risk of developing cataracts and other diabetic complications.

Drinking tea has long been associated with relaxation, and now there's scientific proof. In the medical journal *Psychopharmacology*, British researchers reported that regular consumption of tea



helped normalize levels of stress hormones in the body, lowering stress-related rises in blood pressure and heart rate.

Whether your goal is to chill out, warm up or improve your health, drinking a cup of green tea or hot cocoa is a step in the right direction.

Rallie McAllister is a board-certified family physician, speaker and the author of several books, including "Healthy Lunchbox: The Working Mom's Guide to Keeping You and Your Kids Trim." Her website is www.rallieonhealth.com. To find out more about Rallie McAllister, M.D., and read features by other Creators Syndicate writers and cartoonists, visit the Creators Syndicate Web page at www.creators.com.

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President / CEO of the Home Health Foundation, Joan Stygles Hull, RN, MBA, takes a moment to thank Merrimack Valley Hospice House supporters David and Sherrard Cote.



Master of Ceremonies and Auctioneer Jim Jajuga (center) with Kerri Anne Godin from Pentucket Bank and Leanne Eastman of the Greater Haverhill Chamber of Commerce. Both Kerri Anne and Leanne live in Haverhill.

Harvest food and wine pairing raises \$30,000 for Merrimack Valley Hospice House

Wine connoisseurs in the Merrimack Valley had a chance to sample delicious wines paired with delectable foods at Merrimack Valley Hospice's Harvest Food and Wine Pairing on November 7th at the Andover Country Club.

Participants were treated to autumn-inspired menu stations with wines paired specifically with each offering. Throughout the evening an energetic live auction was hosted by James Jajuga, President of the Greater Haverhill Chamber of Commerce. Guests could also bid on more than 50 silent auction prizes while they enjoyed the musical entertainment of Jim Koczkat, pianist.

Proceeds from the event were directed to the Merrimack Valley Hospice House

being built in Haverhill. This 14 bed Hospice House will be the first of its kind in the Merrimack Valley and will be the only one in the state of Massachusetts with licensed pediatric rooms dedicated to the special needs of terminally ill children. It is situated on 39 acres of lush woodlands and features private rooms.

In addition, common areas like a family kitchen, library, children's play area, sanctuary and meditation garden ensure that the Hospice House feels as much like a home as possible for the patients and families who will benefit from it. Hospice staff members were on hand at the Harvest Food and Wine Pairing to showcase the renderings and materials

used at the Hospice House as well as answer inquiries from guests.

"This was an excellent opportunity for supporters to learn more about this incredible project while enjoying an evening of entertainment," said Vicki Kelley, Director of Development for the Home Health Foundation. "We were especially thrilled to have Jim Jajuga serve as our very entertaining Master of Ceremonies."

The agency raised \$30,000 to support the construction of the Merrimack Valley Hospice. To date, the Campaign for the Merrimack Valley Hospice House Committee has raised nearly \$4.2 million towards the total project costs of \$8.5

million. Major supporters of the event included Parker Hannafin Corporation, Trinity EMS, Pentucket Medical Associates, RiverBank and the Savings Bank.

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. Together with its affiliate agencies, Home Health VNA and HomeCare, Inc. they serve more than 80 communities throughout the Merrimack Valley, Northeastern Massachusetts and Southern New Hampshire. To learn more about the Merrimack Valley Hospice House, visit www.merrimackvalleyhospice.org.

Live the WOW!

The THRILL in Living is in the Giving! It's a Philosophy those Living the WOW! are Committed to not only at Christmas time or just a few days a year. They continue GIVING for a Lifetime!

Thomas Connors
VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

Make THIS Season have meaning! Knock off the commercial side of Giving. Try it. Make this the year you put Christ back in Christmas.

Now, if that suggestion just made you squirm or feel uncomfortable, I encourage you to reassess your thinking and the way you are living your life. I'm not looking to convert you. I'm looking for you to get the most out of this most Wonderful of Holidays! It doesn't matter if you are Christian, Muslim or Jew. The true meaning of this Season can influence you if you open your heart and let it!

Giving has meaning well beyond material things. It is a reflection of what you hold deep inside you. It's an emotion, a feeling and special consideration for the person you are giving to. Make it a WOW!

We have come to a point where the quality in Giving is measured by dollar signs and size. Sad isn't it that the entire focus on Christmas Giving revolves around how much something costs and how big the gift.

The bigger the gift or the more expensive it is, is supposed to increase the appreciation with which it is received. Any parent knows that reasoning went out the window a long time ago. Yet, we go out every year trying to out do last year's attempt to buy love and happiness. Simply put ... losing battle!

This year, give more of yourself! It works!

Giving with a WOW! puts meaning in all those gifts. Cost or size does not play a role. It truly is the thought that counts.

Give some thought to buying that present. If there are sentimental reasons behind it, then go for it! If you are doing it to impress someone, change course and get back on track.

Growing up, I remember being absolutely thrilled to receive wrapped apples or oranges in my stocking with a semi-used toy as my main gift. Those gifts came from the heart. It was what Mom could afford. And I still remember those presents to this very day!

Giving with a WOW! comes from deep inside. From the heart. It doesn't come from your wallet or pocketbook. You cannot put a price tag on it!

Look, we are going through some tough times right now. Millions of people from all walks of life are losing jobs.

Companies are shutting down or merging out of existence. Even at my own company, American Training, for the first time in decades, we regrettably had to lay off a dozen people when the state completely eliminated certain programs for people with disabilities and devastated others with a meat cleaver. Those actions, in addition to the hundreds of Guests still scrambling for services, certainly can leave this season less than festive.

Tough financial times may stop you from buying that expensive dress, but it doesn't mean you can't give something that will impress even more.

Don't feel sorry for yourself. Don't make excuses. Now, more than ever, you MUST Give from your Heart. And do it with a WOW! Take my advice and I Guarantee you will begin to Feel the WOW! and put more meaning in your life than you ever thought possible.

I grew up poor as a church mouse. But I had the best gift of all; a Mom who gave of herself 365 days a year! She made every day Christmas.

At eight years old my Dad had a paralyzing heart attack. At ten, he passed away and left my Mom and me on our own. Broke and unsure where the next

meal might come from, I stood in line many a time waiting to get blocks of butter and cheese and bags of rice, beans and macaroni.

Financially, we couldn't afford a thing. But, somehow Mom always made Christmas matter. I was thrilled with whatever I got. I knew deep inside it was given from my Mom's heart. Giving with a WOW! was what she knew best.

Don't stop at your front door. Bring Giving the WOW! to work and expand your own opportunities to Live the WOW!

My Colleagues at American Training make us so proud. A few years ago, Denise, Donna, Rose, Jenn and Valerie started and still conduct our Wish Upon A Star program that quietly and anonymously assists Colleagues who are a bit down and out. They are gently made aware of where a financial or helpful gesture might be needed and they coordinate ways of making a not so good situation a bit better. They are examples of Living the WOW! each day of the year and especially during the Christmas Season.

Think of this. These *originators* of the Wish Upon a Star program experience a WOW! when they assist someone, the person recommending the assistance enjoys a WOW! and the actual person receiving the assistance sees the WOW! in action; knowing his or her Colleagues deeply care about their well being. That is what you get when not only you but your company Lives the WOW!

Sure you might have to be creative. But, that is what Living and Giving the WOW! is all about. And with genuine effort I know you can even amaze yourself!

You may not be able to afford a typical present. That's ok. Be creative and look for Gifts that come from your heart.



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.

Maybe it is a Gift of TIME. A Gift of LOVE. Or maybe a Gift of CHANGE. Your Challenge is to figure out what would mean most to those to whom you are Giving and then HOW to Package and Wrap those Gifts with a great big bow.

In the end I want you to know, without any doubt, that you have managed to touch someone so deeply by your act of Giving that it shows in that person's eyes. Then you can look in the mirror, take a deep breath and fully realize you experienced a very special and unforgettable Giving with a WOW!

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 - © 2008

SIMPLE WISDOM

The suitcase, a story for the child in each of us

Gail Van Kleeck
VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

There was once was a man who worked for a company who made clothing. The man lived alone. He didn't have family. Every day he went to work and every night he came home. Although the people in the neighborhood were kind to him, they were busy with their lives. No one really noticed how lonely he was.

Twice a year, the man traveled to a far away country to buy cloth for his company to make into clothing. On one of his trips he met a street peddler. The peddler was very kind and very, very poor. He told the man that his children often went to bed without dinner, because he and his wife didn't have enough money for food.

The man noticed that the peddler's necklaces were especially beautiful and thought of a plan to help them. He saved his money and the next time he came to that far away country he brought an empty suitcase. Then he went to the peddler and bought all of his beautiful necklaces. The peddler was so happy. He helped the man put the necklaces in the suitcase and went home to tell his wife that their children would always have enough food. And the man came home with the cloth for his company and with the suitcase filled with the peddler's beautiful necklaces.

At first he tried to give the necklaces to strangers. But the strangers were suspicious. They didn't believe that someone they didn't know would give them something so beautiful without wanting something in return. Some-times they ran away from him. Sometimes they shouted at him. Sometimes they wouldn't talk to him at all.

So the man began to carry some of the necklaces in his pocket. Sometimes he would pass a home and have a feeling in his heart that someone there was sad and also very kind. When that feeling came to him he would slip

quietly up to the house and hang one of his necklaces on the doorknob. He imagined the necklace making that person feel happier and that thought always made him smile.

He had carried necklaces in his pocket for a very long time, until there was only one left. Then, as he passed a school he felt that familiar feeling in his heart that told him about someone who was especially kind and also very sad. He followed his feeling down the hall and into an empty classroom. The teacher had taken the children on field trip that day. He walked quietly to her desk and placed the necklace there. He was about to leave when he noticed a sink in the corner filled with dirty dishes. Without giving it much thought he took off his jacket and began to wash them.

When he had finished, he noticed something shiny that seemed to be stuck in the drain. He reached down carefully and pulled it out. It was a worn golden wedding ring. The teacher's husband had given it to her many years before. He had died not long before and loosing the ring he'd once given her had made her even sadder than sad.

What the man did not know when he walked into the classroom that day was that he was not alone. There was a teacher who was filing papers in the closet. When she first saw the man she felt so afraid she couldn't move. She watched as he placed the necklace on the other teacher's desk. She watched as took off his jacket and began to wash the dishes. She had stopped being afraid. Now she just felt curious. She saw him find her friend's lost ring. Then she saw her friend coming back into her classroom. At first she seemed afraid to see a stranger there. Then the teacher in the closet saw that the man was walking slowly toward her friend, holding out her worn golden wedding ring.

The man stopped just before he reached her and got down on one knee. Then he began to sing the same song

her husband had sung when he asked her to marry him. It was an old fashioned song called; Put This Ring on Your Finger. He gently slipped it back onto the teacher's hand. And while she didn't say a word, he knew in his heart that she was happy again.

Suddenly the two of them noticed a line of teachers standing outside the classroom door. The teacher who had been in the closet had told the others about the man. They each felt so grateful that they had come to bring him gifts. The first teacher gave him an apple. The second teacher gave him a book. The third teacher gave him a picture. Soon there were so many gifts that the man couldn't possibly carry them home. The last teacher ran back to her classroom and brought back an old suitcase. It looked exactly like the one the man had used for the necklaces so many years ago.

The teachers had a party for the man. He told them about the necklaces and how he had hung them on doorknobs through the years. They told him stories about themselves that they had never before told anyone else. After that day the man was never ever lonely again.....

As he left the party he passed a home and felt that special feeling in his heart. At first he felt sad because he had no more necklaces. Then he remembered his suitcase. He reached inside, drew out the apple and put it quietly on the front porch. Then he smiled to himself because once again he had a whole suitcase completely filled with gifts.

As this holiday season draws near I wish each of you the silent knowing that a kind and truly compassionate heart is still the most healing, supportive and loving gift that any of us can give.



To E-mail International inspirational author and motivational story teller, Gail Van Kleeck gail@simplewisdom.com

Sitting in the waiting room

The Answer Man

State Its State: This week's quiz answers are the names of states, or future states, where an event or famed feature can be found or where it occurred.

1. Plymouth Rock is the unproven site at which traditional colonists are sometimes stated to have come ashore in the early colony. Name the current state in which this occurred.

2. Where is that mile-deep, miles-long, miles-wide epic known as the Grand Canyon?

3. Mount Rushmore is the site of immortal carvings of four U.S. presidents into the side of a mountain. In what state can you visit these gigantic artworks?

4. Name the four U.S. presidents carved into Mount Rushmore. For Bragging Rights, name the sculptor who carved those chief executives' images.

5. In which state can you visit the sunken ship USS Arizona Memorial?

6. In what future state did the first gold rush in America occur?

7. In what state can you visit the 14,110 foot mountain Pike's Peak?

8. In what state can you visit the display of American Family Immigration History in the archives on Ellis Island?

9. In what state can you visit the famed Liberty Bell in a national park?

10. One of the most famous battles in American history took place before the point was part of the United States.

In what future state was the Alamo?

Answers

1. Plymouth Rock is in what is now Massachusetts. 2. Head for Arizona to see

Sudoku

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Puzzle by websudoku.com

Answer on page 28

the Grand Canyon. 3. Mount Rushmore is easily seen in South Dakota. 4. The images of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt were carved into that mountain under the gifted hands of Gutzon Borglum. 5. The USS Arizona can be found underwater at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, a victim of the aerial assault that brought the U.S. into World War II. 6. The first gold rush in America took place in what would some day be Georgia. 7. Take a trip to Colorado and you can visit that beautiful crest. 8. In 1998 Ellis Island was officially declared by the Supreme Court to be 90 percent in New Jersey with only 10 percent in New York. 9. The Liberty Bell is in a national park in Philadelphia in Pennsylvania. 10. The assault on the Alamo was in what would become the state of Texas. Take "The Answer Man" to work or to school. Challenge your friends for "Bragging Rights." Send your questions and answers to: The Answer Man, Andy Seamans, Horizon House #603, 1300 Army Navy Dr., Arlington, VA 22202. COPYRIGHT 2008 CREATORS SYNDICATE, INC

Newsday Crossword

THROWING THINGS by Fred Piscop
Edited by Stanley Newman
www.stanxwords.com

- ACROSS**
- 1 Notable times
 - 5 Shaq of the NBA
 - 10 Toothpaste-tube closer
 - 13 Part of the ear
 - 14 Orators' spots
 - 15 Foul-tasting
 - 16 Bowling-alley device
 - 18 Capital on a fjord
 - 19 "Sweet" girl of song
 - 20 Sammy Davis, Jr. autobio
 - 22 Reduced by
 - 24 Revered ones
 - 25 Like freeway exits
 - 29 Derby competitor
 - 32 For all to hear
 - 33 Shopping event
 - 34 Tumblers' surfaces
 - 38 Think ahead
 - 39 Lacking backbone
 - 40 Oodles
 - 41 In ___ (together)
 - 42 Revolution land of '79
 - 43 Prolonged assault
 - 44 Macho types
 - 46 Aromatic fir
 - 47 Started a hand
 - 50 Volvo alternative
 - 52 Brandy flavoring
 - 55 Big steps
 - 60 Literary celeb
 - 61 Meet one's needs
 - 63 Wile E.'s supplier
- DOWN**
- 1 Noted exile isle
 - 2 It may have a fork
 - 3 Fit for duty
 - 4 Unload for cash
 - 5 Kicked off
 - 6 Student's jottings
 - 7 www.ucla. ___
 - 8 Not stuffy
 - 9 Narrow street
 - 10 Big name in computer networks
 - 11 Poe's middle name
 - 12 Unskilled workers
 - 15 Some cell-phone messages
 - 17 In a snit
 - 21 Bro's sibling
 - 23 Tribal healers
 - 25 Sounds at the door
 - 26 Friend in battle
 - 27 Sound of distress
 - 28 End of a gag
 - 30 Lena of Havana
 - 31 Spectrum hue
 - 33 Kingly address
 - 35 Some homebrews
 - 36 Frat-party attire
 - 37 Quarter-note part
 - 39 Cratchit lad
 - 43 Buffalo NHLer
 - 45 "Yada yada yada"
 - 46 Schmaltz
 - 47 The ___ Lama
 - 48 Big-budget films
 - 49 Coffee allure
 - 51 The Jetsons' dog
 - 53 Point ___ return
 - 54 Stadium section
 - 56 Wading bird
 - 57 Malicious gossip
 - 58 Ticklish Muppet
 - 59 High-five, for instance
 - 62 Election Day day: Abbr.

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Fixed Immediate Annuities: Turning Money Into Income

Greg Loosigian

VALLEY PATRIOT FINANCIAL COLUMNIST

Annuities have become popular products in recent years because of their ability to address so many needs of today's consumers—especially those nearing retirement and those already retired. An annuity is a contract, purchased from an insurance company, that enables you either to build money for retirement on a tax-favored basis (deferred annuity) or to turn a pool of money into a stream of income guaranteed for a fixed period of time or for life (fixed immediate annuity). This latter type of annuity, a fixed immediate annuity, can be thought of as the opposite of life insurance. While life insurance provides protection against dying too soon, a lifetime fixed immediate annuity provides protection against "living too long." It is unique in that it can turn savings into a stream of payments that will last an entire lifetime.

Who Buys Fixed Immediate Annuities?

Fixed immediate annuities can be used for many purposes, all involving a need to generate an income out of an existing pool

of money. For example, many people purchase fixed immediate annuities as a payout vehicle for their retirement savings. With people living longer and longer, many retirees are concerned that their savings may eventually run out. By purchasing a lifetime fixed immediate annuity, a retiree can obtain an income stream for the rest of their life. They may also be able to save on their taxes, especially if their retirement savings are in a tax-qualified pension plan, where taking the money all at once could result in a huge tax liability right away that eats into their retirement "nest egg." In some states, the income from a fixed immediate annuity doesn't count when determining eligibility for Medicaid.

Others use fixed immediate annuities to spread out the receipt of a large sum from an inheritance or the proceeds from a life insurance policy. Some use a fixed-term fixed immediate annuity in order to bridge a temporary gap in income, such as between the date of early retirement and the date on which their Social Security benefits would be the highest. Such fixed-term fixed immediate annuities can also be

used to spread money over the period of time it will be needed, such as during the years a couple needs to fund their children's education.

How Do Fixed Immediate Annuities Work?

When you purchase a fixed immediate annuity, you pay the insurance company a lump-sum payment, called a premium, and the insurance company promises to send you income payments. In fact, what you're buying is a promise. It's important that you match the income to your needs while also leaving enough money aside for emergencies, since the purchase of a fixed immediate annuity is an irrevocable commitment, usually for the long term, for both you and the insurance company. That's why it's also important to pick a strong insurance company, since the promise you buy is only as good as the insurance company making it, and you want a company that will be there down the road to honor its commitment.

Most fixed immediate annuities lock in a fixed rate of return and generate a fixed payment amount. Therefore, your

payments won't be affected by the daily ups and downs of the financial markets. You usually have the flexibility to choose the frequency with which you receive your payments, generally monthly, quarterly, semi-annually, or annually, and you can also have the payments sent to someone else, if you choose.

Peace of Mind

Many people find that fixed immediate annuities can provide them with the peace of mind they want during their retirement years. They sleep better knowing that they have an income stream they can use to help pay their daily living expenses, and they don't have to worry about managing that money or how it would be affected by financial market swings. For some individuals, a fixed immediate annuity is just what they've been looking for.

For more information about fixed immediate annuities, please contact Gregory J. Loosigian, Agent, New York Life Insurance Company, at 781-398-9823. G15 00334112CV



Breakfast and Lunch at Eli's Place

267 Merrimack St. Lawrence

See our ad on page 3

RAISE 'EMRIGHT™

“Party, party!”

Barbara Peary, M.Ed.
VALLEY PATRIOT PARENTING SPECIALIST

Are people losing their minds or am I being old fashioned? In the city we live in just outside of Boston, the rage is to have laser tag parties for preschoolers. The argument given in favor of this type of hype is that the children are entertained, your house doesn't get dirty, and the parties are over quickly. One price tag quoted was twenty-five dollars per child. Is this absurd or what?

“Absurd” doesn't even begin to cover it. The conclusion is that people will pay big money not to have to supervise and entertain their own children. When parents start providing this type of entertainment for four year olds, where do they go from here? Parents should step back and look at what they are doing to their children. This effort to “entertain” is foisting the responsibility for their children onto someone else and raising the children's expectations higher and higher inappropriately.

My four year old daughter is an only child and I am dumbfounded when I see how other children her age behave. This gets me worried that she is going to be run over and picked on when she enters school. The other day a friend came by with her daughter who is the same age. When they were playing within earshot, I could hear the other child controlling what they were doing continuously. How can I help her learn to stand up for herself?

If you haven't already, enroll her in a preschool where she can start to interact more on a daily basis with her peers. Talk with the director and emphasize that you want your daughter to learn how to talk back to other children in a kind, but firm way. This is not an unusual situation with children who have no siblings. The teachers should have encountered this previously and can help your child by teaching her what to say to children when her feelings are hurt, how to retain a toy that she has when someone else wants it, etc.

Our teenage son's goal is to be involved in politics, so he is starting his

career by running for president of the junior class. Any other advice you can offer him?

Encourage him to find something that he likes doing, volunteering somewhere for example, in your local community. He could help with a fund raiser, work with a shelter, or join the local Democratic or Republican organization. Have him give himself a check up from the neck up, that is his attitude and how he presents to people. To quote the former mayor of New York, Rudolph Giuliani, “People don't follow leaders that have no hope for tomorrow, barely get by and lack inspiration. People follow optimistic leaders who have vision, confidence, and solutions.”

What do you think about parents buying a sixteen year old son a \$20,000 car?

They are certainly the exception and unless their son is an exceptional teenager, they may have bought themselves trouble.

This parent is “Raising ‘Em Right”:

I've reached a solution with my two young children with the “to let them watch or not to let them watch” television dilemma. They are allowed to view videos and DVDs that we have chosen together at the library. I've successfully eliminated the senseless violence shown in so many cartoons and simultaneously got rid of the commercials!

Since the average child today sees 10,000 commercials a year, most of which are advertisements for junk food, your decision is to be commended. During the Saturday morning cartoons on the average there is one food advertisement every five minutes. Guess what kind of food is being pushed? Sugary cereals, candy, fast food items, soft drinks and snacks are the norm.



Please send questions to RAISE 'EM RIGHT™, P. O. Box 831., Carlisle, MA 01741 or ask online at www.RAISEEMRIGHT@aol.com.

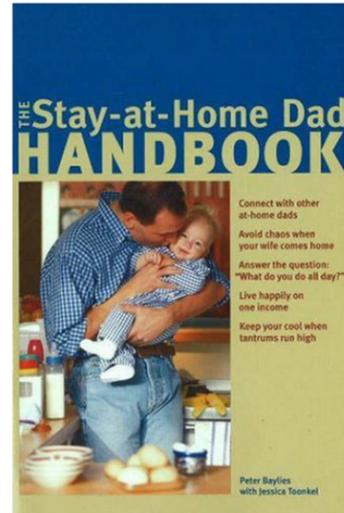
STAYATHOME DADS

Reality sets in... adjusting to your new role as an at-home dad

Pete Baylies

VALLEY PATRIOT CONTRIBUTOR

I found that new at-home dads also are often disappointed to find out that so much of their work seems to go unnoticed and unappreciated. Going from being the breadwinner of the family, where I could have concrete results of the work I did—in the form of a paycheck usually, it is often hard to make the transition to a job that can seem less gratifying on a day-to-day basis. Jim Mains of Chicago noted that when his wife became the breadwinner of the family he had trouble buying his wife a gift. “What am I going to do, buy her \$40.00 worth of roses with her money?” You will need to come to realize that your working wife most likely will not come home each evening and shower you with affection and “thank you's” for being the perfect father and husband even though your wife probably gets lots of positive reinforcement at work.



Also remember your wife may have as tough a time with the transition as you are. While you are dealing with the constant sneering and second-guessing of others about your being the primary caregiver, your wife may be getting the same snide remarks about her working all the time and leaving her kids at home. Also she may be overly critical of you as you take over what may have been her job at home. Be prepared to give time for both of you to get ready for this change in roles.

Your relationship with your wife and kids is not the only one that will change as you take on your new career. Now that you aren't at your old job anymore, there may be less to talk about with your old work buddies that you don't hang around with anymore. At-home dads often find that as they transition into being the primary caregivers, they have less in common with their old colleagues, particularly those who are not fathers. Often these guys view at-home dads as wimpy, or someone who could not handle it in the “real

Local Huntington Learning Center Franchise Operator Attends Annual Convention

John Cantor gains invaluable company and industry information; renown actor Henry Winkler inspires attendees

Methuen, MA (Grassroots Newswire) - Most days, John Cantor is the educator helping Methuen's young people build skills in mathematics, reading, phonics, and other important subjects. Recently, the tables were turned at Huntington's annual meeting, which schooled Huntington educators from all across America in curriculum and instructional updates to meet emerging student needs, and the latest “best practices” for helping students achieve top scores on the most up-to-date versions of the SAT and ACT. “While we focus first and foremost on building the skills and motivation to meet today's demanding academic standards, we also strive to instill and strengthen a lifelong love of learning,” said Cantor of Huntington Learning Center of Methuen, located at 126 Merrimack Street. “I am sure I am not the only one who walked away with abundant knowledge that will help me run the center in Methuen more effectively, as well as training on how to make the student learning experience even better.”

Huntington's annual convention, held October 13 – 17 in Newport Beach, Calif., is one of the most important professional development activities for Huntington Learning Center educators, who operate more than 375 centers in most states throughout the United States.

This year, Golden Globe and Emmy award-winning actor, director, producer, and writer Henry Winkler was featured as the guest speaker for the convention. Winkler's portrayal of “The Fonz” for 10 seasons (1974-84) made him one of the most recognized actors in the world. He won two Golden Globe Awards for Best Actor in a Comedy Series and three Emmy nominations.

In 2003, he began writing a series of children's novels that are inspired by his

struggle throughout his education due to his learning challenges and have appeared on several best seller lists.

“It was such an exciting experience to hear Mr. Winkler speak. His experience with dyslexia and his children's books that reflect that issue have been inspiring to all of us at Huntington Learning Center. As a supporter of various initiatives to benefit children, Winkler has developed a strong sense of what kids need to be successful and we appreciated his thoughts,” Cantor said.

As an extension of the Making a Difference theme, each attendee received an autographed copy of Eileen C. Huntington's book “Making a Difference the Huntington Way,” which is a collection of inspirational stories and actual letters from parents on their experience at Huntington Learning Center. The book will be featured at each center.

For more information about Huntington Learning Center of Methuen, please contact John Cantor at (978) 689-1880.

About Huntington Learning Center Founded in 1977, Huntington Learning Center is the pioneer in the learning center industry and has provided supplemental learning services longer than any other organization of its kind. Every year, Huntington helps thousands of students improve their grades, raise their test scores and develop effective study skills. By individually diagnosing what is keeping students from doing their best, Huntington offers an instructional program directly tailored to each student's needs. The company helps to form the foundation for further learning and success in the classroom and beyond.

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Police officers, Firemen and PIP coverage

Sheldon Fine

VALLEY PATRIOT LEGAL COLUMNIST

Are Police Officers and Firefighters treated differently if involved in an automobile accident while on the job?

There are times when police officers and firefighters are involved in automobile accidents while in the employment of a city or town.

There are other provisions of the Massachusetts General Laws where these individual can receive compensation for their injuries when they were injured on the job. We will limit the discussion of said other provisions to showing what they are but in this article we will differentiate these individuals and other individuals who are hurt on the job and provisions which cover each.

We will first look at possible cases where this question of injury could occur while on the job when caused by an automobile. The Massachusetts (personal) Automobile Insurance Policy only covers "accidents and losses which result from the ownership, maintenance or use of autos".

An accident is defined as "an unexpected, unintended event that causes bodily injury or property damage arising out of the ownership, maintenance or use of an auto".

Reported cases in Massachusetts and other states have facts which were decided showing how specifically a police officer could get hurt. First police officer or "plaintiff" struck by vehicle while directing traffic around two car wreck caused by the person causing the injury or defendant. Second, the plaintiff was

struck by car while warning traffic of obstruction caused by accident.

Normally, when an individual is injured in an automobile accident while on the job as they are delivering a package, etc from their place of business to purchaser of product, they are covered under the Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 152 which covers Worker's Compensation. In this situation, the Personal Injury Protection provision of the Massachusetts Auto Insurance includes an exclusion which states that "we will not pay PIP benefits to or for anyone who is entitled to Worker's Compensation Benefits for the same injury".

Individuals who are not firefighters or police officers, have to look to the Worker's Compensation Act and there is lien for payments under said act against the case. However in cases, involving police officers or firefighters are concerned the exclusion does not apply because payments to which these individuals are entitled to from the city or town are pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 41, ss100 and 11 F, are not Worker's Compensation benefits.

Therefore, the injured firefighter or police officer has access to the medical expense section of the act (subject to the coordination of benefits) and for seventy-five percent of his or her lost wages which are not covered by a plan for wage continuation which are typically comprised of extra paid details and overtime.

As to sections stated above which deal with police officers and firefighters, Section 100 states "upon application by a firefighter or police officer of a city, town

or water district or in the event of the physical or mental incapacity or death of such firefighter or police officer, by someone in his behalf, the Board or Officer of such city, town or district authorized to appoint fire fighters or police officers as the case may be shall determine whether it is appropriate under all the circumstances for such city, town or district to indemnify such firefighter or police officer for his reasonable hospital, medical, surgical, chiropractic, nursing, pharmaceutical, prosthetic and related expenses and reasonable charge chiropody (podiatry) incurred as the natural and proximate result of an accident occurring or of undergoing a hazard peculiar to his employment while acting in the performance and within the scope of his duty without fault of his own".

We look also to the section 111F which provides in part "whenever a police officer or firefighter of a city, town or fire or water district is incapacitated for duty because of injury sustained in the performance of his duty without fault of his own or a police officer or firefighter assigned to special duty by his superior officer, whether or not he is paid for such special duty by the city or town is so incapacitated because of injuries so sustained he shall be granted leave without loss of pay for the period after such police officer or firefighter has been retired or pensioned in accordance with law or for a period after a physician designated by the Board or Officer authorized to appoint police officers or fire fighters in such city, town or district determines that such incapacity no longer exists."

These sections sound like the Worker's Compensation Act, in that the Worker's Compensation Act talks about "arising from the course of employment" whereas the above sections talk about "Injury sustained in the performance of his duty".

Police officers and firefighters in Massachusetts are not governed by the Worker's Compensation law. They are specifically exempted under Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 69 which specially exempts police officers and firefighters from the Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 152 of the Worker's Compensation Act.

Case law has specially recognized that section 111F is not a "pure" Workman's Compensation Law and ss 100 as to the medical expenses have little resemblance to the Worker's Compensation law. In fact, the payments under ss100 may not even be compulsory. Therefore, since neither section being 100 and 111F provide for pure worker's compensation benefits, the police officers and firefighters are entitled to the benefits of the PIP coverage.



This writer welcomes questions on law of motor vehicle accidents, corporation law, real estate law and probate of estates to be answered in the newspaper or by

appointment with the writer by calling him at 978-475-9886 for an appointment or emailing me at S.Fine2@verizon.net. Also, if you have problems on a case, please feel free to discuss it with the attorney.

STAY AT HOME DAD: from previous page

world." You will also change from the experiences of being at home with your kids and you may not have as much in common with former colleagues or even your own family as you once did. Be prepared for people to have unfavorable reactions to your new role. When Peter Steinberg became an at-home dad, his mother did not approve and their first conversation with her ended up with him hanging up on his mother. They "pretended" he was still working. Over time however, his mom was more receptive to the idea.

I realized pretty early on that I had to accept the fact that I wasn't the breadwinner anymore and get comfortable with my new role. No matter how witty my comebacks were to other people's "Mr. Mom" comments and questions about what I do for a living, no one's attitude toward my being at-home dad was going to change until I was at ease being an at-home dad.

For those of us who lose our jobs and are pushed into our new careers more by circumstance, than by choice, this can be incredibly difficult. The first thing you, as a soon to-be stay at-home dad, have to accept is that you will not be making money anymore, and that the job that you once had will no longer define you. Yes, your wife is not only making more money than you, but she is the breadwinner of the family. You need to evaluate your position and choose this new life, not just accept it. Be open to the non-monetary rewards that come with this new lifestyle. When one dad decided to stay at home with his daughter, he said that "the stress of the decision was unreal."

The question he had to ask himself was: "Can I live with myself to forego the precious time with my daughter for this income?" If the answer for you is 'no' then the monetary adjustments, while difficult at times will be worth it.

Once you and your wife have made the decision for her to work and for you to stay home with the kids, the next thing you need to do is figure out your new budget. Obviously putting some money away before you quit your current job is preferable, but many at-home dads do not have that luxury. You may be surprised once you come up with your budget at how much money you were spending just by being part of the rat race. When I sat down and figured out my budget, I found that by the time I deducted daycare, gas, car repairs, lunches, clothes, etc., I wasn't making half as much as I started with. As for the other half I did make, it just wasn't worth the time.

Also, just because you are quitting your current job to stay at home with your kids does not mean that you can't still make money. Many at-home dads that I have spoken with over the years have found that they could start home businesses and end up making more money than before. We will look at ways to do this in Chapter Four as you read the many success stories of dads who work at home. Looking for coupons in the papers and fixing things in the house, rather than hiring someone to do it, are not only great ways to save money, but they are also tasks that you can share with your kids. Make it a race with your kids: whoever cuts the most coupons in an hour wins a prize, or whoever's coupons result in the

biggest savings is the winner. Also take a good look at the house and see where you can replace the repairman.

You can give yourself a timetable as an at-home dad. You do not have to say to yourself, "I am going to do this until my child is in high school." Instead give yourself a reasonable period of time to try it out. By "reasonable" I mean six months or a year—not just a few weeks. You do need enough time to get used to a routine. This not only takes off some of the pressure, but it will force you to appreciate the good moments with your kids. You can also write out goals for yourself and periodically grade yourself, or have your wife and kids help grade you, just as a boss or coworkers might do in an office job. This may give you the sense of structure you need to get through the first few months.

So you have set your budget, your wife has gone back to work, and now you have been an "at-home dad" for several weeks. While you are constantly busy running around, doing chores and watching the kids, you feel more alone than ever. Many at-home dads I know says that isolation is the hardest thing to conquer during the first few months of being at home. Dr. Robert Frank, a researcher and at-home dad, conducted a survey of 1,081 readers of the At-Home Dad Newsletter and found that 63% of the respondents noted that they were "somewhat isolated," while 6% said they were "totally isolated."

One dad from California who had been home with his two young sons said, "The hardest part is not knowing anyone and everyone else is at work all day. After

talking to a three-year-old all day, I can't wait for my wife to get home."

David Boylan remembers the frustration of his first few months as a stay-at-home dad: "I've been there, when the diapers, the baby talk, the lack of adult concepts and conversation starts to drive you crazy. When you feel like a slave to your child's eating/napping/sleeping schedule... when time at the end of the night talking to an exhausted spouse isn't satisfying." Boylan decided to take matters into his own hands and turned to the Internet for some company and started the "Electronic At-Home Dads Network."

"Blissful distraction and conversation using sentences with more than three words is easily available via your computer," he says of the experience. Turning to the Internet does not have to be about finding other at-home dads, you can also join chat rooms on any interest you may have. However sitting in front of a computer and "chatting" with people cannot replace real live interaction. As one at-home dad said, "Far too many at-home fathers spend excessive amounts of time sitting at the computers 'enhancing' their lives as at-home dads at the expense of their children."

Next Month... Isolation and starting a playgroup



Peter Baylies lives in North Andover and is the author of the *At-Home Dad Handbook*, provides free resources for stay-at-home dads at athomedad.com. E-mail: athomedad@aol.com for more information.



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