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FEBRUARY, 2008  
VOLUME 5, ISSUE 2

# THE VALLEY PATRIOT

A NEW ENGLAND PRESS ASSOCIATION AWARD WINNING NEWSPAPER

"Congress shall make no law..."

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

## Sex assault lawsuit filed against local hospital

Tom Duggan

VALLEY PATRIOT EDITOR

Imagine that you have been voluntarily admitted to the hospital to recover from an illness or injury and another patient sexually attacks you while you are trying to recover.

According to a patient's complaint (name withheld), that is exactly what happened to her after being admitted to Holy Family Hospital in Methuen. As a result, the patient has filed a lawsuit in Essex County Superior Court seeking over half a million dollars against Holy Family Hospital, Inc., Caritas Valley regional Support Services, Inc., Joseph Minick, M.D., and Humberto Gomez.

According to the complaint, the patient was being cared for at the St. Michael's Unit of the Center for Behavioral Medicine at Holy Family Hospital between April 30, 2002 through May 3, 2002.

During that time, Humberto Gomez was admitted to the St. Michael's Unit for treatment of psychiatric and mental disorders and illnesses. During the

plaintiff's stay at the facility, Humberto Gomez allegedly entered her room without permission, verbally and physically harassed her and on May 3, 2002, physically and sexually assaulted her while she was sleeping.

Humberto Gomez was arrested on May 3, 2002 by the Methuen police and charged with rape and indecent assault and battery on a person 14 or over. Gomez pled guilty and has since served jail time for this crime. He is now a registered sex offender.

At the time of this incident, Dr. Joseph Minick was the Medical Director of the St. Michael's Unit of the Center for Behavioral Medicine.

According to the complaint, "Dr. Minick represented and held himself out to be skilled in the care, treatment, and counseling of various conditions of mental and emotional health, and in providing a safe and secure environment to those patients of the facility."

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### Police Officer of the Year Michael Magnan



PHOTO: TOM DUGGAN

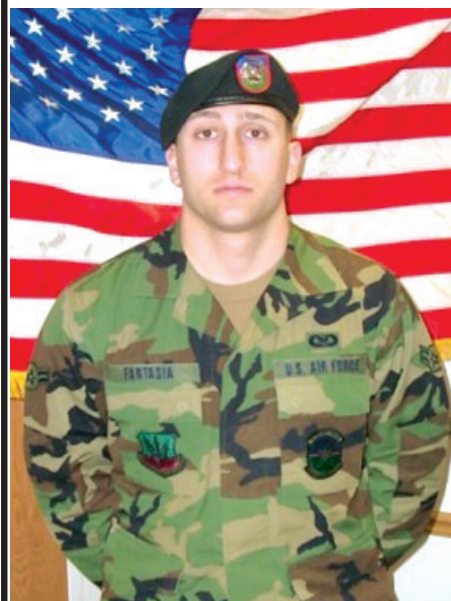
Lawrence police officer Michael Magnan was awarded "Police Officer of the Year" by the Lawrence Exchange Club for his heroism in subduing a man who was holding a knife to the stomach of a pregnant woman. **See pages 2 & 16**

VALLEY PATRIOT OF THE MONTH: Sponsored by...

**HERO IN OUR MIDST**

Christopher Fantasia

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Tech. Sgt. James Moore  
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

SALEM, NH - Airman First Class Christopher Fantasia, home on Recruiting Assistance Duty at the Air Force Recruiting Office in Lawrence, Ma., is making a difference in the world.

He is a patriot and has a genuine enthusiasm for his work. Airman First Class Fantasia joined the Air Force in 2005 and plans on making a career of the Air Force. He's just returned from

**HERO IN OUR MIDST, page 29**

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# Editorial

## Real heroes in the Valley truly deserve our support

Last month the Exchange Club of Lawrence honored police officers, firefighters and an EMT workers for their service to the communities of Lawrence, Andover, and North Andover.

Among those honored were Lawrence Police Officer Michael Magnan who received one of the Exchange Club's "Police Officer of the Year Awards" for saving the lives of Lawrence residents on three separate occasions.

On one occasion, Officer Magnan entered a Lawrence apartment, responding to a domestic dispute only to find himself face to face with a man holding a sword. Though Magnan and other officers commanded the man to drop the weapon he advanced on Officer Magnan making threatening gestures. Magnan did not fire his weapon; instead he used his training and expertise to talk the crazed man into surrendering without anyone being harmed. In another incident, Magnan and Officer Goujon witnessed an armed man trying to stab a Patriot Ambulance EMT. Both officers jump into the fracas and subdued the assailant without anyone getting hurt. In yet a third incident, Magnan responded to a call in December where he had to kick in the door of a man holding a knife to the stomach of woman who was nine months pregnant. Magnan was able to defuse the situation by talking to the man and convincing him to drop the weapon without hurting the pregnant woman or her unborn baby.

Also honored by the Exchange Club last month were;

### Police Officers of the Year

North Andover Police Officers: Katherine Knab, Joe Kamal, Sgt. Charles Gray, K9 Officer "Kyzer", Inspector Dan Cronin, Mark Wilson, Dan Quinlan and Special Agent Todd Prough (DEA), Andover Police Officer Brian Blouin,

### Firefighters of the Year

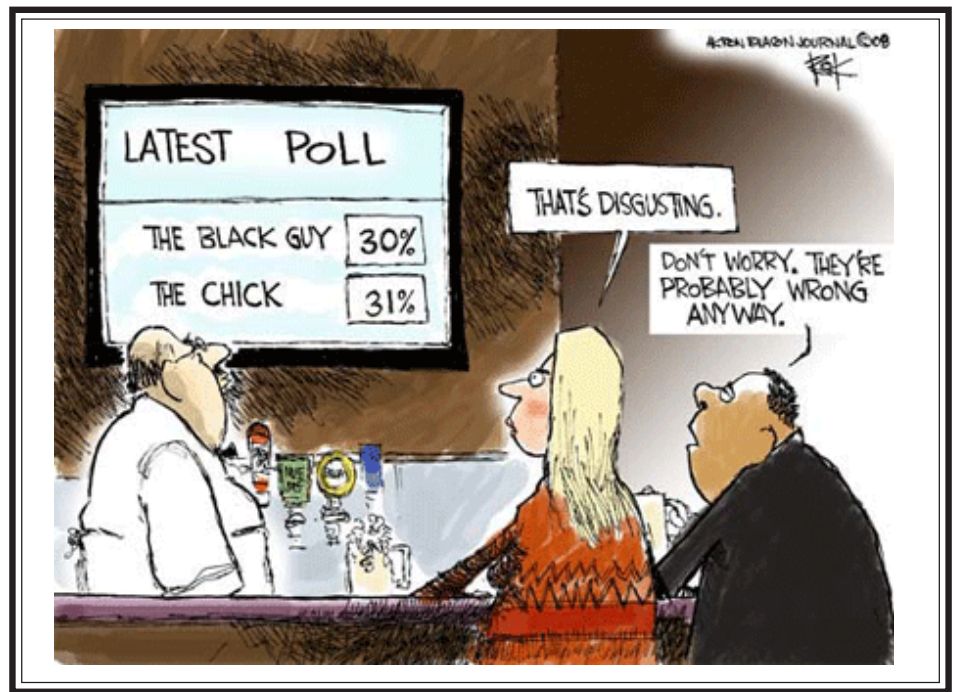
Lawrence Firefighters; Lt. Erik Zahn, Lt. Tara Reardon and Firefighter Rodney Rivera. North Andover Firefighter Daniel Ryan. Andover Firefighters: Deputy Chief DeIDotto, Lt. Mark Conlon, Todd Richardson, Eric Tiechert, Lt. George Milne, Joe Cahill, John Mullen, Thomas Agnew, Cliff Pattullo, Kyle Murpy, Scott Weightman, Jeffrey Condon ad Brian Landry.

These brave men and women, as well as their colleagues in the field of public safety, deserve the support, respect, and thanks from the people of the Merrimack Valley.

And while many of our citizens do understand the sacrifices these men and women make and the dangers they face every day, sadly, there are others who shamefully attack them in the press or grandstand at public meetings advocating public hostility towards those who would so willingly give their lives for every single one of them.

We at the Valley Patriot are proud of the good men and women who serve as police, firefighters and EMTs across the Valley.

We also want to thank the wonderful men and women of the Lawrence Exchange Club for honoring them and calling the public's attention to their bravery and heroism.



## LETTERS

As I watched veterans speak at the Lawrence School Committee I remembered back to the first time I disagreed with a group of Marines. I was in infantry training school, force marching in a platoon carrying crew serve weapons, when one of the marines blacked out from heat exhaustion.

A group of marines gathered around him and started verbally berating the marine, saying he disgraced the unit, he was a wuss, etc.

When the group simmered down a little bit I said to them, you shouldn't be yelling at him, you should be admiring him.

The look on there faces was like that of the school committee when you tell them they should be educating our children.

I said to them, this marine has given more than any of us here and possibly more than any of you ever will, he gave everything he had. He literally gave a hundred percent, his body shut down before his dedication to his unit did, and as you may have noticed he never once complained the entire time we were marching.

Later that day several marines approached me. His squad leader said I'm going to work out with him in the gym and see if he'll go on some extra runs to build up his stamina. Another Marine said I gave up all my water to help with his heat exhaustion. Another said he admitted to the fallen soldier what the group had done and apologized.

My difference of opinion worked out well — it was just a little deeper look at something that happened. As an ex-Marine myself, I am not disgraced by the actions of another, I served vigorously and with honor, no one can take that away; not a hundred Mr. Stokes.

I think no less of the veterans, their honor and dedication to this country for me is still untarnished. I am more

outraged at Mr. Stokes as a voter than as a service man. That may seem a little odd without the right perspective.

Marines basically can be viewed as people who do two things: they serve their country and they fight.

First, Marines and veterans serve their country, not kings, not judges, and not any of it's people. We are servants to a country.

Secondly they fight, to provide the freedoms, rights and privileges for all to enjoy. It is not our place to look for a pat on the back, to concern ourselves with people who lie, and it is beneath the honor of veterans to say that Mr. Stokes or anyone could in any way dishonor them or our country.

As I said above, service to country is selfless, however, if people truly want to honor veterans as they say, I will share with you a way to really do that on a level that will reach their heart. If you wish to honor veterans, honor what they fought for.

Never allow our constitution, bill of rights or freedoms to ever become stained or tarnished. You can at every level find a way to honor veterans. You can ensure a fair trial by removing bigoted Judges like Judge Mary McCauley-Manzi.

Or you can call the mayor's office and let him know we have a system of checks and balances, and it's wrong for anyone to try and change or influence that.

Next time city councilors or school committee members fail to represent the public, throw them out.

A right to a fair trial, government checks and balances, the right to representation. These are things that veterans have fought for — just a few examples of how you can honor them, by honoring what they fought for.

Mark Gray, Lawrence

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**Letters to the editor and op/eds** can be submitted to the address above or to valleypatriot@aol.com

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## PUPPY LOVE

## Proper ways to care for your new pet

Kate Whitney

VALLEY PATRIOT CONTRIBUTOR

This month I decided to write about the importance of training your puppy/dog. Far too many people think that because their dog knows how to “sit”, it’s trained. This is far from true.

Remember one thing, a trained dog is a happy dog.

And a trained dog has a happy owner. For this article I interviewed a woman named Pat Ingersoll. Pat is a Boxford resident and owner of Moose and Me Dog Training. She started training dogs twenty one years ago.

Her first client was her own Rottweiler named Axil. Pat offers private, semi-private, and group dog training classes, and also does in-home care for pets.

I want to thank Pat for taking the time to meet with me so that I could write this article and share with all of you some important tips to remember when the idea of training your puppy comes up. If you



only take one thing away from reading this article, please let it be this: the keys to successful dog training are *consistency, motivation, and reward.*

#### Why Is Training Your Dog So Important?

You need to let your dog know

he’s a dog; your dog is a social creature, just like humans. An obedience class is a great way to socialize your dog.

By taking your puppy to class, you not only create a bond away from the home, but also at the home when you continue the methods even after the class is over. Obedience class is a place where the *owner* is taught how to properly teach the dog.

#### Do You Have Any Rules For Class?

The biggest rule for class is the “one command rule.” When you ask your dog to do something, whether it’s “sit”, “stay”, etc. only say the word one time, do not keep repeating it. If your puppy does not do what you ask, physically help her. Never say “sit down” because that’s two commands.

“Sit” should be accomplished first, and then if you want your puppy to lay down on the floor, you would then say “down.” One command only and say it only once—remember this!

#### When Should I Start Taking My Puppy to Obedience Class? Are There Any Prerequisites?

You can start your puppy in classes as early as 8 weeks old. However, you should always check with your vet first. Your puppy also needs to have all appropriate shots.

#### Who Should Accompany the Puppy to Obedience Classes?

The more family members who can go, the better...everyone can benefit from going to class with their puppy. The family needs to be consistent with commands.

This consistency is going to come from everyone learning the correct way to treat the puppy. The key here is to make sure everyone is on the same page. If all family members can’t make it to class, the person who does go needs to bring the rest of the family up to speed on what went on in the class.

#### What’s the First Command Someone Should Teach Their Puppy?

“Sit.” A sitting dog isn’t jumping on people, isn’t running away from you. A sitting dog is a well behaved dog.

#### What Is The Best Way To Reward Your Puppy?

There are a few great ways to reward your puppy.

Always try to have something yummy for your puppy. Whether it’s a treat or pieces of chicken or liver, remember it should be something quick, easy, soft, and yummy. Simple words can also be very rewarding.

Things like “good dog” or “good sit” are great ways to show that you are happy with what your dog is doing. Always reward good behavior (positive reinforcement). Make sure that the reward, whether food or praise, comes quickly after the dog performed the good behavior. Remember to say your dog’s name when you praise.

For example, say “good sit, Dash.” Remember that your tone of voice is key.

Your dog can tell a lot by how you say something. If you are happy because your dog did something good, then make sure your voice is happy. If your dog did something that displeased you, make sure your voice shows this.



PHOTO: TOM DUGGAN

Boxford resident Kate Whitney holds Dash, a puppy she took in temporarily as a foster parent but decided to adopt. Whitney has volunteered to provide a foster home for needy puppies while they are waiting to be adopted.

Never hit, kick, yell, or scream at your dog. You want your dog to respect you, not fear you.

#### What Are Some Good Treats And Toys For Puppies? Anything To Avoid?

Peanut butter in a Kong is a great treat! Make sure the treats that you feed your puppy do not have any wheat, corn, or

WHITNEY, bottom next page

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# Live the WOW!

Set your heart on fire with a burning love for all you do and everyone you meet! Give it all you’ve got! Then, get ready to REALLY Live the WOW!

Thomas Connors  
VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

It all begins with LOVE! All our Relationships. All of Life! Every **WOW!** Moment!

Take that Heart of yours and fill it to overflow capacity! That’s what it’s there for. Just flex that great big muscle and let Love flow in abundance and for the benefit of those around you? Your spouse, your children, your God ... everyone. What is holding you back? What are you fearing? There’s a **WOW!** waiting to burst right out of you!

Hey, Romeo! You found her! You wooed her! You married her! Then, your Brain went Dead! Don’t wait till it’s too late to fully realize you can’t live without her! Make your marriage, your relationship, a **WOW!** right now!

Guys, where would we be without the magnificence of women? We certainly can make an impression when we want! The flowers, the chocolates, even the smooth talking! It’s one **WOW!** after another as we take advantage of every single opportunity to win her over.

Then, we make a commitment. And as soon as that happens, our brain disengages and goes dead! Instead of creators of **WOW!**, we become total knuckleheads! Divorce is at an all-time high and getting worse.

Take this Challenge. Love your spouse with a **WOW!** Get out of your comfort zone and fill your spouse’s heart with an abundance of Love.

Right now, make a giant note to stop into Market Basket or your local florist on the way home to buy your spouse, girl friend, partner, whatever you call her, a small bouquet of flowers. You can afford the \$6.95. Then, get home and tell her you bought her the flowers,

“Just ... BECAUSE ... and you don’t need any other reason!”

Watch her say, “**WOW!**”

The next week, cook supper for her. Show your effort. Another **WOW!** Buy her a box of chocolates two weeks later. Tell her you were just thinking of her. **WOW!** Go to the beach for a walk ... yes, during the winter. Hold her hand just like you used to do! Keep those **WOW!**s coming!!!

And, ladies, just watch the look on your man’s face when you hand HIM a bunch of flowers to say, “I Love you!” Just keep creating moments that say, “**WOW!**”

Kids! They’ll drive you nuts! They’ll challenge you every single day. And in the end, the JOY they bring you is a Gift that is priceless! **WOW!**

Take the gifts and the money cards and throw them all away! Try giving LOVE to your children. I don’t care if they’re six or sixty! Your TIME is more precious and more valuable than any shiny new bicycle or new i-pod or mall gift certificate. LOVE from your heart is more precious because it is a part of you.

Take TIME for your children. Schedule it if you have to. But make it happen this month no matter how busy you are or what “deals” you have in the works. There will always be a new deal coming your way. There is only one chance, today, to give LOVE to your child. Once that opportunity is gone it can never be replaced or made up. It’s gone!

If your relationship with your child is not great, guess what? You did it. Now, UNDO it!

Stop making excuses. I don’t care how much distance you have between you and your child or how many years it has been since you talked. Get off your butt and make that call.

YOU extend your hand and make the effort to reach out. Then, whatever you say or whatever you do .... DO it with

such an abundance of LOVE that you simply overwhelm your child with a **WOW!** Sure, I know it may not go quite as planned. But, Start! And don’t quit until both of you say, “**WOW!**” Then Scream it from the top of your lungs ... I LOVE YOU!

Give Praise! Shout it from the Mountain top! Make your God the centerpiece of your life and very being. Always remember, from Him all LOVE is born and multiplies! IF you let it!

Whoa! Do you believe I had the gall to mention God and religion in PUBLIC? Amazing, isn’t it! Gather together at any cocktail party and listen. People are upbeat, positive and having just a wonderful time. Then the bombshell! Just mention the word, GOD! That’ll put a damper on the conversation.

God! The Source of All LOVE? Are we crazy? Why are we so embarrassed at the mention of His name? Why are we so uncomfortable discussing our so-called Beliefs?

This month, catch yourself avoiding the subject and share your LOVE for God with those people around you. I don’t care if you are the CEO who thinks she rose to the position with her talents and hard work or the gardener grateful for the mere opportunity to work. God LOVES you immensely and non-stop with all His Heart.

Don’t wait till you are on your death bed to get closer to God! LOVE Him now! Starting today! SHARE IT! Stop into church or a chapel just to say hello.

Make Him a **WOW!** in your life!

Remember! A **WOW!** you fail to create for someone else is a **WOW!** you DENY yourself!

That’s Insane!

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PHOTO: COURTESY

go through the motions and those who work from a base of passion or Love. The results of those putting Love into their day are far greater and much more meaningful. Our Guests benefit immensely!

You too can make a significant difference in this world. Don’t go through the rest of Life hardened by fear of opening up your heart to others. When you do that you choke your own source of a meaningful life and one filled with one **WOW!** after another.

There is no experience, no feeling, no emotion more exhilarating and rewarding than the Gift of Love.

Now, *that’s* a **WOW!**

{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. You can reach Tom at [Tom@AmericanTrainingInc.com](mailto:Tom@AmericanTrainingInc.com) or by writing to him at Tom Connors, American Training, 102 Glenn Street, Lawrence, MA 01843 }

## WHITNEY: from previous page

gluten in it. Stay away from onions, grapes, chocolate.

A list of many other hazardous foods and plants can be found on [www.AKC.org](http://www.AKC.org). For toys, try to stay with toys that are made in the USA. Remember to never give a rawhide chew if your dog is going to be alone and unsupervised. A soft Frisbee known as a “chuck it” is great and even just a stuffed toy can do the trick to providing a well-liked toy.

Make sure you do not use human toys. Try to get dog friendly toys: no small parts that can be chewed off, no small beads used for stuffing, no hard eyes, etc. Inspect a toy before giving it to your puppy.

**What’s the Difference Between Leather And Nylon Collars/Leashes? What Do You Recommend? How Do You Fit A Puppy for A Collar?**

Nylon can burn your hands and also your dog’s neck if it pulls. Leather is great! The collar should be loose enough so that you are able to put your fingers under the collar, but tight enough so the collar can’t slip over the head. A retractable leash is okay for some situations. It allows freedom in the right place.

If you are walking your dog on a busy street, please don’t let it be out twenty feet in front of you, keep it on a short leash.

**Housebreaking a Puppy, Any Suggestions?**

Consistency....try to take the puppy out as much as you can and remember to reward the good behavior of going potty outside.

If a puppy has an accident inside, be sure not to get angry at it. Make sure your puppy’s crate is large enough so that it can stand, turn around, and lay down, but not so big that it has the opportunity to go potty in one end of the crate, and lay in the other end.

You can buy dividers to make the crate smaller if you need to. You should always confine your new puppy to a specific area (baby gates are great for helping with this). In the beginning, the puppy should not have free reign of the house and they should *always* be supervised.

Keep in mind that you are going to have this puppy for a long time, you want to start off on the right foot. You need to bond with your dog and recognize that you will be learning new things about each other everyday!

Owning a pet should be a fun experience, not a hassle or burden, and remember to make fun memories with your pet! Pat said that the biggest mistake people make with regard to training is that they take one class and think they know everything.

Training is an ongoing experience and process that takes time. As the interview came to a close, Pat



PHOTO: KATE WHITNEY

Pat Ingersoll trains Axil to jump through hoops. Ingersoll can be reached at 978-204-1783

reminded me of one thing. She said, “You don’t get Lassie in eight weeks.”

Kate Whitney is the president of the SwingRite Corporation in Boxford. For more information about adopting or becoming a foster puppy you can email Kate Whitney at [kwswingrite@aol.com](mailto:kwswingrite@aol.com).



HAVERHILL ON THE MOVE

From the desk of Haverhill Mayor Jim Fiorentini

Our nation stands in the shadow of a recession. State and local governments— including our own— face massive deficits. Despite this, I am more and more bullish about Haverhill’s long-term future. We have the land, we have an educated and growing populace and access to the river. Our river vision took a big step towards reality this week. I report on it in this edition.

I just returned from Washington, DC, where I attended the United States Conference of Mayors last month and met our Congresswoman and Senators to present our case. I had the chance to meet with the best Mayors throughout the country— Mayors like Mayor Spitalere from Sunnyvale, CA, Mayor Michael Bloomberg from NYC, and Mayor Rhine McLin of Dayton, Ohio.

The conference was devoted to two issues: the use of green technology to build jobs in the local community and the housing crisis.

I also report in this edition about our budget and our efforts to get State assistance for the Hale debt. We have some good news for you. For more frequent updates between newsletters, please check my website, [www.jamesfiorentini.com](http://www.jamesfiorentini.com). Join our blog about local issues. I have changed the blog so that you do not need to be a registered user to respond.

Governor Patrick Puts Hale Debt Relief into State Budget



Governor Patrick released his budget last week, and included \$1 million for Haverhill to pay toward the Hale debt. It is the first time any Governor has offered

assistance. The Romney administration opposed Hale debt relief for Haverhill.

The \$1 million will help us to balance our budget where we face a large deficit. Having the Governor acknowledge the Hale debt and propose assistance is a great step for the city. This did not happen by accident. A lot of people worked hard to lobby and make this happen: Lt. Governor Tim Murray, whom I met with several times, United States Senator John Kerry, and, especially our legislative delegation, led by State representative Brian Dempsey and State Senator Steven Baddour, who worked tirelessly to obtain these funds. Thanks Governor, and thank you legislators.

City Gets \$400,000 Grant to Move Rail Trail Vision to Reality

About a year ago, we invited the community to join us for a visioning session, to create a future vision of how we would use the Merrimack River. We came up with what is called our “Urban River Vision” of the Merrimack River.

Last month, our vision came a good deal closer to reality. We received a State grant to purchase the abandoned rail line that runs along the river in Bradford and put in a walking and biking trail (a rail trail.) Although the grant is not enough to purchase the rail bed, we have commitments from private donors to make up the difference.

No city of Haverhill money will be needed to complete the purchase. This is a first step towards a rail trail— but only a first step. The actual trail will take a good deal longer. When it is done, this abandoned rail line will become a river front walking and biking trail, and park. This step would not have been possible without the hard work of Representative Brian Dempsey,



Senator Steve Baddour, Rep. Barbara L'Italien, who lobbied for us to obtain these funds. We also thank all those who participated in our Urban River Visions exercise.

Lowe’s Opens

Two years ago, I asked the city council to join with me in rezoning a section of the Route 97 industrial park to allow for retail stores. I called it our “21st century retail policy” and said that this new zoning policy would give us a chance to bring in new retail stores.

Today, we see the fruits of our rezoning efforts as the three largest retail stores ever to open in Haverhill, BJ’s, Target and Lowe’s, are all now open. Saturday morning I was honored to represent our city at the grand opening of Lowe’s. Lowe’s brings 100 new jobs to our city. It was a great pleasure speaking to the many residents who work and shop there.

Abandoned Housing Task Force

A good deal of the National Conference of Mayors dealt with a common problem facing Mayors throughout the country— the burst of the housing bubble. We have about 70 foreclosed homes in Haverhill. While this is not a high number compared to other cities or compared to historical trends, we are watching this carefully.

One abandoned building can ruin a neighborhood. I have established the Abandoned Housing Task Force. Here are some of the tasks for our Abandoned Housing Task Force:

- a. **FINANCIAL COUNSELING:** Counseling for homeowners on how to avoid foreclosure;
- b. **VIGOROUS ENFORCEMENT:** If a house is foreclosed and the occupants leave, we alert our code inspectors, police department and fire departments to make certain the building is secured and safe. We keep a watch list of properties and ask police, fire and code inspectors to visit it regularly.
- c. We contact the mortgage company to see when they are re-selling or re-marketing it, and if they fail to pay the taxes, we’ll be vigorous in taking it for back taxes;

d. If property falls into disrepair, we will demolish it, paying for that with our Federal block grant, and put a lien on the vacant land for repayment.

Project Update Boardwalk

We received final State approval for a new phase of boardwalk behind the Tap Restaurant. The boardwalk is a \$1 million project paid for entirely with State funding. No further approvals are required. It is important to understand how State money works. Money comes in different pockets. We cannot take money earmarked for the boardwalk and use it for some other project.

**Dialing for Dollars** Part of my job is to lobby for money for my city. This month, I paid a visit to Congresswoman Tsongas and to Senator Kennedy and Senator Kerry’s offices in Washington. I stressed to all of them what we need: short term relief for the Hale debt, and long term, assistance in improving our tax



base. We spoke of industrial parks, riverwalks, river dredging, parking garages and more.

“Coffee with the Mayor”

Saturday, February 9, I will kick off my annual “Coffee with the Mayor” series in Ayers Village. I’ll be at Broadway Variety, 864 Broadway, Saturday, February 9 from 10 am to noon. If you have any questions or comments about the city’s direction, or if you are just feeling sociable, please stop by for coffee and discussion about our city. Every year, I go around to neighborhoods to meet with residents, update them on neighborhood projects, and their problems.

Two years in a row, Haverhill Taxpayers have one of the lowest tax increases in the region

A recent Boston Globe story confirms it: two years in a row, single-family residential taxpayers in Haverhill have the lowest tax increase in the area, and one of the lowest increases throughout Essex county. In all of Essex county, Haverhill single-family homeowners have the 6th lowest tax bill. The average single-family residential tax bill is \$3,293. The average in Boxford is \$7,402, Amesbury, \$5,029, Newburyport \$4,933.

I do recognize that taxes are a burden for many of our citizens, and that some of our citizens are suffering with high oil costs, high electric costs, high gas and gasoline costs, and many of our residents are worried about their financial future. Our rate for single-family homeowners was helped by a substantial increase in values in business valuations. This has caused a shift from residents to business, resulting in single-family values being kept to a reasonable rate.



Jim Fiorentini is the mayor of Haverhill and was just elected to his third term on November 6th. You can email him at [Jimfior@aol.com](mailto:Jimfior@aol.com)

Haverhill  
95 Winter Street (Rte. 97)

Home of the 19" 3lb. PIZZA

Straight From Boston's North End

Baby Boomer Dance

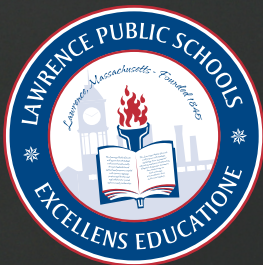
Haverhill, MA – The Recreation Department and Council on Aging and the Groveland Council on Aging are sponsoring a Baby Boomer Dance to be held at Haverhill Country Club on Saturday, February 24, 2007, from 7:00 p.m. to midnight. Music will be provided by George Whitehouse of A Goodtimes DJs. Tickets are \$25.00 per person. Tables of ten may be reserved.

Dance to the music of the 60’s and 70’s and join your friends for a night of fun. This great music will bring back wonderful memories and provide the perfect opportunity to reacquaint with old friends and make new friends. Whether you are new to Haverhill or a long-time resident, this event will be a fun-filled evening!

Tickets may be purchased at the Haverhill COA, 10 Welcome Street.

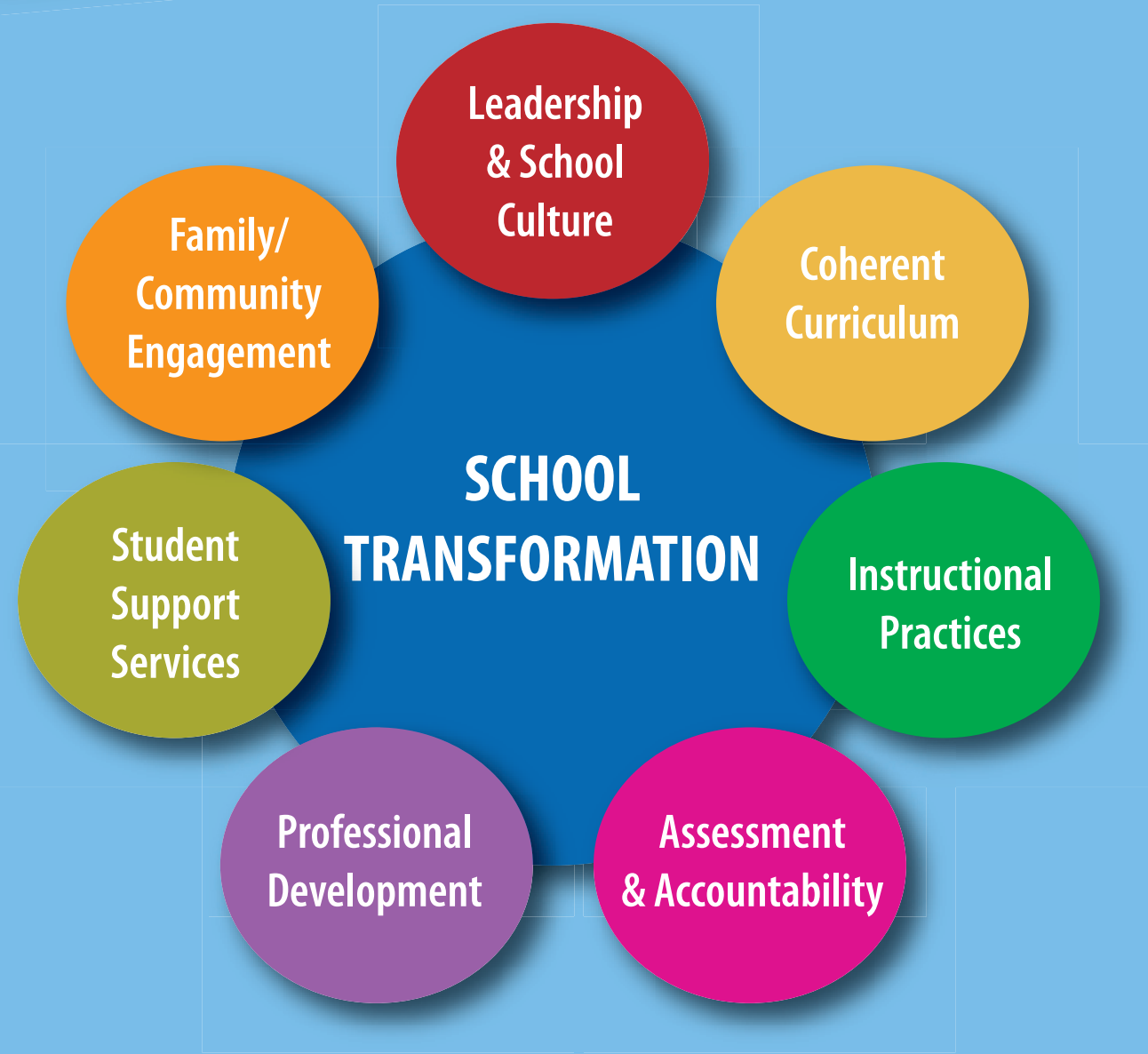


# “A Campaign for Proficiency for ALL”



Lawrence Public Schools  
Embraces

The “7” Essential Elements  
of School Transformation  
“A Campaign for Proficiency for ALL”



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



RICHARDHOWE.COM

# Foreclosures in Lowell during 2007

Richard Howe, Jr.  
VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

The incidence of home foreclosures in Lowell rose dramatically in 2007. In 2006, there were 93 foreclosures in Lowell; in 2007 there were 283. While that number seems disturbingly high, for a variety of reasons discussed below, it is likely that there will be even more foreclosures in 2008. To better understand the causes of all of these foreclosures, I researched a number of them - 247 in all – to learn what was going on.

Here’s what I found:

1) In almost every case, the buyer at the foreclosure auction was a national lender, usually the one that had made the loan that was being foreclosed.

Deutsche Bank, Wells Fargo, Bank of New York and other large, national entities appear again and again as both the foreclosing party and as the buyer at the foreclosure auction. In only twelve cases (less than 5%) was the buyer at auction a private individual. Local banks were the foreclosing lender in just two cases.

2) 57% of the foreclosures were of the mortgage used to purchase the property.

A clear distinction in the Lowell foreclosures was between the mortgage used to purchase the property or a subsequent mortgage that resulted from one or more “refinancings” of the property. Of the 247 cases studied, 57% involved the foreclosure of the “purchase mortgage” while the remaining 43% involved a refinanced mortgage.

3) In 66% percent of the purchase mortgage foreclosures, the property buyer borrowed the entire purchase price

Of the 141 foreclosed purchase mortgages, 66% put no money down but borrowed all of the purchase price. Only in 34% of the cases did the borrower put any of his own money towards the purchase of the property.

4) In 72% of the purchase mortgage foreclosures, the amount borrowed was

split between a first and second mortgage from the same lender.

In 102 cases (72%), the amount borrowed was split between a first and a second mortgage. Unlike the 1990s when these “seconds” were often hidden, the 21<sup>st</sup> Century “seconds” were all recorded along with the first mortgage and were always from the same lender.

5) The average foreclosure auction took place within two years of the purchase of the property by the borrower.

The borrowers in these 141 foreclosures didn’t wait long to get into financial distress. The average foreclosure deed was recorded 28 months after the property was purchased.

6) The amount obtained at the foreclosure sale was \$53,000 less than the amount the borrower owed the lender.

As for the price realized at the foreclosure sale, on average it was \$52,832 less than the amount the borrower owed the lender.

In 127 cases, the amount the property was purchased for at auction was less than the amount of the mortgage being foreclosed. Of equal importance is the fact that the subsequent sale of the property by the foreclosing lender to a third party is usually for significantly less – often 25% less – than the amount realized at the foreclosure sale.

7) 43% of the Lowell foreclosures involved refinanced mortgages.

Of the 247 foreclosures studied, 106 (43%) involved refinanced mortgages. In these cases, borrowers already owned the property, usually with the help of a purchase mortgage, but would “refinance” after owning the property for some period of time. The average refinanced mortgage property owner was typically on his fourth mortgage at the time of foreclosure.

8) Refinanced mortgages were foreclosed almost seven years after the borrower purchased the property.

In the 106 foreclosures of refinanced mortgages, the average borrower had



Of the 247 foreclosures studied in Lowell, 106 (43%) involved refinanced mortgages. In these cases, borrowers already owned the property, usually with the help of a purchase mortgage, but would “refinance” after owning the property for some period of time.

originally purchased the property 82 months (that’s almost seven years) before the foreclosure occurred.

The mortgage that was foreclosed was obtained nearly five years after the property was purchased and was the fourth mortgage that borrower had on the property. Surprisingly, the time from the mortgage that was ultimately foreclosed to the foreclosure deed was 29 months which is just one month more than the 28 months between mortgage and foreclosure deed for the “purchase mortgage” foreclosures.

9) In refinanced mortgage foreclosures, the borrower owed the lender \$75,000 more than he had paid for the house when he purchased it.

As for the money involved in the refinanced mortgage foreclosure, the borrower had purchased the home for \$75,000 less than the amount borrowed on the mortgage that was ultimately foreclosed. To illustrate this with a simple example, homeowner purchases a house in 2000 for \$150,000 and fully finances that with a purchase mortgage of \$150,000.

Five years later, homeowner refinances and obtains a mortgage for \$225,000. Homeowner cannot make the payments on that mortgage and it’s foreclosed with

the borrower owing \$75,000 more than was paid for the property in the first place.

While the above statistics tell us what happened in 2007, the bigger question now is what is going to happen in 2008. My sense is that the slow down in the housing market that began in 2006 will help slow the incidence of purchase mortgage foreclosures in 2008.

The major threat comes from “serial refinancers” who sustained a standard of living by repeatedly pulling equity out of their homes.

These folks now have the money spigot shut off and are left with monthly payments that they cannot afford and houses they cannot sell because the amount owed on the mortgage exceeds the value of the property. I’m afraid this means that we have not seen the end of stories about rising foreclosure rates.



Richard P. Howe Jr. is the creator of [www.richardhowe.com](http://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](mailto:lowelldeeds@comcast.net)

## TRAVELS WITH GRACIE

# How I almost died of starvation in a Florida Restaurant

Grace Piazza  
VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

Before fleeing snowstorms, icy roads and Arctic air in February for sunny warm Florida, Snowbirds should assemble a Survivor’s Kit of crackers,

cheese, raisins, nuts, oranges and apples in a tote bag or backpack for a quick lunch before hitting the beach.

During high tourist season, you take your chances if you try to get lunch at a restaurant near the beach in some Florida towns. The layback attitude in some coastal restaurants is reminiscent of 1960s California when hippies casually moved slowly through space and time in their own psychedelic worlds listening to the beat of their own drummers and to tunes such as “Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds”.

Unlike most of our better restaurants in the Merrimack Valley such as Sal’s Pizza where you are served promptly, you may wait ten minutes to place your order, then wait

indefinitely for the food until you complain to the host who stirs up the kitchen.

In November in Southwest Florida, I thought I must have stumbled into a Twilight Zone or X-File movie set at a restaurant whose name I shall not reveal to protect the guilty and avoid lawsuits. If I was not the unsuspecting victim of an alien experiment on human patience, perhaps I had dropped in during “Role Reversal Day” when the Guest becomes the Waiter and waits and waits for a server-Guest for the Day.

Had I stupidly forgotten Cardinal Rule #1 for Fleeing Tourists in High Season? Unwritten Rule #1 explicitly states that any restaurant near water is dispensed from civility and allowed to charge exorbitant prices for mediocre food to tourists.

I shall remain forever curious as to how my bowl of vegetable soup with mushrooms, the Soup *du jour*, tasted like

the overly salted canned Soup *de l’annee derniere*, (French for last year’s soup), with cream added for panache, but took fifteen minutes to serve.

Perhaps the cook had to go to the dairy farm for the cream or to the shopping mall for a new can opener.

In all fairness to Florida’s hospitality industry, I should add that I had great dining experiences at the Cheesecake Factory, The Dock Restaurant at Crayton Cove and Watermark Grille in Naples and south of Ft. Myers.

Perhaps Rule #1 was superceded by unwritten Tourism Rule #2, quality increases in direct proportion to the distance from water.

Grace Piazza is a former teacher and Lawrence native who enjoys travel writing as a hobby. She studied at Merrimack College and Middlebury College.

Lowell

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Straight From Boston's North End



# Dracut on the move for high school feasibility study

D.J. Deeb  
DRACUT SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Last month, I wrote about how The Dracut School Committee and Board of Selectmen approved the submission of a Statement of Interest to obtain funding for renovating, expanding, and/or building a new high school in Dracut. This is an important undertaking for the Town of Dracut. This month I am pleased to report that members of the Capital Planning Committee and Board of Selectmen have expressed support for funding this Feasibility Study and, as it now stands, it is likely to be placed before the voters at Dracut Town Meeting in June.

Dracut School Committee Chairman Ron Mercier has scheduled an open public forum to discuss the Feasibility Study and the condition of Dracut High School on February 4th at Dracut High School. All Dracut residents and officials have been invited to attend this important informational session and dialogue. In addition, Chairman Mercier, School Superintendent Elaine Espindle, and Town Manager Dennis Piendak will appear before the Massachusetts School Building Authority for a hearing scheduled for February 8th to discuss further the Feasibility Study options.

To recap, the Massachusetts School Building Authority [MSBA] received 423 Statements of Interest from 162 school districts across the Commonwealth. Dracut was one of 49 schools to be approved for Feasibility Study funding.

In early December, Dracut High School was also chosen as one of 83 schools to receive state funding from the MSBA. Only 17 schools in northeastern Massachusetts, including Dracut, were given priority status for funding by the Massachusetts School Building Authority. The Feasibility Study, which is also funded at 50% by the State, will determine the options available to Dracut residents regarding the town's high school. It will also tell us how much the MSBA will be willing to contribute towards a new high school or expansion project.

In recent years, Dracut High School has experienced severe overcrowding and some structural problems within the school itself. It is important to keep in mind that the building itself was constructed in the late 1950's.

The all too-famous catwalk is in dire need of repair as well as the canopy outside the High School's main entrance. Many of the windows are in poor condition, which allows cold air to seep through, and the building itself is costly because it is not energy-efficient. The cafeteria and gymnasium are undersized for the current and projected student population. Most importantly, more classroom space is needed in order to adequately provide for Dracut's growing student population. Currently, Dracut High School contains ten [10] portable modular classroom units to house our students.

This is okay for the short-term, but forward planning is needed to provide for



the long-term needs of our students and our community.

The MSBA currently has approximately \$2.5 billion to appropriate for school construction and expansion projects over the next 5 years. Dracut was fortunate to be chosen to participate in a Feasibility Study by the MSBA to ascertain whether expanding our existing high school or building a new high school is the best option for the Town.

More importantly, the Feasibility Study will determine how much the State would be willing to assist Dracut financially in a future project. Dracut parents and taxpayers would be best served to at least know what options are available to fix Dracut High School.

Communities are judged largely by the quality of their high schools when it

comes to property values. We owe it to Dracut's students and Dracut homeowners to explore all of the options available for repairing Dracut High School and providing for the learning needs of our students by expanding classroom space. More information will follow next month.

*D.J. Deeb is an adjunct Professor of History and Government at Bunker Hill Community College and a Political Science Instructor at the University of Massachusetts Lowell. He teaches Social Studies full-time at Reading Memorial High School. He is First Vice-Chairperson of the Dracut School Committee and a member of the Greater Lowell Regional Vocational-Technical School Committee.*



# From the desk of Congressman Niki Tsongas

Niki Tsongas  
5TH DISTRICT CONGRESSMAN

It has been three months since we won a remarkable special election to succeed Marty Meehan. I want to thank you once again for your enthusiastic and generous support of my campaign. I would surely not have the privilege of serving the Fifth District of Massachusetts in Congress were it not for your invaluable commitment this past year and that of others like you.

I want to take this opportunity, as well, to update you on what I've been doing since I took office. Whether it's been voting to override the President's veto of the much-needed children's health care bill or drafting legislation to set a timetable for the withdrawal of our troops from Iraq or reviewing border security first-hand at the U.S. - Mexican border or joining the House Armed Services and Budget Committees, it has been a busy and purposeful journey.

The day that I was sworn in as a new member of Congress - October 18th - I cast my first vote, joining a majority of my colleagues in trying to ensure healthcare coverage for 200,000 children in Massachusetts and close to ten million nationwide. While we fell short of the

two-thirds necessary to override the President's veto, I remain more determined than ever to help make broad healthcare coverage for children a reality this year.

Congress did end the year with some important domestic achievements. One historic example was the landmark energy bill. I was a strong proponent, both in the campaign last year and as a member of Congress, of the tougher fuel efficiency standards and new incentives for the creation of alternative energy sources contained in the bill. Both will help put us on the path to energy independence. In December, I was part of the coalition that enacted another long overdue measure, the reform of the Alternative Minimum Tax that has placed an undue burden on millions of middle class Americans it was never intended to affect.

The war in Iraq and the growing challenges in Afghanistan and Pakistan have been the most pressing foreign policy concerns. While there has been a reduction of American casualties in Iraq over the last six months, we are no closer to a political solution that will end the sectarian violence. Too many young Americans are still giving their lives for a mission that is ill-defined. We need to channel resources now spent on the war

to our own needs here at home and put pressure on the Iraqi leadership to assume the military burden from our brave young servicemen and women.

This week even as I write you, I am part of a Congressional delegation to Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Greece, Turkey, and Germany to meet with our troops on the ground, thank them for their outstanding service, and learn more about the ways we can support them. I will also be meeting with U.S. military commanders and local political leaders to get a comprehensive assessment of the security and economic conditions in each of these countries and the region.

Issues closer to home and particularly the needs and concerns of the people of the Fifth District, have also absorbed much of my energies. That is why I set up an economic development staff in my Lowell, Lawrence, and Haverhill offices and secured federal assistance to help local companies and dedicated public officials in their own efforts to revitalize the economy of the Merrimack Valley. And it is why I have made myself accessible to as many residents as possible, setting up a Congress on Your Corner program where constituents can discuss issues and concerns with me at

their local supermarkets and other venues.

What I hear so often when I travel around the Fifth District is that we must bring change to Washington. Unresolved and often unaddressed issues like the war in Iraq, children's healthcare, global warming, and - increasingly - our struggling economy, all reinforce that need for fundamental change. That change won't come overnight. Indeed, it may not truly come until the election of a new president in November. But we need to take the first steps now. I look forward to working with all of you, who stood by me in a difficult campaign for change last year, as we move forward to make real the kind of change we all seek.

Again, thank you so much for your support and encouragement. I am truly grateful.

Best wishes for 2008,



*Niki Tsongas was elected the 5th district congressman last October to fill the vacant seat left by Marty Meehan. Tsongas is seeking reelection this year. you can email the congressman's office at [John.Noble@mail.house.gov](mailto:John.Noble@mail.house.gov)*

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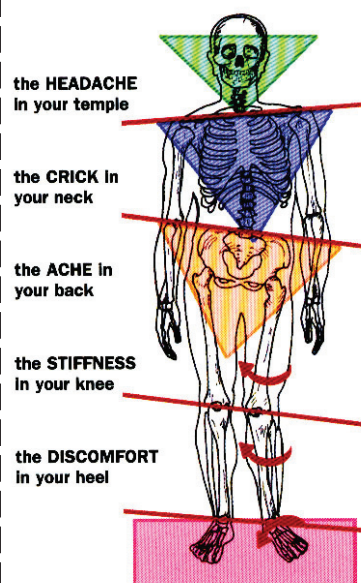
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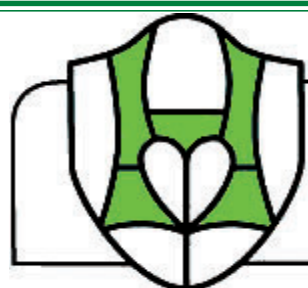
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# Everybody Gets It!

### OUR NEW LINEUP MONDAY - FRIDAY

**5:00am** WCVB-TV Channel 5 EyeOpener News  
LIVE on Your Radio 980 WCAP

**6:00am** MERRIMACK MAGAZINE - with Jack Baldwin,  
Teddy Panos, and Dean Johnson \* News, Weather,  
Local Sports, Merrimack Valley Traffic on the 8's

**10:00am** Dr. Dean Edel

**11:00am** G. Gordon Liddy

**12:00noon** Dr. Joy Brown

**3:00pm** MERRIMACK MAGAZINE - with Ryan and  
Regina News, Weather, Local Sports, Merrimack Valley  
Traffic on the 8's

**5:30pm** WCVB-TV NewsCenter5 The Evening News  
LIVE on Your Radio 980wcap

**6:30pm** The Beatles & Before

**8:00pm** George at Night - George Anthas - LIVE, Local  
call in and interviews

**10:00pm** The Beatles & Before



**Don't Miss WCVB-TV Channel 5  
EyeOpener News  
LIVE on Your Radio 980 WCAP  
5AM & 5:30PM**

### Saturday

**6:00am** Warren Shaw

**10:00am** The Car Doctors

**11:00am** The Car Clinic with Bobby Likis

**12:00noon** Paying Attention! with Tommy Duggan

**2:00pm** The Beatles & Before

**980wcap.com**



PLANNING FOR YOUR FUTURE

# Responding quickly to the fire and its aftermath

**Michael Sweeney**  
LAWRENCE PLANNING DIRECTOR

In the early morning hours of Monday, January 21<sup>st</sup>, the City of Lawrence experienced a huge fire that effected hundreds of people. In total, nine parcels of property were damaged by the fire, with six of the properties experiencing a total loss.

Amazingly, thanks to the Lawrence Fire Department, not a single life was lost as the fire raged during one of the coldest nights of the year. Mutual aid from thirteen different communities, including Haverhill, Methuen, North Andover, Lowell, and Andover, placed additional and essential firefighters and fire apparatus at the scene that turned out to be critical.

The Lawrence Police Department played a central role in working with our fire department and in ensuring the safety of residents in the Parker and Market Street areas.

The outpouring of support from within and outside the community has been amazing. Businesses from Commonwealth Motors and Charles Daher, Lawrence Pumps and Salvatore's Restaurant led the way in providing monetary relief. The Trauma Intervention Program led by Jayan M. Landry and a host of non-profit agencies all stopped their activities to focus on the residents who had lost everything.



Lawrence Firefighters hose down the still smoldering fire on Parker and Market Street more than 14 hours after the fire wiped out the homes of dozens of families in sub zero temperatures last month.

Dr. Wilfredo Laboy mobilized his team at the Lawrence Public Schools to open the South Lawrence East School to provide a temporary safe shelter for those who were displaced.

Mayor Michael J. Sullivan quickly placed an emergency response team in charge of the situation and over the next few days Fire Chief Takvorian, Police Chief Romero and Economic Development Director Tom Schiavone made sure

that the focused efforts of government, businesses and non-profits would be combined to have the maximum impact.

Mayor Sullivan was immediately clear about two things; first, residents displaced by the fire had to be properly helped and cared for: and second, that the area of the fire, totaling over 35,000 square feet, would not be forgotten. Mayor Sullivan made it our priority to ensure that the area was safe and secure and that clean up at

the site would begin immediately. The efforts of the Building Inspectors office will be essential in accomplishing this.

Many of those efforts took shape on January 31<sup>st</sup> when Mayor Sullivan hosted Congressman Niki Tsongas and State Treasurer Tim Cahill to establish plans to rebuild the area. Treasurer Cahill announced an agreement with Sovereign Bank that would provide a \$5 million loan pool to assist victims of the fire.

Following Mayor Sullivan's theme of rebuilding quickly, Treasurer Cahill said, "These loans, made possible in part by \$5 million in linked deposits from the State Treasury, will allow property owners to rebuild and move forward." Congressman Tsongas was instrumental in helping the city involve federal agencies such as the Small Business Administration.

Mayor Sullivan has directed his office to work with the property owners and the insurance companies involved to ensure the over the next thirty days the site is cleared of debris and that an organized and effective rebuilding process can begin.

**P.S. THE GIANTS WIN!!!!**

*Michael Sweeney is the planning director for the City of Lawrence, a former member of the Lawrence City Council and school committee. You can e-mail Mr. Sweeney at [Esqsweeney@aol.com](mailto:Esqsweeney@aol.com).*

# New Beginnings in the Lawrence Public Schools?

**Peter Larocque**  
LAWRENCE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

New Beginnings. Can they really happen in Lawrence or are they just buzz words?

It's only February and I remember not so long ago on election night and then again at the Inauguration these words were filling the air with excitement and on the lips of many.

But many distractions have taken place since these events and some loose ends from FY07-08 have put these thoughts from becoming a reality on hold.

But now, with all these out of the way, maybe we can get back to that feeling of optimism and positive belief that Lawrence can begin anew and change can now have a chance to become reality!

The only way that I know of that the feeling of new beginnings has a chance of happening again, is for the community to come together and make them happen.

One issue that comes to mind is the Arlington Middle School. To turn that school around it's going to take a full time effort from all of us. And by all of us I mean; the Lawrence School Committee, the Superintendent of Schools, the Sullivan administration, teachers, students and parents. All the stake holders have to be involved.

We have all heard of the war on drugs, or the war on poverty. Well, it's time we declare war on the academic situation at the Arlington Middle School.

First, we have to stop trying to assign blame to one another.

Second, we need to support the teachers and let them know that without a doubt, they have our vote of confidence because we recognize the challenge that



Lawrence School Committeemen Peter Larocque, Sam Reyes, Lawrence Mayor Michael Sullivan, Superintendent Wilfredo Laboy and Pricilla Baez. Not pictured; Gregory Morris and Martina Cruz.

they are up against day after day. We appreciate their effort and applaud them for it. They need to be assured that none of them will lose their jobs with the Lawrence Public Schools because of this issue.

The reasons put forth by Superintendent Wilfredo Laboy for the situation at the Arlington Middle School are not excuses as some have said. If they can do a better job than those who are currently charged with the education of the students at this school, come on in and put up or shut up as the old saying goes.

The teachers and administrators on the front line of education at the Arlington Middle School have put forth a restructuring plan that they believe will help them.

It is our job now to support them and make sure that they have the tools they need to be successful. Parents of students at the Arlington Middle School need to support their child's teachers now more than ever.

I have always believed that the Lawrence Public School Teachers are the best in the state and are second to none.

The leadership of the Teachers Union also should make an effort not to get in the way of progress. Lets stand together and unite as the Leadership of the Lawrence Public Schools for the education of these children who need all of us in order to be successful in life and become the productive citizens that we need them to be.

God 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](mailto:peterlarocque@hotmail.com)*

The Merrimack Valley Housing Partnership is pleased to announce the availability of funds for down payment assistance for first time home buyers.

The Merrimack Valley Regional Housing Consortium Down Payment Assistance Program ("The Town Program") is available in Billerica, Chelmsford, Dracut, Littleton, Tewksbury, Tyngsboro and Westford.

The Merrimack Valley Housing Partnership will be administering this program. We have been awarded \$120,000 from the State of Massachusetts to be used on a first-come, first-served basis. Assistance will be awarded to first time home buyers using the formula: 5% of the purchase price up to \$10,000. We anticipate that approximately 15 families will benefit from the program.

More information is available on our website. [www.mvhp.org](http://www.mvhp.org).



## PAYING ATTENTION! WITH TOM DUGGAN

## The real disgrace in the Jennifer Padellaro lawsuit

After reading some of the material we have received on this lawsuit it is now clear to me that I was, in fact, blaming the victim.

Tom Duggan  
VALLEY PATRIOT EDITOR

Last month I wrote about the \$610,000 lawsuit settled by the City of Lawrence with former Assistant City Clerk Jennifer Padellaro.

Padellaro had been on worker's compensation after leaving the position because she was exposed to pornography at work when (then) City Clerk Jim McGravey was using city computers for his personal recreation. But Padellaro was not only forced to view porn on city computers at work at the hands of McGravey but according to her complaint McGravey was harassing her to have a sexual relationship with him as well.

In my column I called the settlement a "disgrace" because it was hard for me to understand how viewing naked images on a computer could cause someone to be "unable to work".

And after McGravey resigned it was also hard for me to understand why Padellaro would even *want* to be elevated to the city clerk's position where she would have to work with the very same individuals she was claiming covered up the issue and harassed her further.

I wrote in my column last month; "Strangely enough, Padellaro was so emotionally distraught by having seen naked pictures on a computer, and so psychologically damaged by the "hostile work environment" of having to deal with McGravey's friends in city hall every day, that she ended up applying for McGravey's job after he resigned in total disgrace."

Since then, however, The Valley Patriot has come into possession of documents detailing some of McGavey's actions beyond what had previously been reported, as well as the unbelievable behavior of City Council President Patrick Blanchette, whom I defended in these pages saying "... City Council President Patrick Blanchette absolutely did the right thing in not hiring Padellaro. It was both responsible and in the best interest of the taxpayers to seek a candidate for the job who was unconnected to the controversy and scandal that rocked city hall for more than a month and still had the potential of lawsuits; both by McGravey and by other city employees in that office."

Because we cover so much of Blanchette's political shenanigans in city hall and there is a feeling among Blanchette supporters that we are "out to get" Patrick, I was overly eager to defend the council president in a case that seemed pretty clear. Unfortunately, my eagerness to quell the misperception that Blanchette cannot get a fair shake in this newspaper blinded me to the reality that a legitimate sexual harassment victim had been treated badly by officials in the Sullivan administration and in particular the council president, the personnel director and the city attorney.

And I was called on the carpet for it by the editorial board of this newspaper, who not only disagreed with my opinion that Padellaro but felt that I was "blaming the victim." This was even before we obtained additional documents detailing the gross and sordid details of just what Padellaro had to endure in Lawrence city hall.

Initially, the board planned to write an editorial disagreeing with my assessment of the situation. But, since the issue was initially addressed in my column and it was that column which lacked a full appreciation of the extent of the harassment that Padellaro had to deal with, I wanted to step up to the plate and correct the misperceptions I gave my readers last month.

After reading some of the material we have received on this lawsuit it is now clear to me that I was, in fact, blaming the victim. Also, it seems clear that officials in the city of Lawrence have learned little from the Padellaro lawsuit as they scurry around spending precious time "investigating" how the press obtained copies of Blanchette's Employee Action Form showing his \$5,000 raise instead of tending to more recent complaints that could degenerate into another \$610,000 payout.

The record indicates that Padellaro had complained to city officials several times about McGravey's behavior, but her complaints were ignored while city attorneys were busy handling political issues for the city council president.

And, according to the documents we have seen, it was City Council President Patrick Blanchette who called Padellaro's home every day, some days more than once, leaving threatening and harassing messages for her on her answering machine.

I am happy to be able to clear the record on this issue. It is important to us that we be diligent in providing our readers an accurate picture of the facts in any story especially in cases where the

known facts evolve over time. What I am not so happy about is that once again, it seems the city council president was involved in harassing a city employee and abusing his authority as a public official to cover up the misdeeds of his friends (in this case Jim McGravey) while declaring an all out war against an innocent victim.

According to the appeals judge in the case, the evidence against McGravey, Blanchette and former Personnel Director Larry Lefebvre (on behalf of the city of Lawrence) was so overwhelming that he "advised" the city to come up with an offer before he awarded double damages to Padellaro for the pain and suffering she endured at the hands of Lawrence politicians who sought to cover up the scandal and paint Padellaro as the perpetrator of a crime instead of the victim of sexual harassment and assault.

In the coming months we will be pouring over additional documents on the case and reporting exactly what happened to cause the city of Lawrence to pay out \$610,000 to Assistant City Clerk Jennifer Padellaro, as well as reporting on additional complaints being ignored by the city attorney's office in Lawrence.



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 noon-2pm. You can email your comments to Tdugjr@aol.com .

## Jennifer Ortiz Foundation 2nd annual Prom Expo and Fashion Showcase

The Jennifer Ortiz Foundations second annual Prom Expo and Fashion Showcase will be held at the Elks Lodge, 652 Andover Street, Lawrence, MA on Friday, March 7, 2008. This year's event will include 2 contests to award 4 scholarships to lucky Merrimack Valley students attending college in the fall of 2008. Entry deadline for both contests is Friday February 8, 2008.

One couple will be awarded a \$500.00 scholarship each for our dance contest and two aspiring models (male & female) will be awarded the same. In addition to the contests, students will have the opportunity to see dozens of Merrimack Valley businesses catering to all their prom needs. Come see our vendors that include; formal shops, florists, limousine companies, hair salons, makeup artists and more.

In 2007 The Jennifer Ortiz Foundation awarded 5 scholarships to Merrimack

Valley Seniors, provided 500 elementary students will fully equipped "Back to School Backpacks" with our Project Stepping Stone, and visited Children's Hospital at Christmas with Santa to bring presents and the spirit of hope and giving to the children in the cancer ward. Your participation at any level will help us reach even more young people in 2008. We are a fully volunteer organization and welcome new volunteers for our events.

For information on how to become a vendor, volunteer, sponsor or contest participant, please e-mail [promexpo@comcast.net](mailto:promexpo@comcast.net), you can also call me at (978) 764-6672.

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### Greater Lawrence Community Action Council Inc.

#### Child Care Center Earns National NAEYC Accreditation

Program Among 1st in Nation to Complete Rigorous Accreditation Process

The Greater Lawrence Community Action Council Inc. Child Care Center (581 Andover Street, Lawrence, MA) was awarded Accreditation by The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) on 12/31/07. The Association is a national system that measures the quality of early childhood programs. The GLCAC Inc. Child Care Center is one of the first programs in the country to earn the mark of quality represented under the new NAEYC Accreditation system.

"We're very proud to have earned this distinguished mark of quality from NAEYC, and to be recognized for our commitment to reaching the highest professional standards, the staff work very hard and are truly dedicated to the children and families we service" said Robin Lynch, Program Director, GLCAC Inc. Child Care Center. "NAEYC" Accreditation lets families in our community know that children in our program are getting the best care and early learning experiences possible." The center is non-profit, has been in operation for over 36 years and is also a recipient of

the Universal Per-K Quality Grant by The Department of Early Education and Care through the state of Massachusetts which is awarded to early childhood programs that have proven quality.

To earn NAEYC Accreditation in the new system, the GLCAC Inc. Child Care Center went through an extensive year long self-study process, measuring the program and its services against the ten new NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards and more than 400 related Accreditation Criteria. The program received NAEYC Accreditation after an on-site visit by an NAEYC Assessor to ensure that the program meets each of the ten NAEYC program standards.

"The new NAEYC Accreditation system raises the bar for preschools, child care centers and other early childhood programs," said Mark Ginsberg, Ph.D., Executive Director of NAEYC. The GLCAC Inc. Child Care Center's NAEYC Accreditation is a sign that they are a leader in a national effort to invest in high quality early childhood education, and to help give all children a better start.

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# Reduced auto insurance rates and new regulations for all Mass drivers

Managed competition and reductions in auto rates

**Nonni S. Burns**  
COMMISSIONER OF MASSACHUSETTS  
DIVISION OF INSURANCE

Are you a good driver who is paying too much for auto insurance? Have you seen auto insurance commercials that advertise policies with the kinds of offerings that you would want to purchase?

Have you ever wondered why you have so few companies to choose from when it comes time to pick an insurer? If so, you're not alone.

For years Massachusetts has been the only state in the nation that sets auto insurance rates. Our system of overregulation made good drivers pay more than their fair share and gave all drivers just one policy option.

It also forced numerous companies to pack up and leave. The result? Consumers everywhere felt shortchanged, leaving them to ask, "Why don't I have access to the same lower rates and greater choices that drivers in every other state do?"

Fortunately, the Patrick Administration is in the process of taking the frustration out of Massachusetts auto insurance. As Insurance Commissioner, I am responsible for giving consumers the answers they've wanted for some time now: lower rates for good drivers no matter where they live, more choices and better products.

Through managed competition insurers can now compete for your business by providing a mix of policy benefits and setting their own rates while still being subject to my authority to enforce extensive consumer protections.

Our new system means that we are truly putting North Andover consumers in the driver's seat for the first time in 30 years.

In November, our 19 auto insurance companies unveiled significant rate decreases and innovative coverage options and discounts. The five largest insurers put forward rate filings that would cut premiums from 6-11%.

Each of these companies reported that at least 67% of their customers will see

their premium bills shrink if they choose to stay with those companies. Preliminary estimates from the Division of Insurance show that nearly half of all Massachusetts drivers will save 10% or more on their 2008 auto insurance rates.

Our new system also gives companies the flexibility and incentive they need to compete for market share by offering an array of innovative products.

Insurers have responded with discounts for good students, low mileage drivers, regular public transit users, customers who purchase homeowners or renters insurance with the same company and accident forgiveness for drivers involved in a minor accident after years of accident-free driving.

These types of options empower consumers with opportunities to tailor their coverage and drive their individual rates down even further.

I am currently overseeing an extensive review of each company's filing. My team and I will be making certain that insurers play by the rules and adhere to managed competition's comprehensive set of consumer protections. Additionally, I also retain the ultimate authority to disapprove rates found to be excessive or unfair.

Consumers in North Andover will begin to see the benefits of managed competition in mid-February – that's when renewal notices for policies with April effective dates will arrive in the mail and good drivers will learn the exact amount of their 2008 savings. It's never too soon, however, to take advantage of Massachusetts new auto insurance market.

Now that the Patrick Administration has put you in the driver's seat, contact your insurance agent or insurance companies directly.

Make sure they know you plan on making the most of managed competition by shopping your good driving record around to find the best possible rates and policy options.

*Nonnie S. Burnes is Commissioner of the Massachusetts Division of Insurance.*

# Early education center opens corporate offices in The Valley

Sal's Riverwalk to host early education corporate offices.

Little Sprouts Child Enrichment Centers is excited to announce the opening of their new corporate offices in Lawrence at the Riverwalk building complex.

The new corporate offices will be the new neighbor of the Lawrence Little Sprouts Child Enrichment Center currently located in the Riverwalk. This expansion finally gives CEO and Founder Susan Leger Ferraro her first real office in the 25 years of Little Sprouts history. "I occasionally would get an office but then someone else would need it more," says Leger Ferraro.

"I love to be near my amazing colleagues and work in a truly synergistic environment." Also in the offices are CFO Melissa Leger, COO Krysta O'Neill as well as the Director of Human Resources, the Regional Director, the Community Outreach Specialist, the Staff Accountant, the Administrative Assistant/ Professional Development Coordinator, and the Literacy Director and the Communication Specialist. "We are very thrilled to have these new offices," noted Krysta O'Neill, COO. "We now have a place where our administration can be united as we strive to inspire and innovate!" The move is also to be more connected to the Nationally Certified economic development project at the Riverwalk complex.

About Little Sprouts Child Enrichment Centers Little Sprouts Child Enrichment Centers have been leaders in exceptional early education and care since 1982, focusing on academic and the metacognition of children, teachers and families. From the beginning, Little



Photo: CFO Melissa Leger, CEO Susan Leger-Ferraro (top) and COO Krysta O'Neill (bottom).

Sprouts has been committed to creating a holistic experience for children, combining an enchanting atmosphere and scientifically based curriculum with an outstanding range of services. Little Sprouts centers include seven sites in Andover, Methuen, Lowell, Lawrence, Haverhill, Westford and Roxbury. For more information visit [www.littlesprouts.com](http://www.littlesprouts.com)

For additional information, please contact: Jessica Todisco, Community Outreach Specialist Little Sprouts Child Enrichment Centers. (781)929-2858 [jtodisco@littlesprouts.com](mailto:jtodisco@littlesprouts.com)

# New Hampshire Magazine names Sal's Pizza "Best of NH 2007"

**Lawrence, MA** – Sal Lupoli, President/CEO of Sal's Pizza Retail and Wholesale Divisions, Salvatore's Restaurants and Riverwalk Properties is proud to announce that Sal's Pizza has been selected as "Best of NH" in *New Hampshire Magazine's* 2007 contest for Best Pizza and selected by the magazine's reader's poll.

*New Hampshire Magazine* is the state's largest lifestyle magazine. It is part of McLean Communications of Manchester, a publishing company that also includes *New Hampshire Business Review*,

*Parenting*, NH.com and The Cabinet Press.

Sal's Pizza has corporate-owned properties in New Hampshire and Massachusetts. The business with over 30 locations has become a large retail franchise and wholesale operation serving all of New England with additional locations in California, Florida and coming soon in Virginia. Today Sal's Pizza and Salvatore's Restaurants make over 40,000 pizzas a week! Riverwalk Properties is one of the largest pieces of office and retail space in all of Massachusetts.



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## TOM DUGGAN'S NOTEBOOK

### Only three councilors don't take city-paid cell phones



Last month we reported that only incoming Lawrence City Councilor Roger

Twomey has refused to accept a city-paid cell phone at a time when Lawrence was laying off

workers and trying to fill a budget shortfall. "I have never taken the city cell phone," councilor Nilka Alvarez-Rodriguez reminded me last month. Rodriguez did have a city cell phone but decided a year ago to return it and use her own. "I gave my city cell phone back last summer during National Bight Out," councilor Jorge Gonzalez also claimed. So for the record; there are now three city councilors who are not costing the taxpayers extra money for a cell phone: Roger Twomey, Nilka Alvarez and Jorge Gonzalez. This also leaves six out of nine councilors *with* a city cell phone.

On a related note, all nine city councilors have taken the \$5,000 raise, meaning that while 40 city workers are still collecting unemployment, the city council has increased their own budget by \$45,000 just for their own salaries. I'm still hoping that someone on the city council is going to have the courage to give back the raise so that others will follow and eventually earmark that raise money to bring back at least one or two city workers .... Well, I can dream can't I?

### Haverhill Hiring freeze

Haverhill Mayor Jim Fiorentini has ordered a hiring and spending freeze for the remainder of the fiscal year (until June 30th). Fiorentini said that budget constraints have caused him to order a freeze on all new, nonessential hires. The hiring freeze will leave a number of positions in the city vacant. "We know that we will have a large budget deficit in FY09. We have seen this coming for some time and have been planning for it. We've been building up our tax base, making structural changes to health insurance and reorganizing city government," Fiorentini said in a press release last week. "Even with these long-term structural changes, we know we have a deficit in FY09. It would be foolish to hire people at this point since under our union agreements the last people hired are the first ones let go in a lay-off." In addition, Fiorentini said that all expenditures of \$500 or more must be reviewed and signed by him personally:

"We are not going to spend one nickel more that is absolutely necessary."

Lawrence City Councilors Pat Blanchette, Grisel Silva and Nick Kolofos were all overheard saying "it's Mayor Mike Sullivan's fault." ;->

### City Attorney Charles Boddy Slated for 4% Raise

Lawrence City Councilors complaining about "raises and stipends" being given out to the "Sullivan administration" may want to look in-house at their own city attorney who just put in for a 4% raise on top of the \$100,000 salary he already receives. Another guy getting a raise while 40 city workers are collecting unemployment. Let's see if the city council treats Boddy's raise the same way they have publicly reacted to "rumors" about Sullivan's department heads getting a raise or a stipend. Under the city charter the City Attorney works under the authority of the city council. Boddy's EAF form will be posted on valleypatriot.com by mid month.

### ANOTHER EAF, Sweeney Gets Stipend for Managing Parking Garages

Lawrence Planning Director Michael Sweeney has been put in charge of managing city parking lots and garages after years of mismanagement by the Downtown Parking Association and a spate of thefts under the brief management of the DPW. So, for taking on these duties on top of his regular duties as planning director, Sweeney is being paid a stipend of \$200 a week. When Sweeney took over the management of the city's parking last year, the fund was between \$40,000 - \$80,000 in deficit. As of last month, the parking garages are showing more than \$100,000 in profit. Some councilors have floated the bogus story that the city charter mandates all city parking be handled exclusively by the DPW, but our research can find no provision in the Charter stating that requirement.

### Silva's censorship

Lawrence City Councilor Grisel Silva has her own blog (griselsilva.com). On her blog last month she called for a performance evaluation of Personnel Director Frank Bonet (the latest target in her war with the Sullivan administration). But when I posted a comment (under a different name) informing the councilor that she and the council have no authority under the city charter to evaluate the job performance of an executive department

head and asked her why she doesn't concentrate on doing her "own job" instead of trying to micromanage Mayor Sullivan's ... well, she deleted 2/3 of my posting, censoring the comments she didn't like. This was very disappointing since I had always thought of Silva as someone who cherished free speech and welcomed opposing points of view. Apparently I was wrong about Silva on that one too. So, if you decide to post anything on griselsilva.com, only post messages that tell her how wonderful she is, apparently praise is all she wants to hear.

### Watergate In Lawrence

Last month the Valley Patriot obtained a copy of City Council President Patrick Blanchette Employee Action Form (EAF) and posted it on line. We did this to show the hypocrisy of Blanchette signing up for a \$5,000 raise while city

workers were being laid off to save money in the budget. Blanchette, who has publicly called for release of Planning Director Mike Sweeney's EAF form — claiming it was a public document — was so infuriated that we posted *his* EAF that he demanded an "investigation" into who "leaked" his form. Now, the city attorney's office is conducting an "official investigation" into how we got Blanchette's EAF as if this was the Watergate break in. They even called me to see if I would reveal my sources in city hall (which I never do) asking a series of questions to service Blanchette's witch hunt. So, now that I have answered their questions to the best of my abilities, I have a few for Patrick Blanchette and the City Attorney: At a time when Lawrence is in the red and tightening it's belt, how much time, money and resources have you wasted on this silly, misguided "investigation"? What important legal cases are not being worked on while the council president's latest whim is being appeased? What about the multiple workplace and sexual harassment complaints that have gone months without any attention from the city attorney? And ... isn't this what got the city into trouble in the Jennifer Padellaro case?

Remember, Padellaro was awarded a \$610,000 payout of taxpayer money precisely because she complained of sexual harassment to the city attorney who did absolutely nothing because he was too busy doing the council president's political dirty work. Here's the best (worst?) part of all this; Blanchette is trying to float the story that his rights were violated because his home

address and phone number were on the EAF form that we published. Perhaps the council president hasn't noticed that he, himself posted his name, picture, address and phone number on channel 22, the government access channel. Blanchette's home address and phone number are also listed with the city clerk, the election department, and have been published in the Tribune, Rumbo and Siglo 21 as well as being printed on the ballot when he runs for reelection every two years. Not exactly top secret information, no matter how you try to spin it.

### Keith Wlodyka elected president of THNA

Lawrence city activist Kieth Wlodyka was elected as president of the Tower Hill Neighborhood Association. Tower Hill resident Dan Clark was elected as the new Vice President, and Ann Clegg has been chosen as the new Treasurer. Clegg will also continue with her duties as the THNA Secretary. Wlodyka says that his goal in the coming year is to grow the THNA membership. If you are interested in joining the Tower Hill Neighborhood Association you can email Keith at towerhillman@hotmail.com



### North Andover's School Budget Fantasy

"The only thing less likely than Ron Paul becoming president of the United States this fall is the town funding the School Committee's budget request." That is what School Committee Member Charles Ormsby responded when I asked him if he thought North Andover would have sufficient revenue necessary to afford the school department's 4.75% budget increase. Apparently the committee was fully aware when it passed its budget that the FINCOM was estimating that the town's operating budget for next year is likely to be lower than the current year's budget after accounting for fixed costs. While the current estimate may be slightly pessimistic, the town's Revenue and Fixed Costs Committee is projecting a whopping 3.5% decline in the available budget. The difference between minus 3.5% percent and plus 4.75% is a whopping 8%+ so, if all the town departments asked for such an increase, it would require finding an extra \$4 million on top of a base of approximately \$50 million. Even if only the school department increased its budget 4.75% and the other departments were flat

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funded (0% increase), an extra \$3.5 million would still have to be found. Don't believe me? Ask the Chairman of North Andover's Finance Committee, Doug Swatski the next time you see him at a meeting. Ask him what he thinks about the prospects of finding the additional \$3.5 to \$4 million above the Revenue and Fixed Costs Committee total of \$50.87M. In fact, if you get the chance to talk to Mr. Swatski ask him how much new debt was proposed by the Town Manager and town boards for our Capital Improvement Plan in FY09 and what impact such new debt service would have on available operating funds over the next few years. When he tells you what I just told you, you should call your elected officials and ask them to wake up and smell the coffee.

Clearly the town needs to align its budget requests with fiscal reality and stop these massive building and renovation projects ... especially when the town's citizens are facing a recession.

#### Lou Blasi Joins WCAP Team

Lou Blasi has joined WCAP/980AM radio in Lowell and not a moment too soon. As someone who has worked with Lou in the past I want to personally welcome him to the team and urge all of readers and listeners to catch Lou on 980AM. As the new WCAP storms Lawrence, Haverhill, Methuen and the rest of the Merrimack Valley, a man with Lou's level of professionalism and talent prove once again that ...

..... EVERYBODY GETS IT!

### If Councilor Silva's \$3 Million in budget cuts had been approved last July, the Parker St. fire in Lawrence could have turned out very differently



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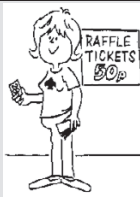
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# Lawrence Exchange Club honors police, fire, EMT's of the year

The Lawrence Exchange Club honored Policemen, Firefighters and EMT's of the year from Lawrence, Andover and North Andover. The event was dedicated to North Andover EMT Michael Latta who lost his life in the line of duty last year. Latta was 21 years old.



Above left, Andover Police Chief Brian Pattullo honors Andover Police Officer Brian Blouin for his service to the Greater Lawrence Technical School as their school resource officer. Above right, the family of Michael Latta are honored for his service to saving lives for Patriot Ambulance. Not Pictured are North Andover Police Officers Mark Wilson, Daniel Quinlan and Special Agent Todd Prough of the DEA.



PHOTOS: TOM DUGGAN

Above left, North Andover Firefighter Daniel Ryan with Fire Chief Bill Martineau. Ryan discovered a fire in his neighborhood during a lunch break and quickly extinguished a garage fire with a fire extinguisher he had in his car. Ryan evacuated residents in the home less than 10' away. Above right, Lawrence Fire Lieutenant Erik Zahn, Lieutenant Tara Reardon, Firefighter Rodney Rivera and Chief Peter Takvorian. Rivera, Reardon and Zahn revived a man who had suffered a cardiac arrest at the Lawrence Firefighter Credit Union last year.



Above left, Andover Firefighters: Lt. Mark Colon, Todd Richardson, Eric Tiechert, George Milne, Joseph Cahill, John McMullen, Thomas Agnew, Clifford Pattullo, Kyle Murphy, Scott Weightman, Jeffrey Condon and Brian Landry with Deputy Chief DeIDotto were all honored for their successful efforts in extracting a car crash victim from her vehicle after being trapped in the crash for more than 40 minutes. Above right, North Andover Police Officers; Joe Kamal and Katherine Knab were honored for their successful efforts in reviving a man who was found without a pulse on the parking lot of Turnpike St.



Far left; Lawrence Police Officer Michael Mangan with his wife Desiree. Officer Magnan was honored for subduing a man who was holding a woman who was nine months pregnant at kifepoint as well as subduing a man with a sword in a seperate incident and saving the life of a Patriot Ambulance EMT who was being attacked. (Middle) North Andover Police Officer Charles Gray with his K9 partner Kyzer who subdued the man who shot up Independence Tire located at the Lawrence Airport. At right: Lawrence Fire Chief Peter Takvorian with Cindy Marcotte from Patriot Ambulance. Marcotte accepted a proclamation from Chief Takvorian on behalf of Chris Baker and Brian Predergast who spotted the now infamous fire on Parker St. in Lawrence last month.





## Haverhill Kiwanis Club Challenges Service Clubs in the Valley to Support Merrimack Valley Hospice House

The Kiwanis Club of Haverhill is making a challenge to other service clubs in the Merrimack Valley – and they are putting their money where their mouth is. They have made a commitment of \$10,000 to the Merrimack Valley Hospice House being built in Haverhill. Merrimack Valley Hospice is building the 14 bed Hospice House off of North Avenue in Haverhill. The Merrimack Valley Hospice House will be the first of its kind to be built in the Merrimack Valley, and the project will cost an estimated \$8.5 million. The Hospice House will care for terminally ill patients and their families, who for a variety of reasons are unable to receive hospice services in their homes. Merrimack Valley Hospice is a not-for-profit agency affiliated with Home Health VNA and HomeCare, Inc. Together, the three agencies serve more than 80 communities throughout Northeastern Massachusetts, the Merrimack Valley and Southern New Hampshire. For more information on the Merrimack Valley Hospice House, visit their website at [www.merrimackvalleyhospice.org](http://www.merrimackvalleyhospice.org).

## Andover Liquors & WCAP Team up for Wine Tasting Event



## LATITUDE SPORTS CLUBS AND TEAM ZINGALES

### PRESENTS 1st Annual Merrimack Valley Biggest Loser Competition

This Fat Loss competition begins on March 3, 2008. Each Participant will be assigned to a team of 10. All teams will be assigned to a Latitude Sports Clubs fitness professional.

At the end of the competition, the team with the total overall weight loss will be awarded prizes.

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THE DOCTOR IS IN

# Living with and treating Osteoporosis

Rami Rustum, M.D.  
VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

First, I'd like to thank all the readers who emailed me with questions after my article in last month's edition of The Valley Patriot.

Every month I'll be discussing a common medical problem involving pain with my goal being to spread and share some medical knowledge with the readers in as simple a presentation as I can.

It's also my goal to stimulate your thinking process so that you ask questions to maximize your benefit and knowledge about what you read.

Some topics may require more than one article to cover all the bases as in our topic for this month, Osteoporosis.

What is Osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis is a condition characterized by the loss of the normal density of bone, resulting in bone fragility. Osteoporosis leads to literally abnormal bone that is more compressible like a sponge, than dense like a brick. So, this disorder of the skeleton weakens the bone causing an increase in the risk of bone fracture.

Normal bone is composed of protein, collagen, and calcium all of which give bone its strength. Bones that are affected

osteopenia (bone softening) as one step before osteoporosis.

Osteoporosis is a very serious health problem for many reasons such as:

1- In the United States, 46 million people have low bone density for which 15 million people have the disease: 12 million women + 3 million men. This amounts to 55% of the U.S. population 50 years-old and over.

2- One in two white women will experience a bone fracture due to osteoporosis in her lifetime. Twenty percent of those who experience a hip fracture will die in the year following the fracture.

3- In the United States, direct health care costs from osteoporosis fractures amount to billions of dollars.

4- Although, the problem affects mostly white women it has been on the rise among black and Hispanic population!

5- If left untreated, it can have a serious impact on the lungs resulting in pneumonia or pulmonary embolism from blood clots in the leg veins. Other organs can be affected to a lesser extent.

It's estimated that one in three women and one in twelve men over age of the 50 worldwide have osteoporosis. It's



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](mailto:ramirustum@comcast.net)

shorter over time because osteoporosis can cause your vertebrae (the bones in your spine) to collapse. These problems tend to occur after a lot of bone calcium has already been lost.

### Risk Factors for Osteoporosis

Here is a list of the most common risk factors for Osteoporosis. The more factors you have the higher the risk of acquiring the disease:

- \* Menopause before age of 48
- \* Surgery to remove the ovaries before Menopause
- \* Not getting enough Calcium in specially in adolescent age
- \* Not exercising enough
- \* Smoking
- \* Family history of osteoporosis
- \* Alcohol consumption in excessive amounts
- \* Thin body and small body frame
- \* Fair skin (Caucasian or Asian race)
- \* Hyperthyroidism
- \* Long term use of oral steroids

### How osteoporosis is diagnosed

A simple test that measures bone mineral density (BMD) at different parts

of your body, such as your spine and your hip, can help determine if you have osteoporosis. Dual energy x-ray absorptiometry (DEXA) is the best current test to measure BMD. The test is quick, painless; it is similar to having an x-ray taken, but uses much less radiation. Even so, pregnant women should not have this test to avoid any risk of damaging the developing fetus.

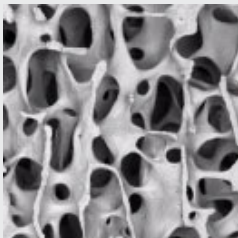
The results of the DEXA test are scored in comparison to the BMD of young, healthy individuals, resulting in a measurement called a T-score. If your T-score is -2.5 or lower, you are considered to have osteoporosis and therefore at high risk for a fracture. T-scores between -1.0 and -2.5 are generally considered to show "osteopenia." The risk of fractures generally is lower in people with osteopenia when compared with those with osteoporosis but, if bone loss continues, the risk for fracture increases.

### Screening for osteoporosis

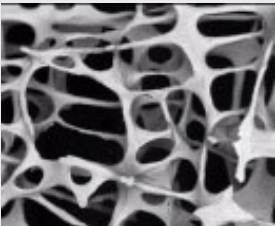
The U.S Preventive Services Task Force recommends that all women 65 years of age and older should be screened with bone densitometry.

The task force recommends screening for women between 60-64 years of age at increased risk. The best indicator of

## Normal Bone Density vs. Bone stricken with Osteoporosis



Normal Bone



Osteoporotic Bone

by osteoporosis usually have far less calcium so they can break with relatively minor injury that normally would not cause a bone fracture.

The fracture can be either in the form of cracking (as in a hip fracture), or collapsing (as in a compression fracture of the vertebrae of the spine). The spine hips, and wrists are common areas of bone fractures from osteoporosis, although osteoporosis-related fractures can also occur in almost any skeletal bone.

It's helpful here to differentiate osteoporosis (bone fragility) from

responsible for millions of fractures every year involving lumbar and thoracic spine, hip and wrist.

In the U.S., there are about 250,000 hip fractures annually with similar number of wrist fractures but 700,000 vertebral fractures.

Between 20-35 % of all women over 50 had at least one vertebral fracture!!

What are the signs of osteoporosis?

You may not know you have osteoporosis until you have serious signs. Signs include broken bones, low back pain or a hunched back. You may also get

OSTEOPOROSIS, page 30

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Dangerous demagoguery

Thomas Sowell  
SYNDICATED COLUMNIST



Most people have too much of a sense of decency and too much common sense to have gone along with those horrors unless someone found a way to turn off their thinking and turn on their emotions.

That is how Jim Jones led hundreds of people to their deaths at Jonestown.

On a much larger scale, that is how Lenin created a regime of mass murder in Russia, how Hitler did the same thing in Germany and Mao in China.

Yet we seem to be no more aware of a need to be on guard against demagoguery today, in the 21st century, than those people who looked up with open-mouthed adulation at Adolf Hitler in the 1930s and at numerous other demagogues, large and small, around the world throughout the turbulent 20th century.

Many people find it thrilling that the mantra of “change” is ringing out across the land during this election year. But let’s do what the politicians hope that we will never do — stop and think.

It is doubtful whether there is a single human being in this entire country who is 100 percent satisfied with everything that is going on. In other words, everybody is for change.

The real difference between liberals and conservatives is in which specific things they want to change, and in what way.

Milton Friedman was the leading conservative thinker of his time but he wanted to radically change the Federal Reserve, the school system, and the tax system, among other things.

Everybody is for change. They differ on the specifics. Uniting people behind the thoughtless mantra of “change” means asking for a blank check in exchange for rhetoric. That deal has been made many times in many places — and millions of people have lived to regret it.

It is not too much to ask politicians to talk specifics, instead of trying to sweep us along, turning off our minds and turning on our emotions, with soaring rhetoric.

Optimists might even hope for some logical consistency and hard facts.

Barack Obama says that he wants to “heal America and repair the world.” One wonders what he will do for an encore and whether he will rest on the seventh day. That we have so many people who are ready to be swept along by such rhetoric is a huge danger, for it means that the fate of this great nation is at risk from any skilled demagogue who comes along.

Barack Obama says that he wants to “heal” the country while at the same time promoting the idea that all sorts of people are victims for whom he will fight. Being divisive while proclaiming unity is something you can do only in the world of rhetoric.

Senator Obama has no monopoly on demagoguery, however. Former Senator John Edwards has been playing this game longer, even if not as effectively in the political arena.

John Edwards built his own fortune in the courtroom, depicting babies with birth defects as victims of the doctors who delivered them. The cost of such demagoguery has gone far beyond the tens of millions of dollars that Edwards pocketed for himself from gullible juries.

Such lawsuits based on junk science have driven up the cost of medical care, not only directly but even more so indirectly, by leading to an increase in Caesarean births and other costly “defensive medicine” to protect doctors rather than patients. The world of John Edwards, like the world of Barack Obama, is a world of victims, whose savior he claims to be. What is scary is how little interest the public and the media have in the actual track record of political saviors and the cry of generic “change.” America is not czarist Russia or Iran under the shah, so that people might think that any change was bound to be for the better. Yet even in those despotic countries the changes — to communism and to the ayatollahs — made them far worse. The time is long overdue for voters to demand specifics instead of rhetoric that turns their emotions on and their minds off.

Thomas Sowell is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institute and author of *Basic Economics: A Citizen’s Guide to the Economy*.

Ron Paul and Media Bias

Mark Palermo  
VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

Ron Paul can’t win... Pass it on. Ron Paul is a moonbat... Pass it on. Ron Paul might be a racist, I think... Pass it on.

How strange that with the county in a conservative mood, the guy that gets treated like a leper is the very one that most closely follows classical conservative principles of individual freedom, small government, non-intervention and limited taxation in the fashion of Barry Goldwater. Could it be that what is collectively understood nowadays as “conservatism” is really something else?

The debates are all scripted of course, the agenda set to preclude any out-of-bounds topics, and so serve as a showcase for selected New World Order candidates. If you doubt this assertion, just look at the two guys who came out finalists in 2004. Out of 300 million people, they just happened to be two rich Yale guys who just happened to be members of Skull and Bones.

So it was no surprise when Fox News denied Ron Paul a seat in the televised debates prior to the important New Hampshire primary. The reason given was pretty lame; he was not a major candidate. But the month before, in a 24-hour period on December 16, Ron Paul’s campaign raised a staggering \$6.026 million dollars, surpassing the all time one-day record. And in Iowa Ron Paul took 10 percent of the votes, way ahead of Giuliani’s 3 percent and slightly behind McCain’s 13 percent.

Ron Paul has several positives. He’s an M.D, a veteran, and he has received more campaign contributions from active military personnel than any other candidate including John McCain. A strict constitutionalist, he has never voted to raise taxes in his 33 years in congress, which has earned him the nickname “Doctor No.” Never taken a taxpayer funded junket. Never voted for a congressional pay raise. And, are you ready for this? He has pledged not to accept his congressional pension when he retires. (*How did this guy ever end up in politics?*)

Some of his ideas are unconventional. For example, he wants to abolish the Department of Education, an idea worthy of consideration. After thirty years of teaching, I have no idea what the department does. Over coffee, I asked some colleagues. Someone said it would be irresponsible to abolish the Department of Education, but none could explain what the department does nor how the department supported their students.

Congressman Paul, a member of the House Finance Committee, wants to abolish the Federal Reserve. Of course this is a shocking idea to some. But have you ever been able to understand what the Fed does? Not just the fluff they teach you in high school.

You know, like “they regulate banking” or “they control interest rates,” or the best one of all, “They print money and sell it the Treasury.” How’s that? They *sell* their printed money to the government? Why doesn’t the government print its own money like other countries do? Why doesn’t congress appoint a committee to control interest rates? The fact is nobody really knows. I attempted to plow through William Greider’s “*Secrets of the Temple*,” but it was a tedious read.

Most people don’t even have a handle on whether the Fed is a government bureau or a private corporation- and I think the Fed wants it that way. I would love to see it taken up on national TV, but with Ron Paul marginalized as I predicted he would be last summer in this column, that’s one debate you will never see. Real debates can lead to the unacceptable risk of real democracy breaking out.

The one thing that has angered his detractors more than anything else is his use of the term “empire” to describe US foreign policy. Let’s see. We have 700 military bases in 130 countries, which, by the way, are being run on borrowed money from China. The British didn’t have a problem with using the term “empire” when they had an empire, so what’s the fuss? Maybe if we started using the word, people might just arrive more easily at the obvious conclusion that empires don’t benefit those who must pay for their sustenance with blood, tears and their children’s lives. According to Ron Paul, the military is for the defense of one’s homeland, not for globe policing or nation building. Imagine if all that money were diverted into tax reduction, medical research, business development, housing, health care, technology...

Whether you like him or you think he’s nuts, you have to admit- he’s not a bore like all the others mouthing stale platitudes about “change.” (No substantive change will ever come to this country until all lobbying is made illegal.) Of all the political analysts I have listened to, my mother said it best when I asked her opinion of Congressman Paul: “*Oh that guy will never win*,” she said, dismissing his candidacy with a wave of the hand.

“He makes too much sense.”  
*You can email mark Palermo at markpalermo@gmail.com*

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REPRESENTATIVE LINDA DEAN CAMPBELL’S (15TH ESSEX) STATE HOUSE NEWS UPDATE

# The Budget Debate Begins:

This year’s budget debate will not be boring. The Governor has dropped the gauntlet demanding that we (the House and the Senate) either act favorably on some of his proposals to generate revenue - or come forth with a plan of our own.

It seems quite certain that the House plan will be quite different than the Governor’s. The only source of agreement at this point is that we face a large revenue gap in the range of \$1.0 to \$1.3 billion.

Many House members, myself included, resent the fact that the Governor built casino revenues into his budget because it is disingenuous. Even if we settled the casino issue today, we would still be many months away from the receipt of tax or licensing revenues.

Further-more, as difficult as the casino debate will be, the fol-low-on debate regarding exactly how these revenues shall be distributed will prove even more contentious.

On a more positive note, it appears that there will be serious discussion of the Governor’s proposal to address corporate tax loopholes. Currently, however, the Commonwealth’s Business Community remains suspicious of the Governor’s “tax break in coming years” in exchange for “loophole closings at present.” And, selling tax reform and increases during economically uncertain times

is formidable public relation challenge for even the most charismatic among us.

None-the-less, this concept likely will remain on the table.

The House will continue to search for avenues in which to trim and save. For example, action last session to allow City and Town participation in the state’s pension and health plans has the potential to yield huge savings. If we sell City and Town participation in these state plans and make enrollment easier still, we will achieve considerable economies and address the single largest budget buster locally – rising health care costs.

The Governor’s Life Sciences Initiative invests all of our tax incentive dollars into one basket. Having the state government pick winners and losers in a very complex and dynamic private sector environment is not sound fiscal policy. Because of this, I and many other Representatives prefer a strategy of greater diversification.

On a final note – Many thanks to Methuen’s new Veterans Director, Tom Hargreaves for his recent Beacon Hill visit where he met with fellow Directors and Legislators from across the Commonwealth. Another item worthy of note for our Veterans Community is the huge boost that Jim Wareing’s new “Support our Troops” li-



PHOTO: COURTESY  
Methuen State Representative (D), 15th Essex, with Methuen’s new Veterans’ Services Director, Tom Hargreaves, at the State House.

cense plate proposal received. Of the great many license plate requests filed on Beacon Hill, Jim’s is noteworthy because it has received endorsement from both State Secretary of Veterans Affairs Kelly and Representative Verga, House Chairman of the Veterans Committee. This license plate visually “Supports our Troops” and revenues collected will be used to help Massachusetts Veterans in need, not put into the general fund.

Thanks to Jim for having the tenacity to see this through.

## ORMSBY: from page 3

Even the IRS is confused by this pathetic regulatory nightmare. They will come up with ten different answers if you ask them what taxes you owe on ten separate occasions.

Oh, you say, you don’t pay income taxes or you only file a simplified form? Not for long! Meet the Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT). Congress originally adopted the AMT in 1969 to force 155 wealthy citizens to pay higher taxes. But, since its provisions were not indexed for inflation, by 2010 the AMT will “embrace” 36 million taxpayers. Welcome to the club!

Maybe you have made some after-tax investments that have appreciated and now you want to cash them in. Do you know that, even if your investments are worth LESS than you originally paid, you will probably owe substantial taxes?

Why? Because investment gains are NOT corrected for inflation. The example below is illustrative.

If liberals get their way and the Bush tax cuts are allowed to expire, the government will increase its take in this example to over \$2,000 and you will suffer a loss of over 20% in buying power. It’s even worse if you die. After 2010, liberal Democrats want the Death Tax to be fully restored so that whatever assets you still have when you pass away will be subject to tax rates up to 50%. See your tax attorney for the depressing details! OK, let’s track a 30-year investment from when the initial amount was earned in 1981 to when your heirs will get to spend it, after your death in 2011.

### EXAMPLE:

If you invested \$10,000 twenty years ago in a poorly performing stock that grew only 3%/year - with no taxable dividends - it would now be worth about \$18,000. Unfortunately, its inflation-adjusted value would only be about \$9,500 (a loss of \$500 – or 5%). Despite this loss in value, you would still have to pay taxes on your fictitious “gain” of \$8,000.

Even at the favorable long-term capital gains rate of 15% in effect today, a rate the Democrats want to increase, you would have to pay the IRS \$1200 (\$630 when adjusted for inflation), increasing your total, inflation-adjusted loss to \$1130 (11.3%).

The bottom line: the government made a \$1,200 profit while you lost over 11% in purchasing power. And this doesn’t count the taxes you had to pay to generate the original after-tax investment.

Table 1 Summary of investment gains, taxes and resulting values ( <u>ALL</u> amounts are expressed in 1981 dollars)			
Source of Gain	Pre-tax Amount	Your Gain (Loss)	Government Confiscation
Your hard work in 1981 (taxed at 30%)	\$10,000	\$7,000	\$3,000
Total income over 30 years from dividends (taxed as income each year)	\$10,559	\$7,391	\$3,168
Investment account value in 2011 (Note: All after-tax dividends were re-invested)	\$17,558		
Capital Gains Tax (15% federal only)		(\$1,532)	\$1,532
After-tax value remaining just before death		\$16,026	
50% Death Tax		(\$8,013)	\$8,013
<b>TOTAL REALIZED VALUE (1981 dollars)</b>		<b>\$8,013</b>	<b>\$15,712</b>
<b>(LOSS from initial \$10,000) &amp; Gov’t GAIN</b>		<b>(\$1,987)</b>	<b>\$15,712</b>

Assume you earned \$10,000 in 1981 and, after paying taxes, you invested it for retirement. In this case, let’s assume you invested in a mutual fund that appreciated at 4.5 percent each year and, in addition, yielded 3 percent in dividends for a total gain each year of 7.5 percent.

After paying taxes on your dividends every April 15<sup>th</sup>, you re-invested the remaining cash. In 2011 you sell your mutual fund shares and promptly die.

Finally, your heirs settle your estate and find out what’s left.

Table 1 above shows how your heirs made out and how the government enriched itself at your expense.

The bottom line: After earning \$10,000 and carefully managing whatever amounts remain after taxes for 30 years, you lose \$1,987 in 1981 dollars (\$5,390 in current dollars) or almost 20% in purchasing power. The federal government, having invested nothing and having produced nothing, enjoys a windfall profit of \$15,712 in 1981 dollars (\$42,618 in current dollars). And we have-not even paid any state capital gains or estate taxes yet!

Maybe this explains the low savings rate in the U.S. compared to other countries. Is this justice? Marx and Engels would be delighted with the outcome. Even old Joe Stalin would be envious!

I wonder if the taxpayer in this example might have been the greedy capitalist that paid for the research, built the factories, and organized the distribution system for that big flat screen TV I watched on Superbowl Sunday. Those rich people are just so GREEDY! Don’t you just hate them?!!


### Important Notice Regarding Ayaan Hirsi Ali

Last month I provided a short synopsis of the life of Ayaan Hirsi Ali and her courageous battle with Muslim extremists. As you will recall, Ayaan is under a death threat from radical Muslims for her questioning of the teachings of the Qur’an and her short film, “Submission.” The producer of Submission has already been brutally murdered.

After my article was published, I was informed that the Dutch government has shamefully withdrawn its financial support for Ayaan’s security detail. Because of this, Ms. Ali has returned to the U.S. and is now under armed guard 24/7. Unfortunately, financial support for her protection is unlikely to provide the needed security unless American citizens come together and offer donations.

Readers of The Valley Patriot who would like to donate are requested to go to: <http://www.ayaanhirsiali.org/> where there are instructions for both tax deductible and non-tax deductible contributions.

If we don’t protect those who speak out, we ensure that Muslim extremism will go unchallenged.



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](mailto:ccormsby@comcast.net)



# Solomon's lawyer releases statement on Lariviere trial

On Thursday, January 24, 2008, a jury of eight citizens rendered a unanimous verdict in favor of Joseph Solomon and Joseph Alaimo in the United States District Court in Boston in the lawsuit brought by Maurice Lariviere.

Each of Mr. Lariviere's five remaining counts was rejected unanimously by the jury after they heard six days of testimony and reviewed all of the evidence. Joseph Solomon and Joseph Alaimo concur with Judge Edward Harrington's comments that the jury's verdict was "fair" and was well-supported by the evidence.

The jury clearly considered all of the evidence, including: the graphic mistreatment of Fulya Capanelli by Mr. Lariviere shown on the videotape of the events on February 16, 2005; the audiotaped interview of Mr. Lariviere during which he waived his right to an attorney, his right to remain silent and during which he requested that the taping cease; and days of testimony about why the criminal investigation into Mr. Lariviere's conduct between October, 2004 and February 16, 2005 was mandated under the laws of the Commonwealth, conducted in accordance with all professional law enforcement standards and entirely consistent with the oaths of office taken both by Joseph Solomon and Joseph Alaimo.

In reaching their unanimous verdict, the jury was legally required to find that Mr. Lariviere's written resignation was completely voluntary and was not the product of any misrepresentation, coercion or intimidation either by Joseph Solomon or Joseph Alaimo.

The jury also necessarily discredited the sworn testimony of Michael Wnek and Michael Hatem regarding false statements that they attributed to Joseph Alaimo. Mr. Wnek's testimony contradicted his sworn testimony at a deposition in November, 2006. Mr. Wnek did not report the purported statement to any of the prosecutors involved with this investigation and did not

include the statement in any of his lengthy reports created during the investigation.

The jury clearly concluded that Mr. Hatem's testimony was fabricated because records demonstrated quite clearly that Joseph Alaimo was on vacation and was not "in uniform," as suggested by Mr. Hatem, on February 17, 2005 when the comment was allegedly made.

Many of the deposition transcripts and other relevant documents to the criminal investigation into Mr. Lariviere's conduct have been filed with the United States District Court and are public records available for viewing. Joseph Solomon and Joseph Alaimo urge any and all of their fellow citizens who are curious about the true facts of this matter to review the transcripts and other documents carefully.

The conclusion of this lengthy trial brings three years of litigation to an end for Joseph Solomon and Joseph Alaimo. Because of the baseless lawsuit brought by Mr. Lariviere, Joseph Solomon and Joseph Alaimo have been maligned in the public by Mr. Lariviere and have been unable to comment due to the advice of their lawyers to not comment on pending litigation.

Mr. Lariviere's lawsuit has cost the taxpayers of Methuen dearly and his actions will continue to cost Methuen in related litigation. Mr. Lariviere's baseless allegations also have inconvenienced a multitude of Methuen government employees and have distracted them from countless hours of work in order to participate in this lawsuit.

Sadly, given his recent comments after the jury returned a verdict that rejected entirely his claims, Mr. Lariviere has continued his attempts to defame Joseph Solomon and Joseph Alaimo, personally and professionally.

Whereas earlier the only response could be to deny the assertions without further comment, Joseph Solomon and Joseph Alaimo now can point to the



PHOTO: TOM DUGGAN

Methuen Police Chief Joe Solomon and his Deputy Chief Joe Alaimo were both exonerated by a federal jury in the Lariviere trial. Solomon has been on paid leave since last year.

impartial verdict of eight persons who sat in judgment of Mr. Lariviere's claims and saw them for what they always have been: unfounded and outrageous allegations not grounded in credible evidence. Moreover, given the evidence revealed publicly at trial, one might think that there is no person less worthy of casting moral judgment on others than Mr. Lariviere.

Joseph Solomon and Joseph Alaimo would like to thank all of their family and friends for their support during this trying litigation. They also would like to thank the following witnesses for testifying truthfully in a court of law: Fulya Capanelli, David Bain, William Manzi, Peter McQuillan, John Molari, Thomas Kelly, Randy Haggart, Kristopher McCarthy and Sharron Pollard.

-Gareth W. Notis, Morrison Mahoney LLP, Boston, Massachusetts

-Andrew J. Gambaccini, Reardon, Joyce & Akerson, P.C., Worcester, Massachusetts

## Online permitting now on city website

Residents can now apply for building permits at [www.cityofmethuen.net](http://www.cityofmethuen.net)

Mayor William M. Manzi, III in conjunction with the City of Methuen Information Technology Department and the Inspectional Services Department, now offers residents the opportunity to apply for all building permits online at [www.cityofmethuen.net](http://www.cityofmethuen.net), the award-winning official website of the City of Methuen.

The new technology streamlines the process of submitting building, plumbing, gas, and electrical permits to Inspectional Services. Residents and contractors can visit [www.cityofmethuen.net](http://www.cityofmethuen.net) and click on the Online Permitting link on the home page.

Applicants will then follow detailed and concise instructions to begin and complete the permitting application process.

"I am very pleased that Methuen residents and businesses are now able to apply for and receive permits online," Manzi said.

"This will eliminate additional paperwork and needless trips to City Hall. Methuen is a cutting edge community when it comes to web technology and I am very proud of this accomplishment."

Online permitting allows Methuen residents and their contractors to apply for permits from the comfort of their homes or offices, eliminating the need for time-consuming visits to the Inspectional Services office.

An online permit application can be processed in less than one week provided all of the correct information has been submitted.

Once an application is submitted, Inspectional Services staff will process the application and contact the applicant to complete the permitting process and payment.

The new technology provides a comprehensive permitting system, where residents and contractors can customize their permits to fit their individual needs.

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# \$403,580 proposed for Georgetown tax relief

Lonnie Brennan  
VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

Chances are, your local legislator is great at showing up at senior centers, large gatherings, lectures, and graduations. But what about showing up on Beacon Hill, ready to go to the matt for you, and tax relief?

Ha, got ya there. Not a chance. And, it most likely doesn't matter in which city or town in the entire Merrimac Valley and beyond you pick up this paper....the chances are quite high you've been fed a song by a sweet-talking rep. who's all hat, no cattle.

House Bill 4651, the Massachusetts Municipal Finance Relief Act of 2007, is still being touted on Beacon Hill. It would take \$450,000,000 from the Commonwealth's Stabilization Fund (which contains surplus revenue in the billions) and divide that sum up to all 351 cities and towns in the State.

If enacted, Georgetown would receive a much needed, one-time stimulus of \$403,580 with which we could use to make adjustments to our budgets so as to relieve school, roads, and other pressures. Here's what surrounding towns would receive:

- Andover: \$1,070,289
- Boxford: \$273,653
- Groveland: \$381,399
- Haverhill: \$4,682,278
- Lawrence: \$11,668,975
- Methuen: 43,178,290
- Newbury: \$272,103

N. Andover: \$1,169,517  
W. Newbury: \$168,511

The specific dollar amount is formula-based on money taken from the cities and towns through prior Lottery fund reductions, which were not spent but rather were socked away in the state's stabilization fund.

While there are many reasons to ensure a healthy stabilization fund, each city, town, and the state, can reach a point of over taxation through such funds. A contingent of legislators, state-wide, have explored the viability of releasing a small portion of such over taxation, at this time.

With regret, they've hit brick walls of indifference and excuses from many legislators in our area who have never seen a tax break that they're willing to vote for.

To them, it's the government's money. They forget who pays it, and who owns it. A rainy day fund is good, but it's not raining on Beacon Hill—it is however down-pouring in cities and in towns, which have watched local receipts with angst, and torn themselves apart with override battles, all while billions sit idle in deep savings on Beacon Hill. According to the bill's many sponsors, including Shirley representative George Peterson, a growing coalition from small towns are trying to fight back.

They point out the obvious: Beacon Hill's biggest problems seem to be the insatiable desire to expand spending with new initiatives (can you spell benefits for

illegal aliens?), rather than take care of the people and projects before us.

Consideration of tax relief of any type, let alone passage in any form, will not occur unless and until individuals in cities and towns speak up and contact their legislators and insist they consider passage of this important legislation.

I've posted a copy of the bill's language, and the full financials at [www.GeorgetownToday.com](http://www.GeorgetownToday.com). I urge you to read it and consider contacting your local legislators to support discussion of this legislation now.

And, I urge every elected official - school committee member, councilor, selectman, alderman, assessor, planning board member, Democrat town committee member, Republican town committee member, et.al.,- to consider supporting a full hearing on this legislation, so that its merits may be discussed in both the house and the senate, and before the taxpayers.

## Speaking of Education

For the past year or so, I've written columns about many issues that face my neighbors—typically tax issues, funding issues, land use issues, education issues, and other challenges. I ask your indulgence now as I write about something a little closer to home.

Not many know, but I hail from a family of six children—two older brothers, three younger sisters. Two of my sisters are public school teachers (Heidi in Georgetown, Holly in

Swampscott), one brother has moved from teaching to administration now (Scott, Byfield). My own experiences are limited to having served as an adjunct professor at both Northeastern University and then at U.Mass Lowell. Together, our collective experience helping students pales when compared to someone very special who dedicated the past 22 years to helping students in the Salem Public School system.

Ruth B. Brennan retired this month. Mother to six, grandmother to many, extended mother and provider to countless thousands. Her citation from Salem Mayor Kim Driscoll said in part “more importantly, she has always been very generous and caring to all she has met, especially special needs students, assisting them with knitting projects and making coloring books for them in her spare time. ...in doing so, Ruth has proudly served the City of Salem and its citizens...a most positive influence in the lives of countless individuals.”

Bless you mom. I know Dad was looking down upon you and is proud, as always, as is your son.



Lonnie Brennan is a selectman in Georgetown and the owner of the Chocolate Cellar. He was the Republican candidate for state representative in 2006 and is active in the Republican party. You can email him at [lonnie@thechocolatecellar.com](mailto:lonnie@thechocolatecellar.com).

## RONNIE'S RANTS

# Random thoughts to ponder

Ronnie Ford  
VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

Andover's Superintendent of schools Claudia Bach wants to eliminate sports from the school system. This of course would be in contrast to the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, Aristotle, Plato, (no Claudia, not Mickey Mouse's dog) and eighty percent of the medical and academic segment of our society.

Perhaps the school committee of the lovely little town to the south, should put more concentration into using the gray matter (brains) and stop this right now. Mind and body work hand in hand and always will; to say nothing about a little well known builder of character, called School Spirit and Pride in ones accomplishments representing the whole community.

\*\*

Judah Folkman, a world-class physician, scientist, and most of all a wonderful servant of his fellow man, has left this earth. In his wake, Judah has planted a heritage of kindness, service, and compassion. I knew Dr Folkman for a short period of time in 1982. I experienced a wonderful human being, gifted with almost every character strength available in a man. I mention this to remind the world that we need more Judah Folkmans. Every child should know about this outstanding person and the greatness he displayed. So that, maybe, just maybe, one small child might follow in his

footsteps. Judah Folkman was a surgeon at Boston Children's Hospital; he was also a research scientist whose work resulted in many avenues to fight a multitude of diseases. Most of all he was a kind and considerate gentleman.

\*\*

I had an opportunity to rub shoulders with the crème de la crème, of the business world at the Andover Country Club.The Merrimack Valley Chamber of commerce, led by that fireball Joe Bevilacqua and his able assistant Will carpenter, as always, produced a very interesting litany of Mayors, Municipal Managers, and Kevin Burke, who hangs around with DeValle Patrick. All this coupled with a delicious and nutritious breakfast.

The local leaders spoke about their communities advancements and the future of the Merrimack Valley. I sat with my kid brother Ken Henricks, who always wanted to grow up to be just like me! I talked with Clark Smidt, of WCAP radio, who promises an all English-speak-ing radio station in the greater Lawrence, Haverhill, and Salem, NH, in the very near future. Clark seemed sincere, and many people are looking forward to getting back to full coverage of news and events in our hometowns. Informative events such as this breakfast would not be so successful without the planning and hard work of people like the chambers Malvena

Burbank, and Denise Murray. They are the best. They deserve a raise Joe!

\*\*

FrontPage Magazine is about as rightwing as you can get. But they did hit the perennial nail on the head. Focusing on that “friend” of the poor, Joe Kennedy and his Citizens Energy Corp. A non- profit (naturally) organization.

Kennedy is the oldest son of Ethyl and the late Robert F. Kennedy. Joe is the self-proclaimed ally of the deprived and the underprivileged. Kennedy is also a close compadre of the North and South Americas top communist, Hugo Chavez! Together it seems, they have conspired to sell the Citgo Corp, which is the wholly owned subsidiary of Chavez, as the property of the Venezuelan people!

They want us to think that it is the Venezuelan people who are giving the oil to the Northeastern Americans. Kennedy, who is making me ill regarding his television face in front of us; he is constantly telling us how wonderful Chavez is. (Typical Kennedy)


The super poor of Venezuela are 40% of the population, and Chavez is keeping them that way. Chavez's buddy, jolly Joe Kennedy, gets a cool (no pun intended) \$400,000.00 plus per year to spread the message of free oil from Venezuela. And that is just the



Andover Superintendent of Schools Claudia Bach wants to eliminate school sports.

non-profit side of Citizens Energy. This guy is pulling in some serious money! So the next time you see the Kennedy face on TV spouting the virtues of his co-hort Chavez, try Alka-Seltzer, it helps.

I have a lot more to say but unfortunately, no more space. So, 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 and the former host of the “Hot Line” radio program. Ford is also 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](mailto:Radiotalk@comcast.net)





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New music program to be offered at NECC

Ernie Greenslade  
DIRECTOR PUBLIC RELATIONS, NECC

Starting next fall, an associate’s degree in general studies with a music option will be available through Northern Essex Community College’s music program. This degree provides students with a two-year associate's degree in music that will be transferable to most four-year college music programs.

Most college music programs require two years of music theory, two years of ear-training and sight-singing, private lessons, and participation in music ensembles. All of these requirements are included in this new degree program.

The program was developed by Dr. Kenneth Langer, coordinator of the music program at Northern Essex Community College. The new program was designed following discussions with the chairs of four-year music programs, high school music directors, and current music students at NECC. This program will now prepare them to transfer to four-year programs at or very near the junior level so

they can successfully continue their studies.

In addition to classes available for music majors other new classes have been added to the program that allows people to begin or explore new interests in music.

With campuses in Haverhill and Lawrence and extension sites in Andover, Methuen, and North Andover, Northern Essex Community College is a state-assisted college, offering over 70 associate degree and certificate programs as well as hundreds of non credit courses designed for personal enrichment and career growth. Close to 13,000 students ranging from recent high school graduates to workers employed locally attend classes days, evenings, and weekends.

Northern Essex is the only state college located in the lower Merrimack Valley Region of Massachusetts. For more information about the new program contact Ken Langer at [klanger@necc.mass.edu](mailto:klanger@necc.mass.edu) or 978-556-3223.

Fix for schools? - Education plan could have unwanted consequences

Charles Chieppo & Jim Stergios  
THE PIONEER INSTITUTE

Gov. Deval L. Patrick’s plan to create a Cabinet-level education secretariat appears eminently sensible in concept. Yet, lawmakers considering the plan at today’s Statehouse hearing should consider why Massachusetts should move to fix a system that, by most measures, is not broken.

As we noted when Mr. Patrick floated the plan several weeks ago, there is considerable appeal in the notion of having a high-level manager overseeing all levels of public education. However, ample cause for caution can be found in the dense legalistic language of the reorganization proposal.

One reasonable concern, raised by the Pioneer Institute, is the potentially unhealthy authority the cabinet secretary could exert over the currently independent policymaking boards.

The danger is that a centralized system would be vulnerable to political manipulation and less well-insulated from the special-interest pressures that have campaigned relentlessly against elements of the reform program launched with the passage of the Education Reform Act of 1993.

Particularly vulnerable is high-stakes MCAS testing, a key element of the “grand bargain” of reform, which provides a massive infusion of funding into public schools while holding students, teachers and school districts accountable for results.

Massachusetts’ dramatic rise to No. 1 in national education assessments has proved its effectiveness.



PHOTO: TOM DUGGAN  
Governor Deval Patrick

Also at risk would be the public charter schools that provide parents and children with a variety of education options.

The reorganization also would shift the statutory makeup of the Board of Education, effectively placing a variety of key budget and appointment decisions under the governor’s control.

A Cabinet secretariat would be in keeping with the importance of education and the huge investment the state makes in its public schools.

However, lawmakers considering the reorganization today should ponder whether the hoped-for benefit of coordinating public education across the board is worth the risk of turning back the clock on reforms that, demonstrably, have worked so well.

Charles D. Chieppo is a senior fellow and Jim Stergios is executive director at Pioneer Institute, a Massachusetts public policy think tank.

The Pioneer Institute for Public Policy Research, 85 Devonshire Street, 8th Floor, Boston, Massachusetts 02109. Phone: 617-723-2277.

SIMPLE WISDOM

Hi - Ho

Gail Van Kleeck  
VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

A few years ago I bought a Prius. I was excited about driving a car that gets great mileage and is also better for our planet. I believe that every little thing we can contribute to making our world a better place is important.

My Prius was one of those little things. Since her skin was blue, I called her “Ciel”. Normally for me a car is just a means of getting safely from one place to another. Ciel was different. She and I could make a difference as we traveled along together.

Because my old car was silver I’d named him Hi Ho. Hi Ho had served me well. He’d been a good and predictable companion. I’d always felt safe in him. He’d never asked much of me, until the month before Ciel was delivered, when I turned the key in his ignition and he refused to move. Maybe he resented my disloyalty. I wouldn’t have blamed him.

Parker jump started HiHo so I could drive him home, but the next morning in our driveway he balked again. We took him to the mechanic who said HiHo’s alternator wasn’t working. He told me a rebuilt alternator would be half the cost of a new one and would last until Ciel came in. I told him to go ahead.

The next morning I woke up feeling uncomfortable. I thought about HiHo and how he would soon be serving someone else in his unobtrusive, loyal way. I wondered how long the rebuilt part

would last and if his new family might have to go without something important in order to replace an alternator I’d known wouldn’t last very long. I thought about it a little longer, then called the mechanic and asked him to put in a new one instead. He said it wasn’t necessary, but I told him it was necessary for me. Sometimes what seems right for someone else simply isn’t right for us.

When I look back over the shoulder of my life, there are things I’ve done for which I feel ashamed. Although I’ve tried to make up for them, sometimes it just hasn’t been possible. While I may not be able to change those times in my past, I don’t want to compound them. It would not have been true to the person I am now, to knowingly pass on an unhealthy car to someone else. It’s a little thing I know. I believe little things make a difference.

I wish you the rich sense of contentment and inner peace that comes from doing the little things that empowers you to live in the light of who you truly are.

WHAT WE FOCUS ON IS TRULY WHAT WE SEE.



To E-mail International inspirational author and motivational story teller, Gail Van Kleeck [gail@simplewisdom.com](mailto:gail@simplewisdom.com)

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# How to Brand a Region

## The Merrimack Valley looks for its identity

Seth Itzkan & John Michitson  
VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNISTS

Like simmering water before the boil, recent events in the Merrimack Valley illustrate escalating interest for the region to cast off its tired trappings and find a new identity that it can leverage for the future. Increasingly it is clear that this identity needs to be focused around innovation – an innovation that is broad and robust and that can fuel sustainable economic development. One particular vision emerging to meet this objective is that of making the region a nexus for green technologies – from nontoxic chemicals, to self-powered homes, to solar cells and turbine controllers. It is a growing industry that this region is well equipped to pounce on. Whatever happens, it’s obvious that a sultry stew is brewing. In this column we will look at what’s going on locally, what is exemplary outside of the region, what we believe are smart steps forward.

### What’s Happening Locally?

One of the important recent events has been the Merrimack Valley’s Planning Commissions’ Economic Vision process. This vision is provided to the state and used as a basis for state investments in the region. The vision calls for the region to provide “an environment of innovation” that will encourage start-ups. It also calls for a “regional branding program” that would “reinforce the image of the Merrimack Valley as a cluster for technology investment”. Specific action items identified are: 1) Increase coordination between economic and community development groups, 2) Expand the “Means Business” website, and 3) Explore best practices from around the country on regional branding efforts and interagency cooperation. To all of these we say, Hurrah!

A second key event was the recent Team Haverhill “Possible Dream” meeting, held January 28<sup>th</sup> at the NECC Technology Center.

Team Haverhill is a campaign to get citizens involved in determining the future of the city. It is now in its fifth year of existence, and has been extraordinarily effective in helping to craft visions and action plans for Haverhill. Although all their meetings are engaging and fruitful, the last “ossible Dream meeting seemed to have a particular punch.

Over 120 people showed up on a cold January night to explore themes for 2008 and innovation was a clarion call: innovation in technology, innovation in education, and innovation in economic development.

Is this a theme that’s time has come? What is exciting about Team Haverhill is not only that they talk about the city’s future, but that they are inventing a new way of getting citizens involved.

They are innovative in their approach. Discussions that were once delegated to planning boards and city councils are now lively and productive public events.

Also, unlike traditional town meetings, that tend, unfortunately, to be contentious debates about the budget, Team Haverhill events a far more conducive to long range, big picture, planning and collaboration. They are like the way we imagine town meetings should be, but within a city, and further more, they can be templates for something larger. What



about, for example, Team Merrimack? How about a multi-city team that meets regularly, with the broad purview of the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission, but with the citizen engagement of a Team Haverhill?

To see something like that, look inside the route 128 belt.

### What’s Happening Elsewhere?

MetroFuture is an initiative of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) to engage citizens in establishing a vision for the Boston region through the year 2030.

They host workshop-like meetings in large halls with upwards of 500 people at a time. At a recent meeting, they created a massive simulation exercise. Each table of about 10 people had a team leader with a laptop and spreadsheet with all their tracked variables, from housing density to traffic, to tax rates, to open space.

After a directed discussion on priorities, each table could then adjust the worksheet data of their choice and see the outcomes. It was a crude simulation, but it worked, and it was a brilliant way to make regional planers of 500 citizens. Each group then reported on the variables they changed and the outcomes.

As the tools for simulation advance, this type of exercise can only become more meaningful.

Of course, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council cannot pull off these exercises independently. It takes the generous support of The Boston Foundation, The Boston College Citizen Seminars, and the University of Massachusetts at Boston.

The lesson to the Merrimack Valley is that strong regional planning requires a coordinated effort of academia, philanthropy, citizens, and planning councils. Neither alone is sufficient.

If MetroFuture is exemplary of citizen engaged regional planning, then equally impressive is the Genetown branding campaign for Boston and surrounding area, embarked upon by The Massachusetts Biotechnology Council and Biospace.com. The Genetown campaign, first initiated in 1993, is a collaborative branding effort to promote

the regional biotech industries and investment opportunities. The campaign is part of a larger effort organized by Biospace.com to help brand “Hotbed” regions in the U.S. and Canada where biotech industries are strong. Other Hotbed regions include Biotech Bay, centered in San Francisco; BioCapital, centered in Washington D.C.; and BioForest, that includes Seattle and Southwest Canada.

As explained on the Biospace website:

“As regions compete for resources, these marketing and branding campaigns help to attract capital, talent and other resources to specific geographic areas”.

Each Hotbed branding campaign has extensive industry support and, through dedicated pages on Biospace.com, a wealth of regularly updated information and resources. For started, there is of course the list of Hotbed participants. In Genetown this includes Abbot Bioresearch Center, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Computer Life Sciences, Pfizer Research Technology, and about 40 other companies.

Additionally, there is the Hotbed News, and the Hotbed Events. In short, everything pertaining to all the biotech industry and companies around Boston is all in one place. And, for added flair, there is a stylized map of the region with all the logos of represented companies.

What can the Merrimack Valley learn from this? That regional branding

requires collaboration around a shared theme, free information sharing of news and events, and, I might add, a strong web presence that is able to automatically compile and disseminate pertinent and timely information.

### What’s Next?

Moving forward, we have several suggestions. First, we are happy to nominate “Innovation Valley” as a theme for the regional branding campaign.

We believe this captures the spirit of the region, its legacy, and its hopeful future. We operate the ivalley.org website to help capture and promote the innovative potential. Additionally, we are trying to create the Merrimack Valley Regional Innovation Network (MVRIN). This could be its own entity, or an outgrowth of ivalley.org.

In its simplest form, it would be similar to a Biospace Hotbed site, but in a fuller and “more innovative” fashion, it would integrate the Open Innovation “online marketplace for ideas” model exemplified by local companies like Innocentive and Yet2.com, so that the region will have greater facility for startups and investment.

This is exactly what the MVPC Economic Vision calls for. Second, we recommend the creation of large-scale planning exercises in the spirit of what is happing at the city level, such as with Team Haverhill and the Lawrence Revi-viendo efforts, and modeled, in part, on the example of the MetroFuture projects.

This will allow all Merrimack Valley citizens to be engaged as planners for the region’s future. And third) we recommend a breakdown of the “silo” behavior of many regional stakeholder agencies and adoption of greater information and resource sharing practices. As an example, the regional chambers could subscribe to each other’s events announcements. Similarly, online forums for regional discussion could be jointly managed and promoted.

Last October we hosted the Green Chemistry Business Summit and needed to take multiple approaches to get it adequately promoted. What if one publication to a trusted source, such as a regional chamber, was enough to automatically get the message to all the others?

When there is collaboration to make the region innovative, that type of information sharing will happen naturally. The question is always ask is, do we want to be merely adequate, or exemplary?

	<i>John Michitson was a Haverhill city councilor for 10 years; the last 2 as president. He is a manager and electrical engineer at the MITRE Corporation in Bedford, Mass. John and his wife, Heidi, are enjoying the childhood of their 4-year-old daughter and 6 year-old son. email: <a href="mailto:jmichitson@verizon.net">jmichitson@verizon.net</a></i>		<i>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 <a href="mailto:seth.itzkan@gmail.com">seth.itzkan@gmail.com</a></i>
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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](http://www.ivalley.org).





## Team Zingales places Number One in Methuen Home Sales for 2007



Team Zingales of RE/MAX Prestige placed number one in both unit and dollar volume sales of single family homes in the city of Methuen in 2007, according to MLS data. Members of this award winning team include Andrea Delahunty, Stephen Bucu, Christina Silva, Christina Tarpy, Kathy Mamos, Erin Livingston Carroll, Jim Chretien, Teresa Zingales as well as Team Leader Joe Zingales.

This top performing real estate sales team closed the year with a record \$18 Million in sales volume within the Merrimack Valley and Southern New Hampshire. Joe Zingales, Team Leader for Team Zingales attributes the team's success to diligent pricing and effective marketing.

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# HERO IN OUR MIDST CHRISTOPHER FANTASIA: from page 1

Baghdad, Iraq, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom 5.

His Air Force specialty, TAC-P (Tactical Air Control Party) allows him to work almost exclusively with the United States Army.

TAC-P personnel provide close air support (CAS) for all conventional and all Special Operation Forces missions within an area of responsibility.

TAC-P is considered a part of Air Force Special Tactics and is somewhat of an atypical Air Force Specialty Code (AFSC) since most Airmen aren't categorized as "Battlefield Airmen".

TAC-P is one of only five Battlefield Airman Careers in the Air Force, meaning that the Airman must be combat mission ready (CMR) at all times. AFSC is to the Air Force as what is commonly known in the United States Marine Corps and Army as "MOS", or Military Occupational Specialty.

Airman First Class Fantasia is originally from Everett, MA, and graduated from Everett High School in 2001.

He joined the United States Air Force as a resident of Salem, NH, where he spends most of his time at his mother's house while home on leave. He is currently stationed at the Army Post, Fort Stewart, Georgia and is a proud father of a beautiful baby girl, Alexa Fantasia who was born in December, 2007.

Airman First Class Fantasia says he chose TAC-P because of its uniqueness and excitement. According to Airman Fantasia, "I wanted an exciting job that would uphold me to the highest standard and challenge me physically, mentally, and technically."

"I get to do, all that an adrenaline junkie like me gets to do, and serve a great cause that I get paid well to do!" An adrenaline junkie, he is.

"If I had to do it all over again, I wouldn't change my decision to join the Air Force", says Airman First Class Fantasia.

Working exclusively with the Army affords Fantasia the opportunity to wear distinctive unit and combat patches that your average Airman wouldn't be able to wear.

Airman First Class Fantasia just recently returned home from an eight

month deployment in Iraq, which he started five months earlier than anticipated to meet the requirements of the increased American troop surge in Baghdad.

Fantasia deployed from Fort Stewart, Georgia with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division (3ID). He was deployed with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division/7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Unit which fell under the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Paratrooper Brigade during his time in Baghdad.

The distinguished service patches he wears proudly on his uniform raises some eyebrows with his fellow Airmen, current and former veterans from all other services.

Since joining the Air Force in 2005, Fantasia has earned multiple certificates and college credits by virtue of his Air Force training and is applying these credits towards his Associate's Degree at the Community College of the Air Force.

He has earned awards and decorations while in the Air Force and for his time and service in Baghdad, Iraq, Operation Iraqi Freedom 5 (OIF 5). Most notably, Fantasia was awarded the Air Force Commendation Medal and an Army Achievement Medal for his distinguished service.

Airman First Class Fantasia graduated Basic Military Training (BMT) in San Antonio, Texas in September of 2005. After he completed BMT and prior to being fully qualified in his career field, he moved on to his required technical training at Hurlburt Field, Florida home of the Air Force Special Operations Command.

Airman First Class Fantasia spent 18 weeks learning small unit tactics, close air support procedures, radio etiquette, and troubleshooting. Additionally, he went through convoy training, day/night land navigation, HMMWV (aka. High-Mobility, Multi-Wheeled Vehicle, also known as Humvee) training with night vision devices and visible and non-visible lasers as well as stealth tactics.

When I asked him how he felt doing this type of work, day in and day out, he says with enthusiasm, "I have a blast!"

The physical demand for TAC-P is grueling, requiring trainees to complete, for example, 12 mile "ruck" marches, 2-10 mile runs, and "smoke" sessions.

"Smoke" sessions are what Airman Fantasia affectionately refers to as a



PHOTO: USAF TECH. SGT. JAMES MOORE

Airman First Class Christopher Fantasia of Salem, NH is originally from Everett, MA, and graduated from Everett High School in 2001.

combination of all physical training aspects in a circuit training-type of session, all of which is done before 8 a.m. He also had to endure S. E. R. E. training, at Fairchild AFB, Spokane, WA, SERE is an abbreviation for Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape.

All Air Force members that are considered on "Flying Status" are required to undergo this training. This is known also known as survival training.

This is a unique Air Force Specialty, so there are always questions to be asked, even from myself.

I have had the pleasure of getting to know Airman First Class Fantasia on a personal level and have gained a level of respect for the good job he had done in his two and a half year of service.

As for myself, well, I have had the pleasure of serving in the United States Air Force for a little over twelve years at this point and I haven't had the opportunity to do half of the exciting things that Airman Fantasia has had the opportunity to do.

Since he's been home, Fantasia has been spending his free time with friends and family, especially quality time with his little Alexa.

He will be on Recruiting Assistance Duty until the 8<sup>th</sup> of February and will be heading back to Fort Stewart, Georgia, soon thereafter.

The Valley Patriot wishes to thank Airman First Class Fantasia of the United States Ar Firce for his serice to our country and we are proud to honor him as our Valley Patriot of the Month, Hero in our Midst. He is clearly a shining example of what a true patriot is and does.

Airman First Class Christopher Fantasia, The Valley Patriot Thanks you, the air forece thanks you and the poeple of the Valley also thank you. Be safe in your next assignment!



*Technical Sergeant, James F. Moore, Jr. has been in the United States Air Force for more than 14 years and is the The Valley Patriot's new Hero reporter. If you would like more information on how you can be a part of the World's Greatest Air Force, please contact Technical Sergeant, James F. Moore, Jr. 160 Winthrop Ave., Stadium Plaza, Lawrence, MA 01841, 978-686-1464 or via e-mail: james.moore@rs.af.mil*

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## BENEFITS FOR OUR VETERANS

## Transportation

Susan Piazza

VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

There are several issues that tax veterans, their families and their loved ones. One of the most pressing of these issues is that of transportation. Though this matter may seem daunting, there are several resources that can help.

All the organizations below need a certain amount of time in order to procure transportation. Call them prior to your need to determine their requirements. Do not wait until the last minute. Transportation around the holidays, especially long weekends, can be particularly difficult to procure, so be forewarned. And, if these places cannot accommodate you the first time, try them again.

Veterans' organizations can be a means of assistance. Not all veterans' organizations in every city or town can assist so it is incumbent upon you to contact these organizations in whatever city or town they are located to inquire regarding your needs.

Some organizations may be limited to local transportation, or to veterans' clinics or only to medical centers. Most if not all veterans' organizations have service officers that handle these issues.

Check with the organization you belong to, or the one in your city or town. If they cannot provide transportation they should, at the very least, be able to point you in the right direction.

Working in conjunction with veterans' organizations is your local veterans' agent. We are fortunate in Massachusetts. Every city or town in the Commonwealth is staffed by a veterans' agent. Call the agent where you reside. If they are unable to help you, they will have a good idea who to call.

Remember, the job of the veterans' agent is varied, their responsibilities are far-reaching, and office work is only one of their jobs. So, if you call and they are not in, leave them a message. They will get back to you. And, if time is an issue, try one of the other options listed.

There is also a VA shuttle. I am not going to delve into this only because the issue is normally getting to the shuttle. The shuttle is of no value if one cannot get there. It, however, does provide a significant service for those able to reach it. Hopefully one of these resources will allow you to do so.

The senior center in the city or town in which you live is another option. One must be a resident of the city from which you are seeking help. The transportation offered is usually limited to transportation within that city's limits.

Call ahead of time to find out their rules, how far in advance you must call to book a ride, if there is any limitation on wheelchair bound individuals (there usually is), etc. Some senior centers will allow someone to tip the driver while other senior centers will not. (Volunteers man this service, like the veterans organizations.) Always check with the senior center where you live for their particular policy.

A great resource is the Merrimack Valley Regional Transportation Authority (MVRTA). The MVRTA is one of the few, if not the only resource, able to provide transportation for individuals in wheelchairs. The program is broken down into individuals under Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and those not under the ADA (those over age 60). To be eligible to receive transportation one must fill out an application.

To apply as under the ADA a section of the application must be filled out by your doctor or a licensed health care provider. Contact the MVRTA's Office of Special Services at: (978) 469-6878 (and press #3) for an application or for questions. Or go online to: [mvrta.com](http://mvrta.com) and go into the Special Services section of the yellow tab.

The EZ Trans service is a shared ride program for people who are unable to use the fixed route bus system. This system will take people into Lowell, their only drop off though is the Gallagher Transportation Center on Thorndike Street. It is then up to you to provide transportation to your final destination.

There is also a nominal cost depending on distance. There are very specific rules and regulations. Make sure you call well in advance of your need.

We hope this list helps.



*Susan Piazza is the past Commander, Chapter 2, Queen City, DAV and was the first female commander of the DAV in 75 years. She has been involved with the DAV for over twenty five years. You can email Susan at [WithMara@aol.com](mailto:WithMara@aol.com)*

## RAPE ALLEGATION: from page 1

The complaint further alleges that the woman's injuries were the result of the "carelessness, unskillfulness, (sic) negligence and improper care by Dr. Minick and Holy Family Hospital in failing to ensure, or take responsible steps to ensure adequate and proper supervision and monitoring of other psychiatric patients in the unit."

The complaint further claims that Dr. Minick, in his role as Medical Director, failed to provide appropriate supervision, management or monitoring of patients in the psychiatric unit, especially those patients with the psychiatric histories for aggression, assault, psychosis, battery and sexual deviance.

Dr. Minick is no longer employed by Holy Family Hospital and is presently an assistant clinical professor at the University of California, San Diego, Department of Psychiatry. He is represented by Attorney Robert Burgess of Boston.

The Holy Family Hospital and Caritas Valley Regional Support Services are represented by Attorney Wilson Rogers Jr. of The Rogers Law Firm in Boston. The Rogers Law Firm has represented the Archdiocese of Boston during the sex

abuse scandals. The woman who filed the suit is being represented by Attorney David J. Hoey of North Reading, MA.

So far, the Court has ordered the release of medical records of Humberto Gomez from Holy Family Hospital and Lawrence General Hospital and allowed a motion to compel Dr. Ricardo Dancel to be deposed (questioned on the record).

Dr. Dancel is affiliated with Balpate Hospital in Boxford. Shortly after this incident, his privileges at Holy Family Hospital were revoked.

On February 1, 2006, the Massachusetts Board of Registration in Medicine took disciplinary action against Dr. Dancel finding that he engaged in inappropriate behavior with a co-worker and ordered that he attend sexual harassment awareness training.

To date, Dr. Dancel is not a party to this lawsuit, but sources close to the case say that Dr. Dancel was Gomez' physician.

A pre-trial hearing on this case is scheduled for March 13, 2008.

The Valley Patriot will be following this case and will report on any the result of the lawsuit.

## OSTEOPOROSIS: from page 18

increased risk is lower body weight (weight < 70 kg).

No screening is recommended in men so far, however it's cost-effective to do screening in men with prior fractures at age of 65 and in men 80 years and older with no previous fractures.

## Prevention of Osteoporosis

The prevention of osteoporosis is made up of general lifestyle preferences and other more specific treatments. Regular and frequent activity of reasonable intensity is recommended and very helpful at all ages.

No one seems to know just how much exercise is too much or too little, but most physicians recommend about 30 minutes of vigorous exercise about 3 to 5 times per week.

During the growing years of adolescence and teen years, attention must be paid to dietary calcium if peak bone mass is to be achieved. Specific attention to dietary calcium intake may also be warranted beyond age 60 which may come in the form of increased food

calcium or from specific calcium and vitamin D supplements.

For women at menopause, the appropriate administration of estrogen (or some of the new synthetic estrogens) is the most potent means by which bone mass may be preserved, thereby preventing fractures in the future. In fact, correction of low reproductive hormone levels at any age is important if proper bone mass is to be maintained.

There is no one treatment, or combination of treatments which can guarantee zero risk of fractures due to osteoporosis. The best prevention, however, is a life-long commitment to physical activity, good nutrition, and normal reproductive hormone status.

*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](mailto:ramirustum@comcast.net) Reference: 1- Bone Research Society, 2- National Osteoporosis Foundation, 3- Web MD Osteoporosis Health Center, 4- Wikipedia on Osteoporosis*

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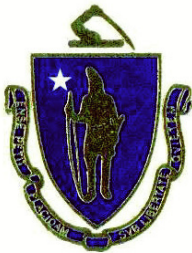
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