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"Congress shall make no law..."

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

Menorah Battle in N. Andover



North Andover Firefighter Sean Fountain holds the controversial "Merry Christmas" sign that Town Manager Mark Rees ordered firefighters to take down after Rabbi Bronstein of Chabad House in Andover threated to sue the town over their rejection of an eight day menorah display on the Town Common.



Welcome Market Basket & Hannaford Shoppers!





Shawn Hansen **Lowell Devils** Reporter **PAGE 15**



Puppy Love Kate Whitney PAGE 39



Jamie Atkinson, George Scione **PAGE 34**



State Senator Sue Tucker PAGE 7



Live the WOW! **Tom Connors PAGE 23**

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VALLEY PATRIOT OF THE MONTH

Sgt. Maj. Eric Nelson, U.S. Army (retired)

Paula Porten

VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

While attending the North Andover Veteran's Day observances, I was privileged to listen to guest speaker Sgt. Major Eric Nelson.

Nelson is a retired U.S. Army officer of 24 years. he spent his first career in the U.S. Army and is now spending his second career working for Valley Works in Lawrence helping other veterans find jobs. During his speech to the North Andover residents, Nelson talked about honor, bravery, commitment, sacrifice and what it means to be a soldier. These are

the values that make up a "Valley Patriot of the Month" and that is why we chose Sgt. Major Eric Nelson.

Eric Nelson was born on May 31, 1965 in Lowell and is presently attending University of Massachusetts in Lowell. He anticipates graduating in 2011. Prior to enrolling at UMass Lowell, Sgt. Major Nelson had a distinguished military career beginning in 1983 when he enlisted in the U.S. Army. He joined the Army as a Field Artillery Fire Support Specialist and trained at Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

Upon completion of his training, Nelson attended Airborne School at Fort Benning,

NELSON, page 44





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The Holidays in North Andover

One of the reasons The Valley Patriot editorial board loves living in North Andover is because the town has never bowed down to political correctness.

We'd drive by the common during the holidays and see a Jewish menorah and Christmas tree. We also enjoyed passing the "Merry Christmas" sign on the fire station. The kids play dradle in the schools, sing Christmas Carols and we've always felt as though the town was a great place to teach them about religious diversity, instead of the religious intolerance other communities embrace.

But, last month all that changed.

The Town of North Andover's Board of Selectmen was accused of "hijacking the Town Common" after a vote that sent shock waves through the town. Because of a new policy restricting displays on the common to one day, the board denied Rabbi Bronstein's request to display a menorah on the Town Common for eight days of Chanukah. The Board did approve one day for the display of the Menorah, but the Rabbi was not happy with the one-day restriction. Neither were several members of the board. Neither were we.

Rabbi Bronstein hired Attorney Meltzer, who contacted town counsel, agreeing to have the Rabbi apply for eight, one-day permits to have eight individual nights for the menorah until the policy could be fixed. They were also planning a joint press conference to give the public the good news.

But, all that changed when Attorney Meltzer sent town counsel a draft copy of a lawsuit that he would file if the situation could not be resolved.

Upon the receipt of the lawsuit, Town Manager Mark Rees told the fire chief not to put up the "Merry Christmas" sign on the Central fire station because it was mentioned in the proposed lawsuit.

The Rabbi says that Christmas signs and decorations were mentioned in the proposed lawsuit to show that Christmas decorations are up for 30 days but the Jewish menorah was denied for eight. He says that he never asked that those decorations be taken down, rather that his be allowed up.

The Selectmen met a week later (for which the Rabbi could not attend as it was Shabbat), and changed the policy so that a Christmas tree and a Menorah could again be displayed on the common.

We believe much of the controversy and bad press was the result of miscommunication and poor decision making. We believe that the Board of Selectmen made a major mistake with the one-day policy and not allowing an exception for the menorah. We also believe it was an over reaction for Town Manager Mark Rees to order the "Merry Christmas" sign to come down from the Central Fire Station.

At the end of all this, the "Merry Christmas" sign went back up and the menorah was approved for eight days on the common.

We applaud Chairman Tracy Watson for admitting that the board was wrong (something rare in politics anywhere) and working to rectify the situation before it became unsolvable.

In the spirit of this holiday season, we hope that the selectmen in North Andover and Rabbi Bronstein can come together with Jews, Christians and non-religious people to put aside this controversy, step back from some of the negative comments made, and learn from this mistake.

The people of North Andover deserve nothing less.

News tips

Phone in news tips to (978) 557-5413, or you may email tips to us at valleypatriot@ aol.com. We respect the anonymity of our sources if requested.

Letters to the editor, columns and op/eds can be submitted to valleypatriot@aol.com. The Valley Patriot is not responsible for the opinions expressed in submitted letters or columns. It is the policy of The Valley Patriot not to edit or exclude submitted material based on content.

Corrections; Please contact the editors at <u>valleypatriot@aol.com</u>

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Reader not happy with Congressman Tsongas

Oh, Mrs. Tsongas, how comforting it must be to be so gullible. You have believed every lie about that stinking pile of socialist blather that is HR-3962. You believe that the destruction of American free enterprise and the very private economy that has led the World is provided for somewhere in the Constitution you once swore to uphold. At least I hope you truly believe it.

You seem oblivious to the fact that every penny government spends, whether it be for hospitals or hospices, schools or senior centers, congresspersons or cops, comes from the productive surplus of PRIVATE individuals and enterprises — the very private economy you are trying to make substantially smaller. What a stupid plan.

You seem oblivious to American history and the fact that we were created specifically to be NOT LIKE other countries, and with a government based on liberty and personal responsibility and not monarchical or tyrannical top-down control over everything. I hope you truly believe those who tell you that a top-down tyranny is not what they are constructing as they place the bricks and mortar of a police state with your acquiescence. One wonders how they have convinced you that adding police powers to the delivery of health care is making us more free.

Certainly you are oblivious to eco-

nomics and have closed your mind to free-enterprise solutions to health care inequities – inequities that derive mainly from government interference and control. You seem happy to drink in the elixir of permanent, perpetual and growing debt as something that should not inhibit the growth of public policy and of all governments, indeed, that no matter how bankrupt we can make our nation, we are "too big to fail."

Your obliviousness extends even to believing that destroying Republican and other opposition to a liberal, statist power bloc so that it may hold power for decades by buying up a majority in every district, is in some way a net good, even as the structure, defense and heart of YOUR COUNTRY is decrepitating before your very closed eyes.

And finally you have shown yourself to be easily fooled by a shell-President and the gross inconsistencies that spew from his mouth and from his minions; inconsistencies that are undoing our heritage, our culture and our ability to survive and prosper. Easily, easily fooled. So, yes, you are elected. That gives you power but not wisdom. You can still choose America and freedom over petty, hateful, racist socialism – or remain a fool.

Bob Wescott, Lawrence





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Law shows no respect to our police and their K9 units

Tracey Zysk VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

As I was sitting in Sgt Gray's office interviewing him for one of my other articles he handed me a copy of Chapter 272: section 77A.

I read this and said to myself "no way" I read it again and just shook my head in disbelief. I thought to myself, I can't be

reading this correctly and put it aside and continued on with my interview. When I got home I read this again and really took a good look at the words explaining this law and immediately emailed Gray asking him to confirm my horrible understanding of this. "Yes"...he replied. I was in SHOCK.

Chapter 272: Section 77A Willfully in-

juring police dogs and horses - Whoever willfully torments, beats, kicks, strikes, mutilates, injures, disables or otherwise mistreats, a dog or horse owned by a police department or police agency of the

Commonwealth or any of its political subdivisions or whoever, willfully by any action whatsoever, interferes with the lawful performance of such dog or horse shall be punished by a fine of not less than \$100.00 nor more than \$500.00 or by imprisonment for not more than 2.5 years or both. Persons violating this section may be arrested without a warrant by any officer qualified to serve criminal process provided said offense is committed in his presence.

Basically what this is saying is, if you assault any police animal it is simply a MISDEMEANOR. That is it! Big deal...get your \$200.00 fine and maybe a day in court and go on with your life. If

you actually go to court chances are it will get dropped. I must also mention this is the same for an assault & battery on a police officer. Yes, hit a cop and it is just a misdemeanor.

The State of Massachusetts is by far one of the most pet friendly states. There is everything from dog parks, pet care businesses, nationally ranked animal hospitals, and pet friendly restaurants and boutiques all throughout the state. Not to mention, some towns have even initiated animal evacuation plans under FEMA guidelines. Massachusetts really is proactive in its

family pet care.

They even have one of the strongest animal abuse laws in the nation. In 2004, animal cruelty as defined in Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 272 Section 77

> became a FELONY. Prior to this, animal cruelty had been considered a misdemeanor. Now, violations of this law may result in a sentence of up to 5 years in state prison, or up to 2.5 years in a county jail and or a fine of up to \$2,500.

> Let's read this clearly. If you abuse a police dog or horse, the same animal that is serving and protecting your life, the same animal that is on a rescue mission for your lost child, tackling a bank robber, searching a car for narcotics, managing crowd control at Foxboro Stadium or even sniffing for bombs and explosives, it is nothing more than a misdemeanor. Let's not forget this dog or horse

that is protecting us is also protecting his handler: A POLICE OFFICER.

Chapter 272 Section 77 is a felony to abuse a family pet

Chapter 272 Section 77A is a misdemeanor to assault a police dog or horse

I reached out to David Leo, K9 officer for the Chelmsford police department and handler to Axle, 2yr old Czechoslovakian German shepherd who is trained in both narcotics and tracking. I asked Dave how he felt about this and he expressed his concerns on whether the State would ever

K9, page 16



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Senior Activities for December

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"Friends of The North **Andover Senior Center** Holiday Breakfast." It

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3:00 PM.

has been an amazing year for the North Andover Senior Center due to the efforts of the Friends of the North Andover Senior Center Inc. Please join us for a holiday breakfast celebration on December

11, at 9:00 A.M. Limited seating is avail-

able please stop by the Senior Center starting on November 30, to pick up your FREE Ticket. North Andover Seniors only!

Christmas Carols: Please join us at the Senior Center on Wednesday, December 16, at 3:30 to listen to the North Andover Brownie Troop from Franklin

School singing Christmas Carols.

Supper Club: Christmas Party Supper Club Thursday, December 17, 2009 at the Rolling Ridge Conference Center. Sign up opens Monday, November 16 at 8:00

a.m. for \$15.00 per person. Meal choices are as follows: potato-crusted halibut filet, seared medallion of pork tenderloin or golden roasted chicken breast. Bring a \$5.00 Yankee swap gift. (Optional)

Pranic Healing: Fridays, 10:00 – 12:00, 20 minute treatment for \$5.00 donation. Call for an appointment.

Seniors on the go: * NEW PRO-GRAM: Additional transportation is available on Thursday afternoons from 12:30 - 4:30 PM and Friday mornings, 9:00 - 1:00 PM. If you need a ride to and from the center, please call reception. If you have a local appointment such as the hairdresser or visiting a friend, we may be able to accommodate you with that.

L.L. Bean in Freeport Maine, December 10, 2009: Please join us for a day of shopping and lunch on your own at the outlet stores of Freeport Maine. \$6.00 R/T bus leaves the Senior Center at 9:00 and will be back approximately at 4:30. Seats are limited for this special Christmas Shopping trip. The bus will drop you off at the L.L. Bean main entrance. You must be back to the bus by 2:00; an established meeting place will be set up. This trip is weather permitting.

No Foxwoods in December. Welcome to the CASH VALUE gift card program.

Stop by the Senior Center to receive your free card. The Friends of the North Andover Senior Center is pleased to announce its endorsement of the Case Value Card Program recently launched in the Merrimack Valley. For more information stop by the North Andover Senior Center and pick up your FREE card.

Support Services and Programs:

Hearing Clinic: Free on the 3rd Thursday of every month. Call for an appoint-

Attorney George White: is available to meet with you to discuss your legal issues. Please call the Senior Center to make an appointment.

TRIAD Shredding Program: Thursday and Friday afternoons, 1:00-3:00. You are responsible for the material to be shredded. We ask that you limit your shredding to only necessary items. Please sign up at reception desk; you must have an appointment for use of machine.

We need Volunteer Medical Transport Drivers! Call the North Andover Senior Center for more information. Speak with Barbara at 978-688-9560 for application and assistance.

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AdConcepts of N. Andover is finalist in the 2010 PPAI Pyramid Award competition

The PPAI (Promotional Products Association International) Pyramid Award competition brings annual recognition to industry professionals for their creativity and outstanding use of promotional products in business and institutional programs. From the standpoint of the panel of judges, "creativity" and "results" of a campaign offer the most influence in the final selection of the winner.

Advertising Concepts Inc. (AdConcepts) was nominated as a finalist in the "Tutorial Programs Category" and will learn if they are winners at their annual convention in Las Vegas in January.

These finalists are recognized for building outstanding marketing campaigns with effective, results-oriented programs around one or more promotional products for creative educational programs. In this case, it's a program designed for employee and client training of PLM & CAD software for PTC (Parametric Technology Corp) of Needham, MA.

According to Frank Firicano (of Andover), president of AdConcepts, "I'm proud that my company has been recognized as a finalist in this competition as this distinguishes us from our competition as professionals within our industry. I'm especially proud of the fact that it's my daughter Amanda Novelline's program that is being recognized. Unfortunately, she won't be available to personally accepts the award (should we win) since she will be accepting another lifetime award the week before, our 2nd grandchild". Amanda is National Accounts Director at AdConcepts.

According to Firicano, "We are grateful to clients like PTC who have the confidence to allow us to partner with their marketing team to develop programs for them to help meet their corporate objectives."

AdConcepts is no stranger to the competition, since they were winners in 1989, 1990, 1991 and 1994.

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The holiday controversy in North Andover

An eight day Menorah, a one day Menorah, no Menrorah.... The Christmas sign is up, the Christmas sign in down... what happened to the holiday spirit in North Andover?

Paula Porten & Tom Duggan

VALLEY PATRIOT REPORTERS

It all started with a policy change limiting displays on the Town Common to one day and ended in what seemed like a Town ready to wipe Christmas and Chanukah from the town.

For months the Board of Selectmen in North Andover debated a proposed new policy of restricting gatherings and public displays on the Town Common to one day.

During those discussions the public was assured that exceptions could be made at the discretion of the Board of Selectmen. But when the policy was passed in September, no language was inserted into the final wording of the policy to make such exceptions. Absent the language for exceptions to the policy, the Board of Selectmen had set themselves up for controversy and bad press that spread throughout the country.

Selectmen said that the new policy was enacted because they wanted to preserve the integrity of the common and avoid unnecessary damage to the green space with multi-day events and fairs.

Limiting the Menorah display

Each year, the Board of Selectmen in North Andover routinely approved a one day request for a Menorah display without any problems or controversies. And when the Rabbi Bronstein of Chabad House in Andover asked for the Menorah to be displayed for all eight days of Chanukah last year, the Board of Selectmen approved his request.

But, when Rabbi Bronstein submitted the same request this year the Selectmen refused, saying the new one-day display policy restricts the use of the common to one-day only and revealed that no exceptions could be made.

The board did approve the Menorah for one day on the common after his original request was amended by the board. But, Rabbi Bronstein did not ask for the amendment, in fact he told the board that night that "this was going backwards" and with the new restrictions said that he might not place the Menorah on the common at all this year.

Some North Andover residents were outraged saying that the Board of Selectmen had "hijacked the Town Common". The vote sent shock waves through the town as Rabbi Bronstein was clearly upset by the new policy and the board's actions as were other North Andover residents in the audience who spoke in favor of the

Selectman Bill Grodon did make a motion to support the Rabbi and asked the board to make an exception to allow the Menorah for eight days, but not one member of the board would even second the motion for a vote.

Those selectmen that refused to support the Gordon's motion to grant an exception to the Rabbi were: Rosemary Smedile, Rick Nardella, Tracy Watson and Dan Lanen

Selectmen also revealed Monday night that because of this new policy, there will no longer be a Christmas tree display on the common because that would also exceed the board's new one-day rule.

"There were rules in place and we couldn't just change them, but we did not take this into account and we need to look at the policy again," said Chairman of the Board Tracy Watson.

Watson said she was proud of the fact that she voted to allow the Menorah on the common for eight days last year and found it disconcerting that she could not vote that way again because of the policy.

"We are a policy making board and we had to stick to our own policy." Watson said defending the board's actions.

After the meeting however, Selectmen who spoke with the Valley Patriot on and off the record said they were hoping to correct the problem before the next meeting on December 7th.

Chairman Tracy Watson told The Valley Patriot that she was "very concerned now" about the affect of the new policy on the town. Directly after the meeting she says she contacted the town attorneys to figure out how to adjust the new policy to accommodate holiday displays and other exceptions that were not put into the new law

Watson told Tom Duggan on the Paying Attention! Radio Program, on WCAP that the Selectmen did not second Gordon's motion because it was their intention to "fix a failed policy". She said that the board wanted some time to "talk to Town Counsel" and amend the one-day policy at that next meeting to allow the Menorah before Chanukah began.

Lack of communication and understanding

Before the Selectmen could even meet with Town Counsel to amend the policy, Rabbi Bronstein contacted a lawyer who specializes in constitutional law and has sued many other communities for their restrictive policies.

This sparked further controversy and admittedly an overreaction by the Town of North Andover. After receiving a proposed lawsuit by the Rabbi, Town Manager Mark Rees told the North Andover Firefighters that they could not put the "Merry Christmas" sign on the fire station as they had for the last 30 years.

Rabbi Bronstein adamantly denies asking that the "Merry Christmas" sign be taken down. In fact, upon hearing about the sign situation, he went down to the fire station to tell firefighters that he was not opposed to the "Merry Christmas" sign and it was never his intent to have it taken down.

He says that the copy of the proposed federal lawsuit was to show the town what the constitutional law says regarding freedom of expression and assembly, and that he believed the new policy violated his constitutional rights.

The lawsuit was to seek an injunction from the court to halt the new one-day policy, he said, not to remove any Christmas decorations.

Nevertheless, the removal of the Christmas sign from the fire station sparked outrage by residents of the town and resulted in headlines across the country.

A proposed lawsuit

Board Chairman Watson spoke with Tom Duggan on his Saturday Paying Attention! show on WCAP and told Duggan that the proposed lawsuit seemed like "blackmail" and she believed that the Rabbi should have worked directly with the town instead of hiring a lawyer.

The lawsuit, (which was never filed in court), was dated December 1, 2009, over one week after the Selectmen's meeting denying the Menorah for eight days.

Nowhere in the court papers does the Rabbi ask for any holiday decorations to be taken down but Watson and the board said they were "terrified" that the mention of the "Merry Christmas" sign in the legal papers they received could result in problems for the town's holiday displays in a future court battle.



The lawsuit in part states:

"The Town of North Andover freely decorates its buildings and streets with Christmas decorations and symbols of long-term placement, the fire station is emblazoned with the legend "Merry Christmas," a "sign" which will, apparently, adorn the building for nearly 30 days. In addition, town streets are adorned with white lights and wreaths. Public schools and buildings are adorned with candy canes and other such decorations, all of which have been in place since November and which will, apparently, adorn these public spaces for more than 30 days. Notwithstanding repeated requests by the Plaintiff that it be allowed to express itself in the public space, the town of North Andover has declined to conform its conduct to constitutional requirements."

In his demand to the court, the Rabbi asks: "That the Town of North Andover, following a hearing on short order of notice, be enjoined from interfering in the Plaintiff's eight day display."

Rabbi Bronstein told the Valley Patriot that he was not asking that the Town of North Andover take down any Christmas signs or wreaths, but that the Town recognize that many Christmas decorations were being displayed for over 30 days, and he could not have the Menorah for more than one day. He said that such a policy violated the constitution and he wanted the Town Selectman to understand that.

Within a few short days the Selectmen and Town Manager, Mark Rees ordered the firefighter to put the "Merry Christmas" sign back up, anticipating a resolution to the Menorah controversy.

Finally, on Friday December 4th, the Selectman met and changed the one-day display policy and granted the Menorah display for the eight days of Chanukah. Rabbi Bronstein could not attend the Friday night meeting as it was Shabbat and felt slighted by the fact that the Selectman held the meeting on a Friday night when he could not attend.

However, the Rabbi did release a statement which reads, in part;

"On behalf of Chabad Lubavitch of Merrimack Valley, I express my gratitude to the town of North Andover for the amendment of the town common use policy so as to bring that policy into conformity with the requirements of the United States Constitution. We look forward to placing our Menorah on the North Andover town common during the eight days of Chanukah, and to sharing the message of that symbol of light with the entire community."

The Rabbi was clearly upset about the situation and the actions of the Selectman, further stating, "While we welcome the action of the Town of North Andover last Friday evening in correcting its policy, we question the apparent need of several members of Board of Selectmen to make comments disparaging the constitutional rights of all Americans to exercise their rights to seek such redress."

The Rabbi was also upset about public comments made accusing him of trying to take candy canes from children in the schools

"We also question," he continued, "the apparent need of several members of that Board to suggest that I, or my organization, or my attorney, ever demanded that the town remove any holiday signage from the North Andover Fire Station, or ever demanded 'having the candy canes taken away from the kids'".

The Chanukah lighting celebration will be on the North Andover Common on Thursday December 17th at 7pm. Meanwhile on December 23rd, a live crèche will also be displayed on the North Andover Town Common. School Committee member Karin Rhoten petitioned and was approved by the Board of Selectman to have a crèche display for one day on the common. A crèche is a manger scene and this one will be with live people and animals.

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THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

Thieves, Liars and Liberals ... but I repeat myself

Dr. Charles Ormsby

VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

It's the holiday season and we should all be full of cheerfulness and goodwill towards our fellow citizens. Let's raise a glass to our political foes and wish them well. Now is the time to put our political differences aside, embrace one another, and celebrate the joy of our shared existence as citizens of the earth.

Bah, humbug!

Bar them from our table, our hearths, and our homes. Rewarding bad behavior only encourages more of the same and we've had more than enough of that from liberals.

At first this may seem to be a particularly inappropriate emotion at a time when we should seek to find common ground and heal old wounds.

Heck, just because two people disagree about some political issue, there is no need for animosity. Right?

Aren't both sides just as worthy? Even if one side has a better answer to society's ills and the other side's position is flawed, aren't both positions held in good faith? And, therefore, shouldn't each side be respectful of the other's opinion?

No, no and no. No, on all counts.

The political debate between free market libertarians/conservatives and socialists, regressives, and authoritarians (collectively referred to inappropriately as liberals) is not a debate between two equally righteous political philosophies.

One philosophy has an ethical foundation that respects individual rights and recognizes that these rights cannot survive, indeed cannot exist, without property rights. It encourages voluntary charitable giving to those facing misfortune, but understands that societal respect for property rights has the practical consequence of encouraging productive activity and

fostering prosperity.

The other philosophy, while publically professing concern for the welfare of mankind (and the poor in particular), privately detests individual rights and seeks to destroy them by imposing laws that can only be described as totalitarian. In this philosophy there are no property rights; only claims of "societal needs" and the desire of its proponents to control the lives and products of their fellow citizens.

For decades, the political waters have been muddied by the all-too-common, clueless Republicans who supported the liberal/regressive agenda and the occasional, but all-too-rare, Democrats who questioned the erosion of our individual rights by the welfare state. Now the mud is finally settling and the ethical basis of the political debate is becoming clear.

We are engaged in a high-stakes war between two fundamentally opposing and incompatible philosophies:

One based on moral principles and compatible with man's nature as a rational being, and the other based on force, fraud and theft and designed to serve tyrants and thieves.

One that has the practical effect of encouraging prosperity and ever-improving standards of living, while the other breeds poverty, dependence, and despotism.

Tyrants and thieves have no place at the table of honest and honorable men. Their philosophy is inherently evil and it is routinely advanced based on lies and purposeful distortions.

Every week brings more examples of the moral depravity of liberals. Here are just two from our once respected Senate:

Complex, legislative proposals – typified by the 2000 page Senate healthcare bill – are brought to a vote without time to be read or for the public to digest them and weigh in on their merits. The bill's provisions are crafted in secret and disclosed just hours before votes are scheduled. Only loud public protests offer any relief.

Critical votes are bought by targeting tax dollars to a legislator's district (This now-common practice is worse than bribery, since bribes are usually not paid with stolen money). Most recently, Louisiana Democrat Senator Landrieu's recent vote, the needed 60th vote to bring the Democrat healthcare monstrosity to the Senate floor, was bought with \$300 million of OUR money. Such boldface bribery was so ugly that it was written into the bill in very obscure language, specifically designed to hide it from the public. Once it was discovered, the congresswoman admitted her pride in selling her vote when she responded to criticism by stating: "I will correct something. It's not \$100 million, it's \$300 million, and I'm proud of it and will keep fighting for it."

The moral decay fostered by the liberal agenda is also evident in the once-trust-worthy, scientific community as was illustrated recently when climate conspirators, bent on supporting government control of energy usage, were caught rigging their data to support the concept of global warming and that it is caused by human activity (go to climatedepot.com to read the lurid details that involve not just the purposeful distortion of data, but also a conspiracy to discredit those, described as skeptics, who do not concur with conclusions touted by the climate alarmists).

As an aside, we should reflect on the impact on scientific objectivity of our federal government having a stake in the outcome of scientific research. If the government takes control of healthcare and, as a result, the fiscal realities of healthcare costs are transferred from the private sector to the government, will we be able

to trust the scientific data that the government will adjust to satisfy its political/fiscal agenda?

Just witness the recent mammogram and pap-smear controversies. The issue is less the merits of these particular recommendations than it is the unavoidable loss of scientific objectivity in the decades to come. All of medical science will be influenced by politics and debated as political issues. Will we decide on medical truths via opinion polls and at the ballot box or in objective scientific laboratories? If the government takes control of healthcare, all of medical science will be subject to political influence and will not be worthy of our trust. Our life expectancy will surely suffer.

Obama and his leftist supporters have given us a valuable holiday gift: They have clarified the core issues of our political debate and they have made the moral basis of our political choices more evident.

The political war now being waged isn't being fought by two sides having equal moral standing. A philosophy that requires and actively supports the destruction of human liberty is not the ethical equivalent of a philosophy that seeks to protect individual rights and strictly limit the ability of government to thwart those rights.

Thieves, liars and would-be tyrants must be recognized as such and treated accordingly.

Merry Christmas and Happy Chanukah to all ... well, at least to those of good will and honest intentions.



Dr. Ormsby is an ex-member of the N.A. School Committee. He is a graduate of Cornell and has a doctorate from MIT. He is currently an adjunct professor of Math at UMASS, Lowell. You can email him

at: ccormsby@comcast.net

Casinos never deliver on their promises

Susan Tucker STATE SENATOR (D), ANDOVER

Let's be clear. The debate in Massachusetts is not about whether to allow gambling in our state. We settled that question years ago, and our people have no lack of places to gamble, from the Lottery to the tracks to the corner store Keno parlor. Gambling games have been a part of human history in many cultures over the ages, and social games of skill such as poker are part of our culture. (A personal disclaimer: I am a good poker player, and

I am not an anti-gambling prohibitionist). The debate today is about how many forms of gambling in how many places is a reasonable economic benefit for the Commonwealth's families, taxpayers, and economic future. This debate is about costs versus benefits, and most especially about the new, predatory, slot machine business that few people in the media or even in the Legislature really understand. Perhaps you already know that when you sign up for and play with that "Rewards Card", the casino is tracking how much you spend and, most importantly, how fast you play those slots. They have a formula that can predict your "lifetime worth" to their business. What is your zip code? How many times per minute do you push that button...because the speed with which you play is the main predictor of your potential addiction to the machines. The heavy marketing and "freebies" go to those most inclined to eventually give everything to the casino.

We are just beginning to learn about the predatory/ addictive nature of the modern slot machine. Dr Natasha Schull, an MIT Professor, studied the industry for years, and concluded that "every aspect of slot machines are designed to make customers "play to extinction...until every dollar is gone" Why would your state government want to partner with business whose entire business model is based on profiting off of addiction?

The Legislature is considering bringing casinos/ predatory slot parlors to Massachusetts for a single reason: the state needs the revenue. The problem is that casinos never deliver on the promise to help bail out state budgets. For example, Connecticut and New Jersey, with all their thousands of slots, both have significantly higher taxes and worse budget problems than Massachusetts.

Proponents talk about re-capturing all that money that goes to Connecticut. If every dollar put down a Connecticut slot by a Massachusetts resident were, instead, put down a Massachusetts slot, the state would have made a grand total of \$92 million dollars last year. That sounds like a lot of money until you start subtracting the costs which proponents of casinos never talk about. In fact, the hit to the lottery from gambling competition will equal about \$80 million, leaving us with only \$12 million in casino revenue. Add in the \$30 million it will take to set up a new "Gaming Commission" with hundreds of new state employees to audit, oversee, and regulate casinos as well as \$20 million to



Poker Players at the new Granite State Poker in Plaistow, NH play on the new Valley Patriot poker tables.

mitigate costs to host communities, and the State is already subsidizing the casino industry. That is before we add in the costs of addiction. In California, the Attorney General stated that out of control gambling costs California \$1 billion per year. You pay even when you don't play.

Yes, we already have the Lottery. Remember that it started out as a single drawing once a week, and was going to solve all of our education funding issues. Several people argue that, although they hate the Lottery, casinos are just a natural extension of state-sponsored gambling. Don't bet on it. Slots represent everything lousy about the Lottery ramped up 100 times. Unlike the Lottery, casinos will max out every one of your credit cards; put a lien on your home; serve you free

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Paying Attention! Prestando Attention!

with Tom Duggan

The Grinch is real!

Warning: This column may offend anyone bothered by truth, goodness and holiday celebrations!

No longer just a children's fantasy story, "The Grinch Who Stole Christmas" is alive and well in modern day America.

But, the real Grinch doesn't live at the top of Mount Crumpet. No, no, he resides in the cold, black hearts (and offices) of the ACLU and every person who tries to stop others from celebrating the season of giving, the season of charity and the season of happiness for children and their families.

And, just as the fictional Grinch came down off Mount Crumpet to steal Christmas from the "Whos down in Whoville," these real life Grinches come out from their caves every year to file lawsuits and steal Christmas from children everywhere they

can.

What's so amazing about today's Grinches is that they are just as mean and just as irrational as the fictional one. To these people, God is to be shunned, goodness is "offensive" and the mere thought of another person celebrating a holiday rooted in religion...that's just plain loathsome.

Dr. Suess himself couldn't have possibly imagined that his creation would someday be a reality in the form of modern day religious bigotry. But here we are, a culture under attack by a very small minority who cringe at the site of a Santa Claus or a Christmas angel.

Now, the Christmas-hating Grinches are even filing lawsuits and complaining about people who put up Christmas displays on their own private property, using local zoning regulations to restrict the myrth and merriment of their fellow citizens. They've even found ways to use condo and neighborhood associations to adopt intolerant bylaws that discriminate against people of faith and even the faithless who enjoy the American holiday tradition.

WHY?

Well, they are offended of course. As if the sight of pine tree with colored lights is akin to using a racial slur... or the sound of children singing Jingle Bells is equal to hearing Hitler Youth songs about exterminating Jews.

Wait, on second thought, the ACLU and the Christmas-haters have defended the "rights" of Nazi's and the Klan to offend, which I guess begs the question: How is a Christmas tree or a Christmas song more damaging to society and more offensive than racist Nazi symbols and songs?

How is it that "offensiveness" is the standard for stopping Christmas displays but not so much for the hateful demonstrations of racists and fear mongers? Doesn't free speech apply to everyone regardless of the type of speech? Or is speech only prohibited today when it's about goodness, religion, God, Christmas and other "objectionable" evils to these confused and empty souls?

The answer to that is simple. This has nothing to do with sensibilities or offensiveness. It has nothing to do with protecting the constitution or stopping a government established religion.

It's really about the narcissistic few who want to erase the words "...or the free exercise thereof" from our first amend-

ment's freedom of religious expression. They hate God and they hate the fact that Christmas is rooted in religious tradition. Even though to many, it is a secular

American tradition practiced by people of

many (and no) faiths at all.

Personally, I have had
enough of the sanctimonious sound bite arguments,
backward thinking and
dishonest debate. I've had
enough of people forcing
the rest of us to sanitize
society from words and

symbols that only evil could possibly find "offensive."

All the while, the "offended" are lecturing the rest of us about being tolerant of weird sexual

oro: COURTESY life-styles, compassion for criminals and "accepting" those who views things differently.

It's time to stop giving in to these people and say enough is enough.

We shouldn't be fearful of offending someone with the goodness of Christmas. We shouldn't be afraid to say to anyone "offended" by a pine tree with lights that they need serious psychological help.

People who so intolerantly demand that the majority bow down to their lack of beliefs (or their hatred for faith and goodness) and then force us to remove everything that offends them should be shunned year-round.

The fact is, Christmas is rooted in Christianity but it is also celebrated by atheists, agnostics, Jews, and others. It is, to some, a secular American holiday which has evolved and taken on a whole new meaning than just the birth of Jesus Christ. Allowing the free exercise of Christmas celebration on public property does not establish a government religion. Anyone who says otherwise is fooling themselves in order to fool the rest of us.

But we are not fooled.

It's not we who celebrate Christmas who are offending others. Goodness is not an offensive trait. In the real world we have to recognize that it is those who hate God and Christmas who are being offensive. It is they who should be more tolerant of symbols and songs, the values of which they certainly do not share. It is the Grinch who must tolerate the will of the majority, not the majority who must be inconvenienced by a monster who takes great joy in depriving others of happiness.

Just imagine ... if the Whos down in Whoville, instead of celebrating Christmas over the objections of the "offended" Grinch, removed Christmas from their little town square so as not to offend him with their infernal "singing" and happiness heard all the way up on top of mount Crumpet?

Would Whoville be a better place?

Is America?

Merry Christmas!



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 from 10am-noon. You

can email your comments to Tdugjr@aol.com .

Maybe Someday We Can Have a Dialogue Politics in the Dominican Republic

Mark Palermo

I was getting away quickly from an ugly scene when I took the photo below, which is why it is not well –focused. The year was 1994, the place, the Dominican

Republic. The subject: our tax dollars at work.

I was with a Dominican friend, driving through this small coastal village- I can't recall its name-

when we rounded a corner and ran into an angry street mob carrying baseball bats, knives and firearms. Later we heard the news: announcement of the presidential election results had been postponed while the votes were recounted. The so-called "recount" showed what everybody feared: the populist candidate, Pena Gomez, had lost by a narrow margin while the CIAbacked puppet president and de-facto dictator, Joachim Balaguer- 87 years old and blind-was declared winner just as he had been in previous so-called free elections. Once again democracy had been successfully thwarted in the Dominican Republic. International observers concurred that the election was rigged and the response you see in this picture followed.

What made these folks take to the streets? After all, we Americans didn't take to the streets after Bush stole an election. Look again at the photo. This is what people look like when all their self-determination is crushed and they have no recourse to law or justice.

Author William Blum writes, "Joachin Balaguer... ruled...his people in the grand Latin American style: The rich became richer and the poor had babies, hungry babies; democracy remained an alien concept; the police and military regularly kidnapped, tortured and murdered opponents of the government and terrorized union organizers. But the man was not, personally, the monster that Trujillo was. There was relative calm and peace. No 'communist threat' hovered over the land. The pot was sweetened for foreign investors, and American corporations moved in

with big bucks..."

As bad as Belaguer was, the guy that preceded him was worse. Rafael Tru-jillo was one of Latin America's leading anti-communists and friend of the United States. A psychopathic, serial-murdering rapist, Trujillo used political power to

amass vast personal wealth and ruled the island for 30 years until his assassination in 1961. Trujillo outlawed political parties- except for his

own-- while imprisonment, torture and mysterious disappearances of any opposition, real or imagined, were accomplished by his thugs and secret police. Every classroom, church and public office is said to have displayed a portrait of "El Benefactor" as he was known. Statues of Trujillo were mass produced and erected in every town and village with the inscription "Trujillo on Earth, God in the Sky." Illiterate peasants were even taught that Trujillo was an all-powerful deity. Franklin Roosevelt once remarked to U.S. Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, "He (Trujillo) may be a son-of-a-bitch, but he is our son-of-a-bitch."

PHOTO: COURTESY

On my first trip to the island some years ago, a friend took me to several museums. I was immediately struck by a curious feature: the common theme of most Dominican art is the legacy of slavery and/or colonialism, which- if art is a barometer of culture- indicates how authoritarian social organization is deeply internalized in the island's collective psyche. Indeed, colonialism has deep roots on the island: after Columbus established slavery, decades of Spanish and French rule gave way to domination by the United States, which under the Monroe Doctrine, occupied the country three times between 1903 and 1965.

To understand Dominican politics, you have to start with the fact that Dominicans have never experienced a period of self determination and democracy in over 500 years- except for one brief window of op-

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Painting a bull's eye on New York City

Dick Morris
VALLEY PATRIOT SYNDICATED COLUMNIST

President Obama's decision to put Khalid Sheikh Mohammed on trial in New York City along with four others accused of helping destroy the World Trade Center and attack the Pentagon on 9-11 paints a bull's-eye for terrorists right on New York City, their favorite target. Now Obama has identified where the terrorists should focus their energies — on New York City.

His decision to bow to political correctness and not to try Mohammed at a secure military base and to try him in a civilian court, according him all the rights of an American citizen, raises important questions:

Most importantly, is the admissible evidence against Mohammed damning enough to secure a conviction? The evidentiary requirements protecting an American citizen on trial are far stricter than those that would apply to an enemy combatant before a military tribunal. We already watched how the 20th hijacker, Zacarias Moussaoui, escaped the death penalty because the evidence the government could use against him in a civilian criminal court was limited by his civil liberties. As a result, the data from his computer, which had not been seized pursuant to the Fourth Amendment, could not be entered into evidence against him.



Valley Patriot editor and owner Paula Porten with Dick Morris, at Sal's Riverwalk in Lawrence. Morris was at Sal's to raise money for Christy Mihos, candidate for Governor. Don't miss our report on Morris' visit next month.

Failing such evidence, the feds had to settle for a life sentence.

Since much of the evidence against Mohammed was gathered through interrogations before which he may not have been read his Miranda rights and during which he may have been water-boarded, one wonders how much of his statement that he was the mastermind of 9-11 is going to be admissible. It could be that he will use the very Constitution of the very government he seeks to destroy to protect himself from the death penalty or even life in prison.

The decision to try him in a civilian court also confronts the Department of Justice with a difficult decision on how much of the evidence against Mohammed should be aired publicly.

Our anti-terror investigations depend on secrecy, and the FBI and Homeland Security agents may not relish having their methods publicized in open court. There is even the possibility that there will be a global backlash in favor of Mohammed as his defense lawyer — paid for by the American taxpayer — will make him appear to be the victim of overzealous investigators and prosecutors rather than the perpetrator of one of the greatest mass murders in history.

In any event, President Obama is affording the terrorists exactly what they wanted in the first place — a global stage right near New York's theater district. The very goal of terrorism is to attract worldwide attention and, by trying Mohammed in a civilian court in the middle of New York City, President Obama is giving them the stage they want on which to articulate their perceived grievances.

Finally, there is the disturbing question of what will happen if Mohammed and/ or some of his confreres are found to be not guilty. Where will they be released? Will they walk out of the courtroom free to prowl the streets of New York, their transportation having been paid courtesy of the taxpayers? Will they be flown to Afghanistan to resume their plots against our government and our people, again at taxpayer expense?

What Obama should have done was to try Mohammed before a military tribunal, without the full rights of an American citizen (which, of course, he is not) and, after a guilty verdict, execute him. But this president bows before political correctness above all else, and he may just have done Mohammed and al-Qaida a big, big favor.

To find out more about Dick Morris and read features by other Creators Syndicate writers and cartoonists, visit the Creators Syndicate web page at www.creators.com.

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DEVINE MILLIMET

WELCOMES PETER J. CARUSO, SR.

Devine Millimet is pleased to announce that Peter J. Caruso, Sr. has joined the firm as a shareholder in our Andover office. Attorney Caruso brings extensive experience in all facets of the law, including family and business planning, real estate, asset protection, estate planning, as well as in media law--newspaper, privacy, defamation, advertising, media, internet copyright, and publications. He is the former managing partner of Caruso and Caruso, LLP and now joins the firm's 80 attorneys in offices in Manchester and Concord, New Hampshire as well as in Andover. Established in 1947, Devine Millimet has served the Merrimack Valley for more than 25 years.





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Final thoughts as I prepare to leave office

Peter Larocque LAWRENCE SHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBER

First I would like to thank my wife and family for their love and support and for being at my side with words of encouragement during the campaign and the days following the election. Their unwavering commitment and dedication that they continue to show me, comforts my heart well.

Next I would like to break from tradition that the past losing candidates for School Committee in District E have practiced.

Remember back in the October 2005 edition of the Valley Patriot, after Mr. Gray lost in the primaries he just about called the voters of District E, foolish and that they were wrong for voting for Amy McGovern because he truly was the better candidate and that because the voters of District E voted for Amy he was now being forced to leave Lawrence. More recently, Mr. Homayoun Maali wrote in the October 2009 edition of the Valley Patriot after loosing in the primaries of 2009 that he believed the voters of District E just didn't care about the Lawrence Public Schools and that they were a bunch of White Christian Races who should move out of Lawrence.

I would just like to simply thank you all for allowing me to represent you for the last 3 years. The reason for my lost in this election is simple, when all said and done Mr. Mark Gray had more votes than

I did. I leave public office with no regrets and I take with me many good memories. I believe the Schools in Lawrence are much safer now for our students, teachers and staff than when I first took office in October of 2006. Sure I made mistakes and made some wrong decisions, but that's on me, not you! Many of you told me how thankful you were that I told the truth and for that I am forever grateful to all of you.

Mr. Gray has an enormous challenge before him, but if he does the right things and really said what he meant during the campaign about being an independent voice and representing the people of District E, he should do well. But on the other hand, if he is perceived as being a rubber stamp for Mayor elect Lantigua and allows him as the Chairman of the School Committee to push through his agenda he will be replaced in two years. Mr. Gray will not have the benefit of a Mayoral race in the next election, so all the voters who turned out for the mayor will not be there next time. But let me be clear, if Mr. Gray does what he promised in the campaign he should have no problem getting re-elected. I know Mr. Gray has no obligation to listen to me or take advice from me, this I know. But here are some good areas that he should tackle.

* Get rid of Cooperative Learning in the Middle School grades, especially in

LAROCQUE, page 44

Can Lawrence or our neighbors afford another round of political correctness?

Bob O'Koniewski

Political correctness is driving the city of Lawrence deeper into a fiscal and academic black hole, to the detriment of our city, and state's, taxpayers.

The Patrick Administration and its Department of Revenue have decided upon a course of action to address the city's burgeoning \$15 million deficit for FY2010 based purely on racial considerations. Had David Abdoo, the white mayoral candidate, won last month's election, it is a fact that the DOR would have already commenced a process of considerable state involvement in the daily management of the city's finances, including steps toward receivership, especially with the city's current budget director zipping out of town to take a new job elsewhere. Under a potential Abdoo administration, the Patrick Administration would have taken the approach that the city's financial hole is too deep for any one mayor to turn around in six months, especially for another perceived Republican after eight years of the Republican mayor, Michael Sullivan.

If Abdoo won, the state was poised to immediately walk into City Hall and institute the same tools used to turnaround Springfield and Chelsea in recent years.

With the election of Latino Democrat state representative William Lantigua, however, the state has chosen a path of almost benign neglect, instead giving the legislator 18 months on his own to turn the city's fiscal operations around. Sure, the state delegation will step to the plate and try to get a \$30 million loan through the Legislature for their colleague with no strings attached. By doing so, the administration is making it clear that they are willing to give a heavily Latino city and its Latino mayor-elect the benefit of the doubt that they can fix this mess on their own without state receivership or other extensive fiscal management and oversight. The Patrick solution - throw more money at the problem with the hope that things will get better - is the equivalent of rewarding the child who keeps misbehaving in the hope that he finally comes

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Election Day show

Gary Manion, Jr. VALLEY PATRIOT SYNDICATED COLUMNIST

This past month I was given the "privilege" to sit at the polls on Election Day. This was the first time I had sat and watched a circus for almost twelve hours straight.

It amazes me some of the shenanigans and unprofessional behavior that goes on at a polling location. I noticed many things that would raise an eyebrow or two if the public was educated as to what went on.

First off, I was sitting at Mary Immaculate Sneior Living, which is where the residents of District B, precinct 1 vote.

I arrived at the poll around 6:50 am, only to find that there was not a poll worker in sight. What shocked me was that the polls were opening at 7am. Finally around 6:59 a.m. the warden showed up and a few workers followed. Around 7:15 a.m. the ballot counter was set and the workers were finally in place. It still amazes me that this laziness is allowed by the city's elections division and nobody ever does anything about it.

The morning rush of voters started and ended

Around 9 a.m. the warden got up and walked out. I didn't think anything of it, the morning was stressful and maybe she just needed some air. About an hour later a voter came into the polls and received his ballot. He then asked to use the special voting machine for visually impaired people. I quickly noticed that the machine was present at the location but was not hooked up. He then asked for the machine, which he always votes on and a worker told him that the machine was not working (which was n outright lie). The voter was then told to have one of the workers vote with him, to assist him. He was told to say who he was voting for and that the worker would mark it down for

him on the ballot. It was very obvious that the voter felt upset about doing this, but he felt that he had no choice but to comply with the directions of the poll worker.

This was a violation of a person's voting rights and I stood up to challenge the vote only to find that the warden HAD NEVER RETURNED. I needed to talk to the warden to challenge the vote but because our warden was MIA, I had no one to talk to. I finally said out loud that I challenged the ballot so everyone could hear me. I was directed to the warden's husband and he incorrectly had me fill out paperwork to challenge the ballot. He then handed me his cell phone to talk to Ana (the warden) over the phone so that she could approve of the challenge. She then came back into the polling precinct about thirty minutes later. I laugh now when I think about the fact that the city is in such a financial deficit and we are paying this lady to NOT do her job.

My second observation was that multiple times we had senior citizens walk in and tell us that they had a hard time seeing and needed help voting. ONE poll worker would then take the person to the voting booth and vote for them.

It was very unfair for people who can't see to be limited to one person going with them to vote. There should be at least two people helping the person, or another way for the voter to cast their ballot to make sure election workers who not so secrety shill for specific candidates aren't stacking the ballots by marking the wrong candidate on purpose, or even by mistake.

At the end of the day I was overwhelmed with the unorganized mess that goes on at a polling location. I hope that the mayor elect seriously looks into fixing the way the elections division runs their circus. The people of Lawrence deserve better

Tough decisions for tough problems

Mark Gray
LAWRENCE SCHOOL COMMITTEE-ELECT

A executive order for turning around low performing schools, examples schools just like Lawrence.

It identifies common issues among a lot of underperforming schools, noting conditions like 75% or more of the kids qualify for free lunch (about 85% in Lawrence).

Changes not actually reflecting improvement, in 2004 the administration in a propaganda campaign noted that grade 7 ELA (English language arts) MCAS results had jumped to a 37, 5 years later, it's at 36

The government also points out that low performing schools are the least likely to be able to turn themselves around, sometimes not even knowing why they are failing, Lawrence has been failing for 10 years and still cannot even include subjects mandated by law into a CEP (comprehensive educational plan) often leaving out things like science, history, civics, and physical fitness.

So, we have identified Lawrence as low performing and unable to turn itself around, now what.

Looking to see if the leadership has the ability or desire to turn things around. Lawrence administrators run the school system as a taxi service, a campaign man-

agement headquarters, a medical facility, a building rental facility, and a job welfare office for those of 'relations'.

Not to mention the history of keeping concerned parents out of the picture. For this reason it is unlikely that even if given the chance, the administration of it's own free will, can turn things around, now what

In some model schools for turning underperforming schools around some success stories come from schools that fired (or unassigned) all the staff and then hired back only those committed to do what it takes to educate.

Other critical efforts in other schools were REAL parental involvement, charging all staff to make it happen firing those that don't. As real as this option is, administers still today continue doing business as usual. It may be a sad reality for them if the new committee holds in believing the kids education comes before the administrations entitlements.



Mark Gray is school committee-elect from District E in Lawrence, with 3 son's in the Lawrence Public School system. He served in the Marine Corps, the Army reserves, and has been active with the issues and problems facing the com-

munity. Mark can be reached by e-mail at ghostapollo@yahoo.com

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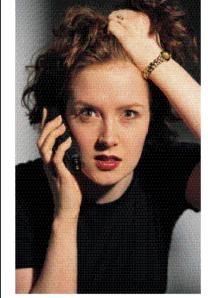
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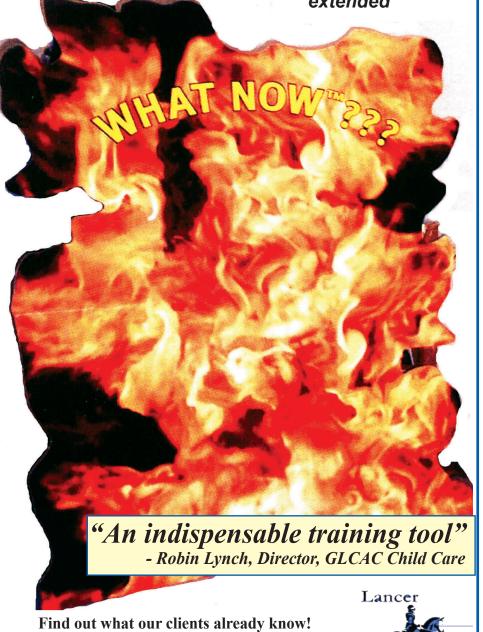
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1st Place Devils are the team to beat

Shawn Hansen VALLEY PATRIOT SPORTS WRITER

The Lowell Devils hooked the Worcester Sharks 7-3, at the DCU Center in Worcester on Nov. 11th, earning their third consecutive win.

Right out of the gate, the visiting Lowell Devils took a promising 2-0 lead thanks to a few early penalties on Worcester. Skating down ice on a two-man advantage, #20 Matt Taormina fired his sixth goal of the season past Sharks goaltender #32 Alex Stalock to make it 1-0. Nearly a minute later, #14 Nathan Perkovich tallied in Lowell's second goal of the game.

With a lot going on in Devils territory, #53 Brandon Mashinter tagged in a goal for the Sharks cutting the lead in half on an open netter. In the second period of play, the Devils scored three goals for a 5-2 lead at the end of two periods. Goals scored by #25 Nick Palmieri, #17 Vladimir Zharkov, and #33 Trevor Kell forced Worcester to pull Stalock and replace him with #31 Tyson Sexsmith.

"When you get down early in the game, its hard to stay in it mentally and you just got to focus on the little things that have made you win so far and made you successful so far this season," Sexsmith told the Valley Patriot.

Once the Sharks changed goalies, #14 Frazer McLaren poked home a goal putting the Sharks within two goals of the Devils until Kell gave the Jr. Devils a three goal lead again firing a shot past Sexsmith for his first goal of the season.

In the final period of play, the Devils weren't done as #9 Ben Walter's pass deflected off Zharkov making it 6-2. #34 Jeff Prough, recalled from the Trenton Devils that morning tallied in his first goal of the season to up the ante to 7-2. Worcester



#34 Jeff Prough of the Lowell Devil's watches #40 John Zeiler of the Monarchs fall near The Valley Patriot sign Nov. 21st at the Tsongas Arena in Lowell. The Valley Patriot is an official sponsor of the Lowell Devils.

Sharks #9 Logan Couture scored the last goal of the game with four minutes remaining in regulation. "Lowell played well," said Dean Strong of the Worcester Sharks. "They got a lot of good bounces, and we couldn't seem to get much going,"

Devils goaltender (#31) Jeff Frazee saved 30 out of 33 shots. Sharks goaltender Stalock saved 7 shots and Sexsmith saved 13

Two days later, the Devils white washed the Sharks again.

At the end of the first period, the Jumbo Tron at the Tsongas Arena displayed a scoreless contest. With only 1:03 into the second period #9 Ben Walter scored to put the Devils up 1-0. Towards the end of the period #17 Vladimir Zharkov increased the lead to 2-0 with 1:39 on the clock scoring his fifth goal of the season. Sporting a 2-0 lead into the third, #24 Alexander Vasyunov put the Devils up 3-0 with 32 seconds into the period. Vasyunov's goal came on a 2-on-1 advantage as his wrist shot sailed

by Sharks goaltender #31 Tyson Sexsmith.

About five minutes later #19 Michael Wilson notched in a goal past Devils goaltender #31 Jeff Frazee. The last two goals of the game came by #7 Tyler Eckford as he scored the minus-one hat trick – two goals all in three minutes of play to cap a 5-1 victory.

In the game Frazee saved 20 of 21 shots for the Devils as Sexsmith saved 31 of 36 for the Sharks.

DEVILS, page 43

Seeing Stars!

Chris Papoulias

When the Boston Celtics came to the Tsongas Arena for an open practice, I got the chance to speak with some of the players about their thoughts on the upcoming season.

As I sat courtside next to Boston sports reporter, Jackie MacMullan and her children, the Celtics were running team drills with rhythm and finesse. The number of mistakes made could be counted on one hand. There was one instance when Doc had to stop play to tell rookie Lester Hudson, "this is not the *expletive* playground!"

When the team was done practicing, Doc sent the starters out there and had them going up and down the court running various offensive plays. As the team gathered around center court and practice was coming to a close the team put their hands together and chanted in unity "Ubuntu!"

After practice most of the players were gathering their things, icing their knees, and getting ready to head on the team bus.

Paul Pierce, Rajon Rondo, Eddie House, Ray Allen, and Rasheed Wallace were shaking hands and singing autographs for the fans in attendance. The atmosphere after the intense practice was very family friendly as autographed t-shirts were shot into the crowd. Rasheed Wallace was throwing around a football with a member of the Celtics staff.

I asked Eddie House if this is the deepest bench he has ever played with, including the 07 championship bench: "We're expected to be, a lot of guys have something to prove as far as we want to



be the best bench in the NBA.

In order to do that we have to go in there night in and night out and try to prove that with a chip on our shoulder. Because if we are the best bench in the league, it only helps out team that much more."

When asked if there would be an adjustment period for all the new players added, he replied: "We are synched up and ready to go. I mean a couple of guys still have to get their rhythm and the scheme of the offense but other than that I think we're going to be alright."

Don't expect the Celtics to be worried about nagging injuries either, according to Ray Allen: "I've never looked at it from an injury standpoint. The injuries are a part of the game but you don't want to talk about it. Just keep playing hard and get better every day. We're kind of looking for our angle to become a better team." When asked about his own physical health and the depth of this year's team, he said: "I love the way I feel! I'm in a great position

CELTICS, page 41

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GEORGETOWN TODAY

Undocument guests?

Lawrence "Lonnie" Brennan

ATTENTION: We interrupt this column to alert the general public that illegal entry, oops, 'party crashers', oops, I mean, 'undocumented guests' broke into the White House and crashed a party.

Yes, just as it is no longer politically correct to call 12 million illegal aliens "illegal" (just because they broke the law and mostly living off taxpayer subsidies), it is also wrong to call trespassing party crashers anything other than 'undocumented.' And, as Senate candidate (ultra-liberal) Martha Coakley has done all she can to promote and support illegal immigrants (law-breakers), in all that she has done and failed to do (now termed 'undocumented guests' to this country), we too must embrace the 'undocumented guests' at the White House.

Turning back to Georgetown, I'm laughing while another developer's lawyer pontificates \$3 words and illusions to legal threats as he tells the Zoning Board that building a 16 housing complex will not affect the schools, the water, traffic, etc. And, to put the cherry on top, this lawyer implies that his client will do all this work and barely make a nickel.

Where have we heard THIS before??? Answer: on almost every multi-unit development in Town that has hammered the water, electrical, traffic, and school

Did I mention that the developer has a track record thus far of "non-responsiveness" to another town board, and the project has been subject to tens of thousands in environmental fines, etc.? Did I mention how great it was to hear ZBA member Jon Pingree point out a few potential downsides to blindly following this lawyer's recommendations? Very deftly, Mr. Pingree pulled the curtain away from the majestic Oz.

And, it was particularly great to see an audience member note that these 2-bedroom units each come with a "den/office" that could be used as a bedroom, meaning that we could see lots more kids in the schools than the 1 or 2 the lawyer suggests we'll see. It was a priceless show.

So, of course I just had to sniff around to see what else is on the drawing boards around Town. Bottom line (from off-record discussions with members from other boards about current and future projects): expect to see hundreds of more housing units, and with that many hundreds of new future friends and neighbors.

While I think this is fine if managed and staged properly over many, many years, I must ask the bigger questions: when will we build a school addition at the Penn Brook site? When will we add classrooms to the middle/high school?

Moving on, it's time to give thumbs up, yes, with both hands, to embattled and bruised Housing Authority member Ed Kiley for standing up for the senior's maintenance crew! You might not agree with his actions to date regarding other matters (yes, it's been contentious), but in this case, you have to admit Mr. Kiley was recently unrelenting in his defense of funding the maintenance crew, and for that, many are thankful.

Have a wonderful Christmas. As we and many of our neighbors struggle through items of past or present, do what you can to be good, do good, and survive. And, if possible, say a prayer for my bride Dianne, and any woman who was smart enough to have routine mammograms, get detected early, have surgery, and now deal with the scars, radiation treatments, blocker drugs, and ongoing treatments etc...and that's what we in the Brennan clan call lucky!

And finally, the grandkids and I send a very Merry Christmas to my mom, Ruth Brennan. God bless all.



Lawrence "Lonnie" Brennan is a former Georgetown Selectman and is currently Vice-Chair of the Georgetown Republican Town Committee. He can be reached at Lonnie. Brennan@verizon.net.

K9: FROM PAGE 4

prosecute someone that abused a police dog. I told him I didn't think that made any sense and it most certainly wasn't fair.

He agreed it wasn't fair but he also so proudly added " If anyone ever even attempted to assault my dog, my dog bites! That person would have to deal with a few holes in his body, a day in the hospital, and a lot of pain. That is worse than any misdemeanor."

I asked Sgt. Gray for his opinion and his response was he agreed 100% with Dave.

Chapter 272 Section 77A is appalling and is just another example of our political leaders being ignorant to what they are actually signing and putting into place

for laws. I'm a dog walker, I am not an elected official or sit at the State house. I walk dogs up and down Main St, North Andover all day, and I can clearly understand that these two laws are inconsistent, 77A makes absolutely no sense and is not in the best interest of our police K9 and Horse units.

After reading this I am asking all of you to please bring this to the attention of our leaders. I ask you to write a letter to your local congressman and or senator to change Chapter 272: Section 77A Willfully injuring police dogs and horses to a FELONY. Let's help protect the ones that help protect us!



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BOXFORD TOWN MEETING

John McCormack attacked at Town Meeting

Linda Greenstein

The New England Town Meeting should be democracy in its purest form.

It should be a forum for free speech and open discussion of the issues and economic decisions that impact each community.

Yet, on October 27, when John McCormack of Boxford exercised his free speech right and utilized the official process to question voter support and the need for the Community Preservation Act (CPA), he was verbally attacked and lambasted publicly by an elected official.

McCormack admits "to not knowing it all, but I also do a fair amount of research and when I make a presentation at Town Meeting, it is done thoughtfully," he says.

McCormack questioned the need for the CPA (Community Preservation Act) and asked voters to consider that first of all, this was not free money. In fact, a local tax funds the Community Preservation Act and that money has restricted use.

The matching funds from the State of Massachusetts also come with specific restrictions. Further, due to the depression in the real estate market, the level of matching funds from the state is decreasing.

Finally, McCormack presented details on how the money was being spent in Boxford in an effort examine if the taxpayer's money was being spent efficiently. McCormack examined the funds outlaid for the proposed West Commons Housing Project that failed to gain voter approval.

His presentation highlighted tens of thousands of dollars for expenses for a small project that was approved by the **Community Preservation Community** (CPC), but had little general community support.

Selectman Barbara Jessel, a member of the CPC (Community Preservation Committee) at the time of proposed West Commons project, took this opportunity to attack McCormack. "The accusations of half truths," were surprising and disturbing, said McCormack.

"It seems too, " he continued, "when Town officials cannot argue on the facts, they turn to a personal attack. In this case, the attack on me for criticizing the efforts of a town volunteer came from out of left field. Her argument seemed to be that you should not criticize the efforts of Town volunteers simply because they are volunteers."

Some voters saw Jessel's attack on Mc-Cormack as much too personal.

In a letter to the editor printed in several area newspapers William Paisley of Boxford wrote:

"How Mrs. Jessel could take the words of Mr. McCormack and twist them into accusations against Mr. (Haynes Land Advisory Committee Chair, Bill) Brown is beyond all understanding. Her tone and fervor of belittling Mr. McCormack caused an explosion of applause from the floor. I was so taken aback by her behavior and the uproar that I was not able to respond to her allegation at that moment."

Despite the personal attack, McCormack has no plans withdraw from future public comment. He does however, have concerns about the effectiveness of Town Meeting.

The issues voters face at Town Meetings have become increasingly complex over the years. Often voters are asked to vote to spend millions of dollars for projects that will impact the future of their community for decades to come. Many of these projects involve detailed state or federal restrictions, matching funds or approval by multiple community boards from planning to conservation. The Power Point presentations by the pubic officials are usually only superficial explanations of the article and rarely deal with all the future implications," he explained.

"For the average citizen, fully understanding the complex articles can be a real hurdle," said McCormack.

"You see this prepared presentation with graphics, statistics and slides. The presenter on behalf the Town has all the time they need to make their case. That is not true of those who have questions or may oppose an article. In an effort to get through all the necessary articles in the one or two night schedule, public comment and questions can be limited."

Whether you agree with his position or not, it is through the concerted efforts of voters like McCormack that critically important questions are raised about how tax money has been spent and will be spent in the future.

In an age where fewer citizens have the time to attend Town Meetings and even less time to fully research articles prior to voting, the efforts of voters like McCormack should be applauded not belittled.

A freelance writer, Linda Greenstein has worked on staff at a variety of media outlets including WRKO in Boston. Her work has been featured in trade publications, newspapers and magazines ranging from Northshore to Better Homes & Gardens.

HAVERHILL

Teens and seniors talk books

Northern Essex Community College recently hosted a multi-generational book discussion on its Haverhill Campus. Students from Northern Essex's Honors English Composition I course gathered with three Advanced Placement (AP) English classes from Haverhill High School and senior citizens from the college's Life Long Learning Book Group to discuss Sherman Alexie's "Ten Little Indians."

Jessica Dick of Haverhill, who graduated from Central Catholic High School last spring and is now enrolled in the Honors English course at Northern Essex, said the event was a great success. "There were no awkward silences," she said. "Everyone was

engaged and it was interesting to hear how the stories could be interpreted in so many different ways."

Haverhill High School English teacher Jules Kahn was also pleased. "This is exciting. Our high school students learn from the perspectives of college students and senior citizens."



Blowin' in the Wind

John McCormack VALLEY PATRIOT BOXFORD COLLIMNIST

The Boxford Special Town Meeting last October was an easy place to pick up \$7,000 if you had a good story. Article 13's story was the money to be made by installing a municipal wind turbine. Massachusetts offers free site assessments through the Commonwealth Wind Incentive Program. The \$7,000 would "supplement" a wind turbine site assessment study, possibly paying someone to find sites to assess.

This tire kicking could result in a wind turbine installation, very likely on Bayns Hill. But why would Boxford want to backward integrate its electric utility service? Mostly, I think, because the state desires it. Selectman Galarneau, former Finance Committee chair, talked up attractive returns on investment for these projects. Finally, there's the global warming totem.

Sumptuary laws have been used throughout history to prevent common people from affecting the dress and habits of the aristocracy. Today's egalitarian aristocrats deplore the large houses, lots, cars, sprawl, competitiveness and energy of the Western middle class. Labeling energy use an existential threat to the environment yields the moral high ground to those who would drastically curtail the energy use, and therefore the living standards, mobility, and freedom, of ordinary people. Recent revelations of political corruption of climate change research suggest human-caused global warming is a hoax, but its usefulness may keep it politically undead.

That's certainly true in Massachusetts where our hapless governor has jumped aboard the "renewable energy" and "green jobs" bandwagon. Less than two years ago state grants and loans enticed Evergreen Solar to build a solar panel factory in Devens. We had beaten competing proposals from, among others, Mexico. Last month the company announced it was moving the assembly operation to China.

The governor has also announced a 2,000 megawatt state wind power installation goal by 2020. This would require nearly 1,000 large turbines and produce about as much power as one two-unit nuclear power plant. This would provide only 10% of current demand and wouldn't displace any conventional generator capacity since wind power's variability requires conventional peak load generators to fill in the gaps.

You would expect most of these turbines to be in windy locations like mountain tops or offshore. However, a variety of federal and state programs creates incentives to build them nearly anywhere

Renewable energy tends to be much more expensive than conventional energy unless prices are distorted by government subsidies. The neighboring town of Ipswich has been trying to build a wind turbine facility for over five years and recently ordered a 1.5 megawatt unit. The experience is sobering.

Wind power economics begins with wind. Ipswich has areas along the coast and just north of the town center which are theoretically windy enough for economic operation which Boxford does not. The turbine is planned for a town-owned drumlin adjacent to a former landfill (sounds familiar) which is not among the feasibly windy areas. The 2005 feasibility study cites an average wind speed of 5.6 to 5.8 meters per second at the site. This is less than the state recommended minimum of 6 meters per second at a 70 meter altitude.

This average speed was determined by a year of sampling at lower altitudes and extrapolating the results. This requires some guesswork which results in an uncertainty of at least 20% in the result. The study considers three turbine models and makes financial estimates for the project based on two scenarios: a conventional 6% loan and federally subsidized 0% Clean Renewable Energy Bond (CREB) tax credit financing. Five of the six projections lost money and one marginally broke even.

Electric power producers are mandated to produce a growing power percentage from renewable sources. This can be met by purchasing Renewable Energy Credits (REC) from wind turbine operators. Factoring in REC sales makes a modest return on the turbine investment possible.

Efforts to finance the project since 2005 have a checkered history. CREBs are not popular with investors and have limited availability which is biased toward very small projects. Two applications from Ipswich were rejected but a smaller one from the School Department was accepted. This partial financing fell through when the town found no buyers for the CREB bond. Now the town is considering conventional municipal bond financing.

This increased interest cost may be offset by power purchase costs avoided by the town if electric rates rise. In any event Ipswich is looking at an uncertain future and minimal return on its investment.

I expect Boxford to follow the same path. Projects nobody would build are propped up with subsidies. CREBs consume federal tax dollars and RECs are paid by utility customers. Like affordable housing, renewable energy is another expensive utopian fantasy imposed on average citizens. Supposedly for our own good, its real purpose is to remake the world in a form desired by an elite minority.



John is a Boxford resident and was vice president of Lattice Trading and Batterymarch Financial Management. You can email him at jmacprime@yahoo.com

The End of the Village Reporter!

Linda Greenstein

The headline stunned many local readers as they opened their copy of The Village Reporter on September 30. A local and famously independent voice had been silenced. Editors Anna Sobczynski and Faye Raynard announced in a front page story that after 13 years, this would be the paper's final issue.

"Reaction to the loss was immediate and overwhelming. Readers came to the door of our office and wished to express their sorrow," said Sobczynski. "We have had many heartfelt letters praising the papers and its local voice over the years. It has been like the early stages of grief."

Owning and operating a newspaper is not for the faint of heart these days and those that pursue independent community journalism face extreme challenges as local advertising dollars have dried up and a down economy has resulted in advertising cutbacks across the board.

"We never lacked for news," added Sobczynski. "In fact, one the hardest things was deciding what to leave out."

Known for their fiercely independent journalism, Sobczynski and Raynard founded The Village Reporter after working for another paper. They believed that to be a local voice you needed a local presence and established their paper and opened a cozy office in downtown Topsfield where people often stopped by with ideas or just to chat. Over the years, the two editors attended endless meetings in Boxford, Middleton and Topsfield. They reported on plans for new schools, new libraries, new church pastors and became known for their profiles of interesting local people.

"In the beginning we did it all," said Raynard.

"We did the graphics, sales and reporting. We were comfortable with the editorial end of the business, but the rest was a learning experience." The two women did learn and built a respected paper that with the help of a crew of regular columnists and freelance contributors received many awards from the New England Press Association.

While Boxford, Topsfield and Middleton will still be covered by other regional newspapers, it will not be at the same comprehensive level that Sobczynski and Raynard provided with The Village Reporter. Being located in the community, talking with local people everyday whether it be at the bagel shop or at one of town halls while dropping off newspapers, meant that Sobczynski and Raynard had their fingers on the pulse of communities. They were able to pick up the nuances of local life and learn about potential stories firsthand. With local news, it is not often the big political stories that most impact the lives of readers, it may be a retiring teacher, change of owner at coffee shop or the quiet passing of a longtime church members. These are typical of relatively small stories that brought the community to life in the pages of The Village Re-

"We do not want this to be a sad time," commented Sobczynski. "We want to celebrate 13 years of local coverage and thank all people that have shared their stories with us over the years. We are thankful to have been part of the community for such a longtime."

"We now join a growing list of newspapers whose presses have been silenced this year and with it, our reader' voices," wrote Sobczynski and Raynard in their closing editorial."

A freelance writer, Linda Greenstein has worked on staff at a variety of media outlets including WRKO in Boston. Her work has been featured in trade publications, newspapers and magazines ranging from Northshore to Better Homes & Gardens.

DOMINICAN: FROM PAGE 8

portunity.

That opportunity came in 1962, when Juan Bosch, a respected author and exiled opposition leader, returned to the island upon Trujillo's death. Supported by the urban middle class, intellectuals and rural peasants, Bosch was elected president in 1962. He quickly opened a national dialogue about land redistribution, workers rights and democratic reforms, all of which proved too much for the island's ruling families, church leaders, and foreign investors. As a result, Bosch- a legitimately elected president- was deposed in a military coup which led to civil war.

Meanwhile, the Johnson administration was wary of Bosch's populism, which looked to them like Communism, and they feared another Cuba near its shores. The American media framed Bosch as a communist, and in the resulting hysteria, the United States, under the pretext of putting down a communist rebellion, sent

a military invasion force to the island and installed a CIA-backed puppet government headed by Joachim Belaguer. (Until his death in 2001, Bosch insisted that he had never been a Communist.)

That was your tax dollars and mine at work. (I don't know about you, but I would have preferred a tax rebate to an invasion of the Dominican Republic.) Maybe someday we can have a dialogue in this country about our foreign policy which nurtures so many corrupt, brutal dictators, but I doubt it. Maybe we are ourselves becoming another Latin American dictatorship.

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.com. Visit his website at http://
markpalermo.tripod.com

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ON DUGGAN'S NOTEBOOK

LAWRENCE - It has come to my attention that there's a very strong possibility that Our Lady of Good Counsel School on Tower Hill is closing in June. The enrollment is down, the economy has killed the inner city, no one can pay for anything. The alumni have not really stepped up to help out, it's a mess. There's also talk of merging with one of the 3 other local Catholic schools in the area. More to come I'm sure.

DANVERS - December 18 – Jane Ash and Bob Bakst will speak at the North Shore Business Forum, on challenges and opportunities in 2010. The meeting date is December 18, at 7:30am at the Danversport Yacht Club, Rt. 62 East, Danvers, MA. The \$9 admission fee includes a continental breakfast and pre-registration is not required. For more information - (978) 774-0322 – www.nsbforum.org.

MERRIMAC - Cottage Gardens and Merrimac Old Home Days invite you to "catch the holiday spirit."

Throughout the month of December, Cottage Gardens will donate a percentage of their "green" sales to the Merrimac Old Home Days Committee. Please mention Merrimac Old Home Days when making a purchase of the following: roping, wreathes, trees, kissing balls, poinsettias, loose greens, holly, mistletoe and made to order arrangements. Cottage Gardens is located at: 935 Amesbury Rd. in Haverhill. Open 7 days. (978)457-6003. Don't forget to check out their gift shop and baked goods.

BOXFORD - A MESSAGE FROM PUPPYGIRL - This time of year is financially tough for many families ... people are spending money on gifts and traveling to be with loved ones. But, if anyone would truly like to make a difference

and really help, please consider making a donation to One Tail at a Time Rescue. One Tail at a Time is running out of funds because we spent thousands of dollars on

vet bills to help save hundreds of puppies and dogs over the last year and we could use some help from the generous readers of The Valley Patriot. If you would like to donate ANY amount of money (even \$1!) **PLEASE** make it out to One Tail at a Time Rescue and send it to PO Box 155 Boxford,

MA. 01921.

Lawrence Author Kenny Tingle signs copies of his book "The Girl in the Italian Bakery" at Brissonte, 181 Canal Street in Lawrence. Tingle's book is a GREAT read and would make an

exceptional Christmas or Chanukah present!

ber, you really do not know how to play chess until you have lost 500 games.

Time in Amesbury or whatever shelter is

LAWRENCE - The next Lawrence

Chess Club meeting will be Thursday, 17

December

2009 from

6-8pm at

the Law-

Library at

the corner

rence Public

of Lawrence

and Haver-

hill streets.

All ages, all

abilities, all

and all levels

are welcome

to play, learn

and help

teach. As

always, it is

free. If pos-

sible, please

and a chess

set. Remem-

bring a friend

languages

OPEN REHEARSALS - Do you like to sing, dance and perform? Would you like to learn vocal production techniques and presentation skills? Are you longing for applause? If you're looking for the fun and satisfaction of acapella singing, performing Broadway show tunes and popular music of yesterday and today, the Liberty Belle Chorus is for you. Come to a rehearsal any Monday evening at 7 pm in St. Camillus Church hall, 1175 Concord Turnpike (directly off of Rte 2, Exit 57) in Arlington. Isn't it time you heard a little applause? Call: 617.735.9254 or 978.287.4445 Web: http://libertybellechorus.org e-mail: libertybelle.info@yahoo.

METHUEN - DR. FUDGE WEIGHT LOSS - Get a jump on America's number 1 New Year's Resolution-weight loss. Make this be the LAST time it is #1 on your list. Diets do not work. Attend a free overview of the Transitions Lifestyle System. Dr. Deborah Fudge will be doing a free overview at Perrault Chiropractic 76 Woodland St. Methuen, MA. Wed. Dec. 9th at 7pm. Transitions is about healthy low glycemic eating, body fat loss, behavior modification and exercise. Also learn about the new Kids Wellness Program that many pediatricians locally are referring their patients to. Call 978-686-7791 to

reserve a seat. Get healthy for life ... not just an event!!

HAVERHILL - Haverhill Mayor Jim Fiorentini may have just been reelected but he is already looking ahead at the race for governor. Fiorentini called into the Paying Attention Radio Program on WCAP last month and said he is "absolutely" supporting Governor Deval Patrick in his bid for reelection next year. When asked to name one major thing Patrick has accomplished in his three years as governor, he listed a host of projects Patrick has funded in Haverhill but Fiorentini could not name one major, substantive accomplishment Patrick had made in the state. "Well, ethics reform and transportation reform," Fiorentini said when asked of Patrick's accomplishments. But the fact is most people have no idea what that means and Patrick did not accomplish those reforms to any degree of success. Nevertheless, Fiorentini is in the Patrick camp, while Mayor Bill Manzi of Methuen is squarely in the Tim Cahill camp.

LOWELL - On Sunday from 9am to 11am a new kind of radio program hits the air in The Valley. Longtime entrepreneurs Rick Brutti and Dexter Fountain are hosting a business show for entrepreneurs by entrepreneurs on WCAP 980 AM. The show streams live on-line at www.980wcap.com MYOB features business topics such as how to buy or sell a business for the beginner or seasoned veteran, different financing options, and networking ideas. Along with expert guests who will help business owners/ managers and those interested in getting into business navigate the issues concerning business. It offers a great opportunity to showcase local businesses through interviews with local business owners. If you would like to come on the show to talk about your business and services please contact Dexter at 781-533-9463 or Rick at rbrutti@comcast.net

METHUEN, CORRECTION – Last month we had a notebook item that pointed out Lowell City Councilor Kazanjian and outgoing Methuen School Committeeman Kazanjian were brothers. Committeeman Kazanjian in Methuen called us to correct the record as the two men are not related.

LAWRENCE - With Willie Lantigua (da chief) about to take office as the second Dominican mayor in Lawrence's history, the humble and reserved outgoing councilor from District "C" Jorge Gonzalez has made a history of his own. With no fan fair at all, and nobody celebrating a "historical moment" Jorge Gonzalez leaves office on January 4th as the first

Exclusive PuppyGirl Kate Whitney who has now been writing her Puppy Love column for two full years. In that time, PuppyGirl has helped raise money for dog shelters, fostered dozens of homeless puppies and recruited Valley Patriot readers to foster or adopt shelter dogs across the 25 communities we cover. We look forward to a long future of Puppy Love columns and we urge all our readers to help foster or adopt shelter dogs from One Tail at a

SPEAKING OF PUPPYGIRL -

Happy Anniversary to The Valley Patriot's

YE OLDE PEPPER COMPANIE, FRESH CANDY MADE LOCAL!

Crystal Arnott VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

This holiday season America's oldest candy company offers gifts for everyone on your list! With a two kitchens in Lawrence and Salem, MA; Ye Olde Pepper Companie provides only the freshest of chocolates and candies to their North An-

dover and Salem shops, made right in your backyard. Ye Olde Pepper Companie dates back to 1806 when an English woman by the name of Spencer became shipwrecked with her

son in Salem. The small Spencer family struggled to survive and produced their first candy from a barrel of sugar given to her by neighbors. This candy was the "Salem Gibralter", local history says it may be the first commercially produced candy and was made famous all over the globe by sea captains who found port in Salem. You can still find this signature item, in lemon or peppermint flavors, in their shop today!

Over the last 200 years the company has been owned by just three families, with the most current, The Burkinshaw Family, keeping tradition for the last four generations! I was pleased to find the candy store still holds plenty of the old world charm when I visited Ye Olde Pepper Companie North Andover shop this week. Already featured on televisions Food Network and on Phantom Gourmet when I read their praise in O, The Oprah Magazine I decided it was due time to try their Chocolate Turtles for myself! As you walk through the doors, the shops layout invites you right up to the display case where you are met with an array of chocolates to choose from. With their by the pound prices you can mix and match to your delight to go home with a variety that will satiate your

sweet tooth! As I made my

way past prepackaged assortments, I found myself at the sought after Turtles. I found that, not only do the Turtles look delicious, but there are several

variations to choose from! Your choice of nuts comes first; peanut, almond or cashews slathered in caramel and covered in your choice of dark or milk chocolate! In addition to their collection of Turtles, Ye Old Pepper Companie offers a full range of chocolates and candies, including fudge, truffles and their signature Black Jacks; an old fashioned molasses candy which are made by hand using the original recipe from the 1800's! Be sure to stop by Ye Olde Pepper Shoppe this season for all your holiday gifts.

Stop by their shop or order online at www.yeoldepeppercandy.com to choose from chocolate assortments including handmade cherry cordials and a full range of fudge flavors! Holiday gifts of both Christmas and Hanukkah themed chocolates can be ordered for delivery so you're sure to make everyone on your list happy this year!



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The Chanukah lighting celebration will be on the North Andover



Common on **Thursday** December 17th at 7pm.





Students fromtthe Greater Lawrence Technical School had one of the best dishes at the Fesitval of Trees, The Taste of the Festival. See Page 28

ever Ecuadorian elected official in the city. Gonzalez was initially elected to the Lawrence School Committee and in another historical first ascended to the city council a few years later. (Mike Sweeney is the only other School Board member to do that). Gonzalez says that he doesn't mind the lack of recognition that he is the "real minority" on the city council, adding that he is proud to have served all of the people of Lawrence. "I'm proud to be Ecuadorian," Jorge said. "I am proud to be the only person from Ecuador to serve in elected office but I think it's self serving and egotistical to point that out. Everyone comes from somewhere, or their ancestors come from somewhere. Bragging about your genes or where you come from is kind of stupid if you ask me. I would rather brag about what I do or the accomplishments of the city than something I had nothing to do with," he said.

HAVERHILL/ LAWRENCE - Bakery Founder Named to NECC Board of Trustees. Mark Forman of Merrimac, co-founder of the Boston Coffee Cake Company in Ward Hill, has been appointed to the Northern Essex Community College Board of Trustees by Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick. Forman is a longtime supporter of Northern Essex, who serves on the college's Occupational



Advisory Board and has hired the college to provide skills training for his company employees. Boston Coffee Cake Company is a wholesale bakery that supplies frozen baked goods to supermarkets, food service distributors, fundraising organizations, and mail-order accounts throughout the United States. Forman co-founded the

Boston Coffee Cake Company with his brother Bruce with just \$15,000 in 1992. At the time it made 100 coffee cakes a day. Today the company resides in a 40,000 square foot facility that produces 10,000 coffee cakes per shift, employs 40 full-time employees and conducts business with Stop & Shop, Shaw's, Market Basket, Big Y, Shop Rite, Kroger, Costco, and B.J.'s as well as a number of independent markets, hotels, and restaurants.

NORTH ANDOVER - From Friday November 27, 2009 to Sunday December

NOTEBOOK, page 42



Valley Patriot Welcomes Market Basket, Hannaford Shoppers!



Our Voice is Your Voice

If you are picking up the Valley Patriot for the first time at any of our new locations, especially Market Basket, Hannafords or Bog Lots stores we want to welcome you to The Valley Patriot and explain a bit about our mission and what we do.

The Valley Patriot is a monthly paper that prints on the first Wednesday of every month and distributes more than 25,000 papers to 25 communities across the Merrimack Valley.

That's a pretty amazing statistic for us because, we started this newspaper in March of 2004 printing only 2,000 newspapers and distributing them in only four communities.

Most predicted our failure from the start, laughing at our vision and mocking our plan to provide real news and opinions from real people.

But, we were committed to putting together a publication that would honor Veterans in every edition, give a voice to those who felt shut out by other media outlets and report the news as it happens regardless of who is involved.

Unlike the daily newspapers of record, (The Tribune, the Sun, the Boston newspapers) we believe that there should never be "sacred cows" or "favorite sons." No matter who it involves, friend or foe we are committed to telling you what happened and give you the back story other papers conveniently leave on the editing room floor.

Our mission was, and still is (after nearly 6 years) to give our readers a unique opportunity to get the straight scoop from those who are driving the issues in your community without the "standard" creative editing or filtered agenda employed by editorial boards in other newspapers.

Almost all of our writers are freelancers and guest writers. When you their material in the Valley Patriot you know that their reports or opinions are genuine and credible, whether or not you agree with them. We don't edit and we don't censor regardless of the content of the material. That is what free speech is all about.

So, when we say "our voice is your voice" we really mean it. Those who write for the Valley Patriot are not on staff. They are not given "assigned stories" and they are never restricted to particular topics.

Welcome to the Valley Patriot family! We hope you will not only read us every month, but at some point we hope you will write something for us too!

THANK YOU!



PROSPECT HILL-BACK BAY ASSOCIATION! WISHING YOU A VERY HAPPY HOLIDAY SEASON. MAY 2010 BE A BETTER YEAR FOR ALL MY LAWRENCIAN NEIGHBORS!

<u> Jim Vittorioso, Lawrence School Committee District A</u>

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"Good Night, Sleep Tight" with a thoughtful asset allocation plan

Linda Buell, Veronica Calixto,
METHUEN RIVERBANK BRANCH MANAGERS

The economic downturn and ongoing market volatility over the past year has been of great concern to many people as they have seen the value of their assets decline. These concerns have certainly made it more difficult for many of us to sleep well at night. But there's an important lesson to be learned in the midst of this chaos that can and should be applied by individual investors, the value of asset allocation.

Many people think about asset allocation in regards to the stock market and stock picking, but there's much more to it than that. In order to manage your money well you need a thoughtful and knowledgeable approach to asset allocation - dividing and diversifying your dollars among different types of investments,

such as cash, bonds and stocks - helps you to control risk and limit your exposure to weaknesses in any one sector.

Asset allocation helps to match a portfolio with specific financial goals, to reduce the potential volatility of returns and help people feel more confident that they have an active plan in place for their hard earned dollars.

Not all classes of assets move up and down at the same time. One year, stocks of multinational companies may bring the best returns, while in another a bank certificate of deposit or government bonds will perform best. History tells us too that some asset classes are far more volatile than others. They may go from big gains one year to substantial losses the next. For example, in the past 25 years, there have been six periods when the S&P 500 has lost 15% or more. And, over the past 10

years, the S&P 500 has significantly underperformed bank certificates of deposits (CDs) as a form of investment. If you had invested \$10,000 on October 1, 1999 in the S&P 500, ten years later on September 30, 2009 you would have had \$8,241. Likewise, if you had invested \$10,000 in a six-month CD with your local banking institution, and kept rolling it over every six months to a new six-month CD, you would have had \$13,393 on September 30, 2009. This is not to say one should put all of their investments in bank CDs, because the S&P 500 certainly has experienced long periods of good strong returns as well. However, as the above example illustrates, even over the long-term, a portion of your investment portfolio properly invested in bank CDs can lessen your risk while providing both good returns and a

good night's sleep.

What is clear is that no one mix of assets is right for everyone all the time. The allocation that works best for you depends on your time horizon and your risk tolerance:

Time Horizon - This is the expected number of months, years, or even decades you will be investing. An investor with a longer time horizon may feel more comfortable taking on a riskier, or more volatile, investment because he or she can wait out slow economic cycles and the inevitable ups and downs of our markets. In contrast, an investor saving up for the college education of their high school student would probably take on less risk because they have a shorter time horizon.

Risk Tolerance - This is the ability (and willingness) to lose some or all of your original investment in exchange for greater potential returns. An investor with a high-risk tolerance is more likely to risk losing money in order to get better results, while a conservative investor favors investments that will preserve their original capital.

Determining the mix of assets to hold in your portfolio is a very personal one. Investing in a mix of cash, bonds and stocks, (the most common asset categories), can be an effective strategy to help you achieve your financial goals without tossing and turning all night.

Cash - As the recent past has shown, it is prudent to have at least a portion of your assets in a safe, secure, and steady earning account. Cash and cash equivalents like savings deposit accounts, certificates of deposit, treasury bills, money market deposit accounts, and money market funds – all offered by your local banking institution - are the safest

RIVERBANK, page 27

The sandwich generation: caught between duty and goals

Greg Loosigian

The "Sandwich Generation" is the largely unheralded group of adults who find themselves raising and providing for young children while also caring and providing for aging parents. If you are a member of this generation, it might seem like there is no safe or reliable investment to protect your family and address your specific needs. But there are more options than you may realize.

Preparing for the Future

One of the greatest concerns for anyone with the responsibilities of caring for parents, children or spouses is, 'What will happen to them if something happens to me?' Fortunately, there are several precautionary steps you can take. First, it is

important to prepare a will, and to update it as often as circumstances change.

An estate-planning attorney can help you navigate your options. Another prudent step to think about is life insurance, which can be tailored to the needs of you and your family. For instance, a term life policy can provide affordable death benefit protection for a certain period of years. It may also be eligible for conversion to whole life policy at a future date, which can provide financial protection later in life. Additionally, a whole life policy can be borrowed against* as needs arise.

There are some events you can anticipate and plan for, such as your own retirement and your children's education. Caring for an elderly parent, however, can be unpredictable and requires a higher level

of planning. While savings and investment accounts can provide some assistance, so can the right insurance.

Simply put, members of the sandwich generation do not need to go it alone. Term, whole life and long-term care insurance are three strong solutions that can help provide financial protection for their changing needs.

* Loans against your policy accrue interest at the current rate and decrease the cash value and death benefit by the amount of the outstanding loan and interest. Gregory J. Loosigian Financial Service Professional - MA.Licence # 183059 NH # 2017596 - New York Life Insurance Company

Reverse Mortgages – A Professional's Viewpoint

Bob Irving, CSA® VALLEY PATRIOT FINACIAL COLUMNIST

A number of articles about reverse mortgages have appeared in this paper in 2009. Some items mentioned in the articles were not fully explored and may leave readers with a poor impression of this unique loan. A reverse mortgage is not a "bad" product. Loan officers and lenders specializing in this segment of the mortgage industry are not intent upon stealing the family home from Grandma. And contrary to advice from well intentioned but often misinformed sources, reverse mortgages are not the "last resort" of desperate seniors. You would be surprised to learn how many of your neighbors have already quietly and happily completed a reverse mortgage.

Recent stories in Consumer Reports, Parade Magazine and a study from the National Consumer Law Center, Boston trash the reverse mortgage industry and falsely claim that these loans are the next subprime fiasco. Those offering reverse mortgages are tagged as predators poised to target senior homeowners. These particular articles are inflammatory, poorly researched and the so-called study acknowledges contributions from individuals known to have serious conflicts of interest. All of the cases cited are old news. Federal regulations have been in force for some time aimed at preventing the same mistakes from reoccurring. Reverse mortgage articles appearing in The Valley Patriot rehashed these much publicized cases but omitted significant, positive facts about the industry:

1 – Since 1989, more than 500,000 Home Equity Conversion Mortgages (the most popular reverse mortgage and accounting for 90% of industry volume) administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) have been completed. There are 499,994 "good" reverse mortgage loan stories out there but the media are solely focused on the same, tired old 6 cases. Those cases are the exception, not the rule.

2 – AARP and industry sponsored surveys have reported consistent satisfaction rates among reverse mortgage senior borrowers ranging from 93% to 97% over the last few years. No other loan product is so well received. The news stories never mention this critical fact.

3 – Comments made by the Comptroller of the Currency John C. Dugan in June (that started the recent avalanche of bad press) are out of context and Dugan is misquoted in all of the above cited publications. The publications conveniently fail to include his positive comment that "reverse mortgages can provide real benefits". Further, they fail to report the fact that a member of his own family has a reverse mortgage.

4- Congressman Barney Frank (D-MA and Chairman of the Financial Services Committee) is a strong supporter and proponent of the government insured Home Equity Conversion Mortgage (HECM) program administered by HUD and offers rebuttal to those who claim that reverse mortgages could become the next subprime fiasco. His summary, given in specific reference to the Dugan quote, is that this (the next subprime mess) is a completely ridiculous assertion. There is no possible comparison to reverse mortgages, according to Representative Frank.

As one of the nation's leading consumer advocates and an architect of the HECM plan, he should know.

5 – For several years, HUD has worked to tighten regulation of the HECM program in order to prevent repeat of abuses featured in above referenced publications. For example, while the "bad" publicity warns of unscrupulous reverse mortgage lenders cross-selling annuities or other insurance products to seniors, this activity has long since been prohibited and substantial federal penalties have been applied in cases where the practice continued.

6 – At the request of the National Reverse Mortgage Lenders Association (NRMLA is the reverse mortgage industry trade group) HUD and state banking regulators nationwide have been repeatedly asked to report any and all known cases of abuse. According to NRMLA, no cases have been reported to date. But those same few cases from prior years seem to be publicized repeatedly by the press. Bad news, it seems, sells papers and generates grant money.

7 – The SAFE Mortgage Licensing Act of 2008 is another federal government effort to insure that all mortgage loan originators are registered with the Nationwide Mortgage Licensing System (NMLS). Also, mortgage originators who do not represent a depository institution such as a bank, credit union, or savings bank (about 85% of loan originators do not), must complete 20 hours of pre-licensing education and pass a tough national license exam. Individual states (MA and NH included) also require a state specific exam administered separately from the

national exam. Fingerprinting, credit check and criminal background check are also required. The NMLS registry will be opened up to consumers in 2010 so that complaints may be recorded, tracked and individual qualifications may be verified. This will be a major asset to borrowers, enabling them to know more about the loan officer they select.

8 – HECM borrowers must complete a counseling session with an independent FHA certified counselor before a reverse mortgage application may be registered with FHA. Non-borrowing spouses (not on deed) are required to attend and adult children are encouraged. Participants are now required to pass a test administered verbally by the counselor to insure that each has a clear understanding of the loan product. Non-borrowing spouses and even adult children living in the home are required to acknowledge in writing that the reverse mortgage carries consequences that could impact them.

I cannot overstate that there is nothing inherently wrong with a reverse mortgage. As is the case in any industry, it is the people you deal with that make the difference. Second, there are an increasing number of 62+ year old homeowners using reverse mortgages who are certainly not destitute. Some, in fact, might be considered affluent. For many seniors who wish to remain in their home, the reverse mortgage is a useful financial tool if fully understood and used properly.

Work closely with a professional who has specific reverse mortgage training, long experience in the reverse mortgage

MORTGAGES, page 41



Mind, Body & Soul; Health in The Valley

Excessive drinking shrinks your brain and your memory

Dr. Rallie McAllister

Moderate alcohol consumption may be good for your heart, but new research suggests that it doesn't appear to offer the same protective benefits for the brain. While moderate amounts of alcohol don't necessarily help the brain, regularly consuming more than two drinks a day can definitely harm it.

Habitual consumption of more than 14 alcoholic drinks per week actually causes the brain to shrink, according to the results of a study conducted by researchers at Wellesley College in Wellesley, Mass. The scientists found that the more alcohol an individual drinks on a regular basis, the lower his or her total brain volume.

For the study, the Wellesley researchers evaluated brain size and alcohol consumption patterns in more than 1,800 adults between the ages of 34 and 88 years. The subjects were enrolled in the Framingham Offspring Study, which includes children

of the original Framingham Heart Study participants.

Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scans were performed and used to measure brain volume, a relatively reliable indicator of brain aging and health. Compared to those who abstained from alcohol, the subjects who habitually consumed more than 14 drinks per week had a 1.6 percent reduction in brain volume.

Although chronic drinking is detri-

mental to the entire brain, the cells of the hippocampus are especially vulnerable to damage from alcohol. The hippocampus



is a small, curved structure in the brain that is vital to learning and memory formation.

When the structure is surgically removed, a person's ability to store most new experiences in memory is permanently lost. In individuals with advanced, debilitating Alzheimer's dementia, the hippocampus typically is the first brain structure affected, and often the one that is most profoundly damaged by the disease.

In an animal study supported by the

National Institutes of Health, scientists at Scripps Research Institute in San Diego found that chronic alcohol consumption dramatically reduced the number of new brain cells that normally form in the hippocampus.

For the study, rhesus monkeys were allowed to voluntarily consume a sweet-ened beverage containing 6 percent alcohol during one-hour sessions, five days a week for five months. A control group of monkeys had equal access to a similar, alcohol-free beverage.

Analysis of brain tissue revealed that alcohol consumption significantly reduced new brain cell growth and proliferation in the hippocampus.

Compared to the non-drinking monkeys, those consuming alcohol exhibited a 58 percent decrease in the number of new brain cells formed in the hippocampus and a 63 percent reduction in cell survival.

Based on the results of their study, the researchers concluded that chronic alcohol consumption not only causes existing cells of the hippocampus to die off, it also keeps new cells from forming. These findings have important implica-

McAllister, page 22

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M.V. Hospice Welcomes Ariadne Mueller, MD, as Associate Hospice Medical Director

LAWRENCE. – Merrimack Valley Hospice is pleased to announce the addition of Ariadne R. Mueller, MD, to its team

of hospice professionals. Dr. Mueller will be serving as Associate Medical Director to Dr. Jennifer Reidy.

Dr. Mueller earned her medical degree from Drexel University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and completed her Family Medicine Residency at Greater Lawrence Family Health Center.

Prior to joining Merrimack Valley Hospice, Dr. Mueller served as

an attending physician at the Greater Lawrence Family Health Center (GLFHC). In addition to her role at GLFHC, she has served as a faculty member with Lawrence Family Medicine Residency and as a Clinical Associate with Tufts University School of Medicine. Dr. Mueller served as the 2007-2008 Chief Resident at Lawrence Family Medicine Residency.

Her interest in palliative care increased during her rotations with Dr. Jennifer Reidy at Merrimack Valley Hospice.

"At the end of life there is great potential for healing – both physically and emotionally," said Dr. Mueller. "I am also firm believer that self care is especially important for the hospice staff. I look forward to working with the staff and

patients at Merrimack Valley Hospice."
"We are excited to welcome Dr. Ariadne

"We are excited to welcome Dr. Ariadne Mueller to our hospice team," said Joan

> Stygles Hull, RN, MBA, President / CEO of Home Health Foundation, the parent organization for Merrimack Valley Hospice, Home Health VNA and HomeCare, Inc. "Her experience with underserved communities and interest in palliative care make her a natural fit for our agency. Her role as Associate Medical Director will enhance the services Merrimack

Valley Hospice provides to patients and families facing terminal illness."

Dr. Mueller resides in Somerville.

Merrimack Valley Hospice is a notfor-profit agency dedicated to serving
the needs of terminally ill patients and
their families. The agency is affiliated
with Home Health VNA and HomeCare,
Inc. Together, they serve more than 80
communities throughout Northeastern
Massachusetts, the Merrimack Valley and
Southern New Hampshire. The agency
opened the Merrimack Valley Hospice
House in June of 2009.

To learn more about Merrimack Valley Hospice, visit www.merrimackvalleyhospice.org.

A Little Christmas Magic

Terri Crow Mercier VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

Mary, a nursing home resident for the last couple of years, had regular visits from her two adult children. However, these were perhaps, shall we say, empty visits. They had been taking turns, visiting every other weekend for half an hour or so. Feeling it was their duty, they faithfully visited, even though their mom had dementia and her ability to initiate meaningful conversation had dwindled. Both of Mary's children had families of their own, but they were never included in the visits. Their reasoning was that their mother could not remember names or even what she had for lunch yesterday, so what was the point of bringing the children?

One day, just before the Christmas holiday, something beautiful happened that would change their lives forever. Mary's oldest daughter was home baking some holiday goodies with her two young daughters. One of them asked if they could make some special ones for Grandma and bring them to her. "Oh no, Grandma does not understand presents anymore. She will not miss them," their Mother answered. The two young girls pleaded their wish in a way that only children can. "It's Christmas, and everyone deserves a present, please, please," the children begged in a tone of voice that makes it impossible to refuse. Off to Grandmas they went. Afraid that the two young children would not understand that Grandma was no longer the person they remember, and that they might be disappointed, their mother explained Grandma's dementia to them and told them and reminded them to remember to be quiet in the nursing home, for it is not a place for children. She could not have been more

The granddaughters were very much at home in the nursing home setting, pulling off their coats, hats, and mittens, and tossing them aside without a care as to where they fell. They found Grandma sitting in the dayroom with others. She was quiet and seemed lost in her own thoughts. Laughter from the two young girls quickly filled the room. "Grandma, we are here, and we brought you a present," they screamed with excitement. Then it began. One smile, two, three, and before you knew it, the whole room was filled with a warmth that only a child could bring. Grandma looked puzzled and asked, 163 Howe St.

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"Who are you?" The girls simply giggled and replied, "We are your granddaughters, and we brought you a present. Hurry, open it, open it," they begged. So she did. The sweet aroma of the freshly baked molasses cookies filled the room. "This reminds me of baking with my mother," Grandma said. Grandma then went on to tell stories of her childhood. Everyone listened intently. Even her daughter, the one who didn't believe anymore that Mary had anything left to offer, was taken by surprise.

The afternoon visit had flown by with Grandma telling her wonderful stories from years gone past. Grandma hugged and kissed the girls good-bye as they promised to return soon. Mary's daughter found herself with tears streaming down her face as she drove home. When the children asked her what was wrong, she replied, "I am happy because you both just gave Grandma and me the best present ever!"

Now family visits are more frequent and filled with laughter and smiles. Names may still be forgotten, but that incredible feeling you get when you have made a difference in someone's life is abundant.

So when I am asked by family members of our nursing home residents what they can give their loved one for Christmas, I like to share Mary's story. It is truly the little things that seem insignificant that are the most meaningful. Mary was fortunate to have family. Many do not. If you would like to adopt a grandparent the best resource is to connect with your local nursing home activity department. Make it part of your Christmas preparation with your children to write out Christmas cards and drop them off at a nursing home. Some residents never get mail, so you can imagine how special they feel when they are handed a card just for them. It tells them that someone thought of them. Too often people think of nursing homes as places where people go to die. They are so wrong; there is a great deal of living that goes on! Why not join in and be a part of it? The best gift you can give is the gift of yourself.



Director of Activities At Colonial Heights Care and Rehab-where she has worked for many years. You can email Terry at mike3433@msn.com

Methuen

McCALLISTER: From page 21

tions for humans, since shrinkage of the hippocampus is known to coincide with declines in cognitive abilities, such as memory and learning, and can ultimately lead to dementia.

Although the hippocampus typically shrinks with age, the rate at which it becomes smaller differs substantially among individuals. While regular physical activity and continued learning have been shown to enhance the size of the structure, chronic alcohol consumption appears to reduce it.

In the earliest stages, loss of brain volume is associated with temporary, minor lapses in memory, such as forgetting a doctor's appointment or the name of a casual acquaintance, according to the results of a study published in the medical journal Neurology.

The study included 500 adults ages 50 to 85 with no history of dementia. The subjects were asked about their experiences with occasional memory problems, such as having trouble thinking of the right word or forgetting events that had occurred in the previous hours or days.

After evaluating the subjects' brains using MRI scans, researchers found that in individuals with occasional memory

lapses, the hippocampus was measurably smaller than in subjects with no memory problems.

Protecting the hippocampus is especially important for people who have been diagnosed with early Alzheimer's as well as for those who are at high risk for developing the disease. A study conducted by researchers at Oregon Health and Science University in Portland showed that having a large, healthy hippocampus may allow some older adults to compensate for Alzheimer's-related brain changes.

If you're determined to keep your hippocampus healthy and your mind sharp as you grow older, don't stop exercising or learning new things. And if you enjoy drinking alcohol, continue to do so only in moderation.

Rallie McAllister, M.D. is a family physician, author, speaker, and medical director of www.MommyMDGuides. com, a website featuring child-raising tips from trusted doctors who are also moms. To find out more about Rallie McAllister, M.D., and read features by other Creators Syndicate writers and cartoonists, visit the Creators Syndicate Web page at www.creators.com. COPYRIGHT 2009 CREATORS.COM



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Live the WOW!

"And a CHILD Will Lead Them!" Let the Season Bring Out the Child in You Once Again. Wake up to the World around you with Renewed Curiosity, Discovery and Imagination. The very Things that make Life a WOW!

Thomas Connors VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

The Gospel makes it clear that, "a Child will lead them." An amazing reminder that is further strengthened during this Christmas Season when we celebrate the Christ Child's birth. For unto us is born this day ..."

People Living the WOW! know there is even more to that message. They know it's a Curiosity placed within each one of us when we, ourselves, are born. A natural Curiosity that can lead us toward a life of incredible fulfillment if we allow it to.

Take that hidden message to heart. Especially, if you want to really Live the WOW!

Slap yourself on the side of the head to wake up to one of Life's best kept secrets. Let your child-like attributes come back to you each and every day of your life.

As a Child you were simply amazing! You had this natural and casual Curiosity that caused you to look at life with the greatest joy and promise. Then you got older. And the qualities that allowed you to wonder got curtailed and actually forbidden. You were told you needed to, "come back down to earth."

Remember what it was like in school? Sit up. Eyes forward. Hands folded in front of you. Be careful what you say. Avoid making any mistakes. Don't color outside the lines. Speak only when spoken to. The restraints and constraints went on and on. And you became less child-like year by year. All in the name of becoming an "adult".

But something kept nagging at you in-

side. You fought a silent fight within you to justify the WOW! of your childhood.

Walt Disney knew it existed in everyone of us. He lived a lifetime dedicated to satisfying the child in all of us. And the world has admired and loved him for it.

It's Your turn Now! Nurture your own personal Curiosity. Keep the embers of opportunity burning no matter your age or status in life. Let your desire to Live the WOW! be the spark to keep your mind sharp and your thoughts fresh.

Now is the time to force yourself to allow your child-like gifts to come through once again. Let them all hang out. Then enhance those qualities with all you got!

That is why at American Training I constantly reinforce the importance of introducing and encouraging the WOW! Principles among our Colleagues, Guests, Residents and Students. Too many of us have long forgotten how to be Curious, how to Discover and how to put our Imagination to good use.

Think about the road blocks we would encounter if we just focused on a disability or past shortcomings and hurts. Think about the kind of future we would have if we allowed just our past to determine our fate. Think about how uneventful life would be if we never took charge of our thoughts and the possibilities out there.

After thirty years of helping people from all walks of life get ahead, I know it takes so much more than skill, education or background. Even more important is the mind-set our people bring to life. A mind-set that involves Curiosity, Discovery and the greatest of Imagination.

But don't stop there. Take that Curios-

ity and let it lead to Discovery.

Learning to educate yourself to the wonders that your Curiosity led you to gives you proof that your child-like qualities are not only real but effective and promising as well. Being able to know why you think the way you do and what you can do different to get ahead is key to Living the WOW!

Discovery gives you the credibility you need to continue pursuing an amazing Life when things are down. The vital information you accumulate keeps you grounded and focused through those difficult times we all face at one time or another.

Then, Run Wild! Turn to your Imagination to create actual ways of Living the WOW! This is the process that makes it all happen!

Imagine what can be. Letting your Curiosity come out and using Discovery to justify your direction gives your Imagination the foundation to be as creative as possible. Imagination opens you up to a world that is your true place on earth. One that is in harmony with the people, places and things around you. Sure, you may have to tweak it a bit here and there, but it will always feel comfortable because it resonates from deep within you. Sort of a natural state-of-being. Not only where you should be in Life but where you were meant to be.

Find that place where the child in you is right at home. It's the one place where your Curiosity, Discovery and Imagination allow you to be who you want to be.

I remember when my children were about 5 years old. Paige, Tommy, Casey and I would walk or ride our bikes to the end of our street. There we found a small wooded area that gave rise to the "Dragon's Cave". An imaginary place of wonder where we took refuge from the distractions of the real world around us.

The "Dragon's Cave" always represented those child-like qualities that made us feel special and good. It was a world of magic and hope and awe; where Living the WOW! was possible. Even if was for just a few minutes.

As children we always see the best. We are able to escape from the real world and create our own special place that gives us hope and joy and peacefulness. The kinds of things we outwardly search for as adults despite knowing they are right inside us all along.

Let your Curiosity, your urge to Discover and your Imagination power your thoughts and drive your actions to the most purpose-filled Life you ever thought possible. Find your own "Dragon's Cave" to retreat to when you want to let the child in you introduce you to the Majesty and Magnificence of Life when you choose to Live the WOW! It's our Gift of a Lifetime from the One whose birth we are about to celebrate.

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 or by writing to him at Tom Connors, American Training, 102 Glenn Street, Lawrence, MA 01843 © 2009

Survive Holiday Stress: Tips for The Valley

Christy Matta

According to the American Psychological Association stress is on the rise

in America, with nearly half of Americans reporting that stress is having a negative impact on their personal and professional lives. Although the holidays can be a time of joy, they often bring with them additional stressors. The following tips are designed to help you find relaxation during this busy time and to improve how you are thinking or feeling about the moment and the season.

1. Find Meaning in the season. Find or reconnect to a purpose, meaning or

value during the season. Contributing can give a sense of meaning and make you feel good about yourself. Give something to someone else, do volunteer work or do a surprising, thoughtful thing. A few places to contribute or volunteer in the Merrimack Valley include Lazarus House (www.lazarushouse.org), Neighbors in Need (www.neighborsinneed.net), Horizons for Homeless Children (www.horizonsforhomelesschildren.org) or the United Way of Merrimack Valley (www.uwmv.org).

2. Do only One Thing in the moment: Doing just one thing can give you time to settle down in the midst of a frantic or chaotic day or week. Focus your entire attention on what you are doing now. Let go of the mental list making, worrying, and party planning. Put your mind in the present and focus on physical sensations, such as walking. If you have some time, head out to one of the many great places

> to walk in the Merrimack Valley. Lowell-Dracut-Tyngsboro State Forest offers six miles of trails for hiking, cross-country skiing, and snowmobiling and Harold Parker State Forest in Andover, North Andover, North Reading and Middleton has over 35 miles of logging roads and trails and offers quiet seclusion to off-road hikers. You can also do one thing in the moment right at home by focusing on tasks around the house, like washing dishes, listening to music

or decorating.

3. If you're feeling down, do something Opposite to how you feel. Let's face it, if your life isn't perfect the holidays can bring up sadness, regrets and other painful emotions. Change your mood by engaging in activities that are opposite to how you're feeling. Read emotional books, listen to emotional music or go to emotional movies. In the area you might want to get out of the house and see author Anita Diamant at the Andover Bookstore, attend the Holiday Fair and Breakfast with Santa at the Methuen YMCA or take in a movie at Chunkies Cinema in Haverhill.

4. Plan some memorable activities into

SIMPLE WISDOM

The Present

Gail Van Kleeck

T'was the holiday season and as usual I
Was frantically thinking of presents to buy.
I'd been shopping and wrapping and baking like mad,
But I didn't feel peaceful. I didn't feel glad.

My checklist was growing. I couldn't get through. My mind kept inventing one more thing to do. There were parties to go to and people to see. The angel was crooked on top of the tree.

Something was wrong with this beautiful season. I stopped for a moment to search for the reason. And in that silent moment, the reason was clear. I'd forgotten the most precious present this year!

A present so precious, it couldn't be sold. It couldn't be purchased for silver or gold. A present too precious to place on a shelf, One I couldn't give, till I had it myself.

For the present most precious, the present most rare, Is just that...the present, the moments we share. While the things we achieve or collect are fast gone, The love we create in the present lives on.

So if I were dreaming, perhaps what I'd see, Is fewer gifts piled up 'neath your Christmas tree. There'd be simpler meals and tasks that could wait, You'd be there for each other, before it's too late.

And so I wish you and those you hold dear, A present that's loving and a blessed new year.



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



Above left, Matt Siegel of KISS 108 shows off his Valley Patriot at the Methuen Festival of Trees last month. Above right: nationally renowned conmedians gather together for a picture with The Valley Patriot after the Comics Come Home event in Boston last month. Among the comedy legends in this photo are: L-R: Comedians Bill Burr, Kenny Rogerson, Tony V, Denis Leary (Rescue Me), Patrice Oneal, Jimmy Fallon (Saturday Night Live), Whitney Cummings, and Jeffrey Ross.



Patriot, which he uses as a primary source for his lists of who is naughty and who is nice. Local pols beware, Santa Claus is "Paying Attention!"

Students and faculty at the Bruce School in Lawrence were not worried about political correctness or the God haters last month when they held a Christmas shopping fair complete with wreaths, candy canes, Christmas trees, caroling, present exchanges and even an appearance by Santa Claus.

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The "Merry Christmas" sign controversy in North Andover didn't stop the North Andover Fire Department from giving Santa a ride in the annual Christmas parade down Main Street last month.

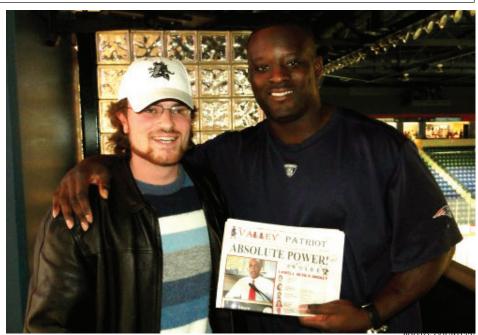




Sandy Martinez of Chelmsford with Dick Morris, Bill Clinton's political consultant, and the media coordinator for Christy Mihos for Governor. Morris held a fund raiser for Mihos at Sal's Riverwalk in Lawrence. At right, Sean and Dennis Corrigan of Boxford and Valley Patriot Boxford Columnist John MacCormack with Christy Mihos candidate for Governor.



Methuen officials were on hand for the Santa parade in Methuen last month. Back Row (I. to r.) Councilors Steve Zanni, Jen Kannan, School Committeeeman Evan Chaisson, Councilor Jeanne Pappalardo, Senator Steve Baddour, former senator Jim Jajuga and Councilor Phil Lahey. Front Row (I. to r) Mayor Bill Manzi, Scott Yim and Madison Aleska and Methuen State Rep. Linda Dean Campbell.



Valley Patriot Sports and Entertainment Reporter Shawn Hansen pals around with Jarvis Green of the New England Patriots at the Paul Tsongas Arena in Lowell. Green was on hand to watch a Lowell Devils game and promote the Jarvis Green Foundation. **See Page 15**



In Memory of

Lawrence Police Officer Kevin Callahan

For those of us who knew and cared about you, time cannot heal the pain nor minimize the loss we feel since you left us. The number of people whose lives you touched and the joy you brought to the world is immeasurable. We miss you and we pray for you.



- The editors of The Valley Patriot

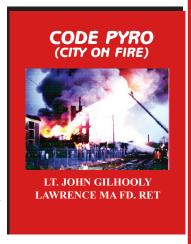
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School Committee "Gang of 3" caught with their hands in the cookie jar!

D.J. Deeb
VALLEY PATRIOT DRACUT COLUMNIST

After having been elected to the Dracut School Committee for just under six months, Bonnie Elie is up to her old tricks once again.

'Backroom Bonnie' Elie has two close political allies on the Dracut School Committee, Mike Miles and Matthew Sheehan. This 'Gang of Three' is successfully using its political leverage to consolidate power, drive out Superintendent Spencer Mullin, engage in political nepotism, bring back former Dracut Schools Superintendent Elaine Espindle, and negotiate backroom deals on the backs of Dracut taxpayers.

In the April 30 edition of The Valley Patriot, I predicted that the election of 'Backroom Bonnie' Elie would prove disastrous for the Town of Dracut.

I hate to say I told you so.

'Backroom Bonnie' Elie and the other members of the 'Gang of Three' (Mike Miles and Matthew Sheehan) are all close friends of former Dracut Selectman Warren Shaw. Although Shaw would not get elected 'Dog Catcher' in the Town of Dracut if that were an elected position and he ran, unfortunately, he is still trying to control the Town of Dracut behind the scenes.

Recent comments that Shaw has made on his WCAP radio program and articles he has written for a competing newspaper reveal this. What is even more unfortunate is that several elected officials in the Town of Dracut lack the intestinal fortitude to stand up to Shaw and not permit themselves to be manipulated.

This includes (you guessed it) Elie, Miles, and Sheehan.

The 'Gang of Three' (Elie, Miles, and Sheehan) is interested in making former Dracut School Committee member Tim Woods a full-time administrator as Athletic Director for Dracut High High School. Currently, Woods teaches a reduced load of two classes (instead of five) and receives a \$9,000 stipend for serving as Athletic Director in addition to his full-time teaching salary.

In attempting to restructure the Athletic Director position into a full-time administrative job to include Vice-Principal at the November 9th meeting, 'Backroom Bonnie' Elie read a prepared statement from a memo she said that she had received.

The memo contained numerous talking points. No one else on the School Committee had the memo. This raises the obvious question, where did the memo come from? Ms. Elie claimed later that she e-mailed the memo to herself. Does she really expect us to believe that? There is speculation that the memo may have even come from Woods himself. The fact remains that Woods and Elie had been close allies when the two served together on the Dracut School Committee several years ago. 'Backroom Bonnie' Elie was so blatantly arrogant and obvious that she prompted fellow committee member Mike McNamara to comment, "I

just perceive that things are happening behind the scenes. I'm a member of the Dracut School Committee. I don't know why I don't have the memo." Committee member Ron Mercier also criticized Elie for trying to reorganize the position and micromanaging the Superintendent. The Committee then voted to take up discussion on the creation of a full-time Athletic Director position at a future meeting.

Are Dracut School Committee members trying to take care of former Dracut School Committee member Tim Woods by making the position of Athletic Director full-time with a substantial raise? It certainly seems so. This was revealed when Miles, a Woods confidente, sung the Athletic Director's praises at the November 9th meeting. The ironic thing about all of this is that just 1 year ago, Committee members Mike Miles and Matthew Sheehan were promoting a warrant article (albeit an illegal one) to prohibit former members of the Dracut School Committee from applying for positions within the school department. It is now obvious to everyone that this was all for political cover. Miles and Sheehan, along with Elie, are now advocating that the part-time stipend position of Athletic Director (currently held by former Dracut School Committee Member Tim Woods) be made into a full-time administrative position. Dracut residents remember that Tim Woods was hired as a teacher and Athletic Director just a few short months after his term expired on the Dracut School Committee after voting to give a 6-year sweetheart deal contract to former Superintendent Elaine Espindle.

On another note, it doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that the behavior and actions of these three committee members likely prompted the decision by Dracut Superintendent Spencer Mullin to retire in March after just a year on the job. It should come as no surprise that Elie and Miles have indicated their desire to bring back former Superintendent Espindle as Interim Superintendent.

Mike Miles showed his true ambitions when at the November 9th meeting he tried to push Superintendent Mullin to retire two months before his announced retirement date in March. It's too bad that Dr. Mullin does not have a strong enough personality to speak out and fight against this 'Gang of Three.' He is too much

of a professional and he has obviously reasoned that at this point in his career he does not need the headaches of a committee that wants to micromanage his every move. Can you blame him for retiring before his contract expires?

The Dracut School Committee should take its time searching for a new Superintendent. The next Superintendent is going to have to deal with a multitude of issues facing Dracut Public Schools in preparation for the visit by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges to determine if Dracut High School will be re-accredited. With the current condition of Dracut's schools, it is highly likely that Dracut High School will not receive accreditation, or at the very least, be placed on probationary warning. In the meantime, why not make Dr. Linda Trouville, the current Curriculum Director, interim Superintendent? She knows the system, has worked as a teacher and administrator in Dracut Public Schools for more than 25 years, is certified, and she has volunteered to fill in while the Dracut School Committee is conducting its search.

The 'Gang of Three' have been caught with their hands in the cookie jar. Unfortunately for the students and taxpayers of Dracut it looks like a return to the "Good Ole Days" of Backroom Deals in Dracut. These were the days of failing MCAS scores, below average SAT scores, high student drop-out rates, constant turnover among staff, and political nepotism at its worst. It sounds like a Warren Shaw field day. With Re-Accreditation of Dracut schools looming next year, Dracut's in for a rough ride and dark days ahead. It will be a miracle if the Town of Dracut does not lose its accreditation as all indicators point to that being the likely scenario.



D.J. Deeb is a member of the Town of Dracut Committee on Government Rules and Regulations. He served as a member of the Dracut School Committee from 2005-2008 and the Greater Lowell Regional Voc-Tech

School Committee from 1997-2009. Deeb is an Adjunct Professor of History/Government at Bunker Hill Community College and an Adjunct Political Science Instructor at the University of Massachusetts Lowell. He teaches Social Studies full-time at Reading Memorial High

Listen to the Paying Attention! Radio Program with Tom Duggan on 980AM, WCAP or www.980wcap.com every Saturday, 10-1pm



The fantastic food of Scolas in Dracut was one of the Valley Patriot Food Critic's favorite dishes at the Methuen Festival of Trees, "Taste of the Festival" on Branch Street Methuen. **We picked the lobster ravioli and eggplant Parm.**

SEE PAGE 28 FOR MORE ON THE TASTE OF THE FESTIVAL

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Yazmin's Happenings

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Bob is a local talent who played at the Manning Manse / Livingstone's for 7 years. He sings from Frank Sinatra to Doo-Wop as well as a mix of the popular favorites and takes requests to please everyone for a fun filled evening of dining and dancing at CAFE MADRID!

White white white

Chelmsford boys on a mission for good with "Toadally Perfect"

Crystal Arnott VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

What happens when two brothers put their heads together to help the com-

munity? The results are Toadally Unexpected! Liam and Aidan Trainor are on a mission to help as many local charities as possible before they each graduate from high school. For their first charity campaign the Trainor Brothers set out to collect 100 pairs of winter pajamas for needy children by the end

of December, but they have far surpassed that goal! Excited about their progress thus far, already at 180 pairs collected, these two boys hope to have collected double their goal by the end of the month.

The donated sleepwear will be distributed to needy families through The Chelmsford Community Exchange Food Pantry and Lowell's House of Hope.

As their first campaign winds down, the boys are already geared up for their next endeavor: a Gift Card Drive for Camp Paul's Extended School Year

and Overnight Program. Chelmsford's

Paul Center provides quality programming for individuals with disabilities and their families. Located in a beautiful natural setting, surrounded by trees, wildlife and

> pond; Camp Paul is a natural place for students to thrive. As non-profit organization, funding for Camp Paul is tight. The Trainor boys hope that their Gift Card drive can help the teachers worry less about where their supplies are coming from and spend more time on what's important; their students.

Liam and Aidan invite you to make donations of gift cards in any denomination to Walmart, Target, Craft Stores or Teachers Supply Stores. Want to help but can't get to the store for gift cards? The

> Paul Center is always in need of school and arts supplies, so clean out your playroom and donate all those unopened boxes of crayons and extra construction paper that are hanging around.

> For more information on donating to this and upcoming campaigns by The Trainor Boys, visit their website at www.

toadallyunexpected.com.



Rendering of the new Tupelo Music Hall in Salisbury

DECEMBER 2009 CONCERT SCHEDULE

Saturday, December 12, 8pm – DE **SOL** Reserved table seating; tickets \$25.

deSoL, rock, pop and Latin-influenced Jersey rockers, have toured the country from Asbury Park to Beverly Hills, stirring audiences with their breezy rhythms. USA today says "by the second chorus you'll want to join in." The six-piece band, whose CD "On My Way" rocked the country in 2006, has shared marquees with artists such as R.E.M. and Los Lonely Boys. deSoL was founded on and continues to create its own unique mix of Latin rhythms and rock music styles.

Friday, December 18, 8pm - JOHN-NY WINTER Reserved table seating; tickets \$45 / \$50.

The tradition of the Texas guitar slinger lives on: a gutsy school of blues playing marked by thick tones, aggressive attack and tons of technique all delivered in a flamboyant, swaggering style that is endemic to the Lone Star State. For over 30 years, Johnny Winter has been a guitar hero without equal, laying out a blueprint for his fresh take on classic blues. Shifting between simple country blues to all-out electric slide guitar blues, he is one of the most respected singers and guitar players

Saturday, December 19, 7pm - RE-**CYCLED PERCUSSION Reserved** table seating; tickets \$25.

Fresh from NBC's "America's Got Talent" season 4 this past fall where they finished in third place comes New Hampshire-based Recycled Percussion. For the past 10 years, these four young men have been creating their unique style of music with just about anything they can get their hands on--like ladders, buckets, trash cans and even metal grinders! This high-energy group is determined to inspire a drug-free youth to watch the amazing things you can do when you put your mind to it. A great family show!

Wednesday, December 30, 8pm -**ASSEMBLY OF DUST Reserved table** seating; tickets \$20/\$25/\$30.

Thursday, December 31, 8pm – AS-SEMBLY OF DUST Reserved table seating; tickets \$20 / \$25 / \$30.

Assembly of Dust brings their "voltaic, raw live performances" to Tupelo as part of their 'Some Assembly Required' critically lauded new album tour. Featuring an inspired, inventive and spirited version of American rock and roots music, the band's new album contains the strongest collection of songs created to-date. Each expertly crafted tune is illuminated by a stellar lineup of guest musicians who lend their considerable talents to the band's skillful compositions.

About Tupelo Music Hall - The first and original Tupelo Music Hall Located in Londonderry, NH, is an award-winning music venue is known for presenting nationally recognized performers in an intimate setting. Showcasing bands and solo acts from today, as well as artists and musicians from the past who maintain a dedicated fan base, Tupelo's success is based on catering to discriminating adults and baby boomers ranging in age from their 30's through their 60's. Tupelo Music Hall Salisbury will present artists in a wide range of genres, from rock and R&B, to jazz and country. Comedy shows and children's entertainers will also be featured.

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Everybody

RIVERBANK: FROM PAGE 20

investments and can actually out perform other investment classes during difficult

Bonds - Bonds are generally less volatile than stocks but offer more modest returns. If you're approaching a financial goal such as retirement, you might increase your bond holdings relative to your stock holdings because of their reduced risk. There are also certain categories of bonds that offer high returns similar to stocks. But these bonds, called high-yield or junk bonds, do carry higher risk. One must remember that the price of a bond typically moves in the opposite direction of interest rates. This means that the price of a bond may decline when interest rates increase, putting your principle at some

Stocks - Stocks have historically experienced greater risk and greater potential for return. But the volatility of stocks makes them a risky investment in the short term. As we have seen in the recent past, sometimes the losses they incur can be extremely dramatic and painful. Investors that have been willing to ride out the

volatile returns of stocks over long periods of time generally have been rewarded with better returns. For those who remember the stock market crash of 1987, the market peaked in August 1987 with the S&P 500 at 336.77. In the course of less than two months it lost one-third of its value. However, over 22 years later, it closed on December 1, 2009 at 1,108.86.

Before embarking on an asset allocation plan or making any new investments, you should understand the risks and ensure they are appropriate for your situation. Finding the right mix of assets to achieve the best return for your risk tolerance while maintaining adequate diversification can be challenging. With that in mind, you may want to consider asking a financial professional to help you determine your initial asset allocation and suggest adjustments for the future.

Linda Buell, is the Vice President and Methuen Branch Manager for RiverBank, Veronica Calixto is Vice President and West Methuen Branch Manager of River-



Top left photo: Michael Grant, pastry chef and owner of Andover Cakes with a Chocolate replica of the Tewksbury Country Club. Bottom left photo: Left to right; Matt Siegel from Kiss 108, Mike Asmor, owner of Shadi's Restaurant in Methuen, Joe Chadid from the Lawrence Aiport and Billy Costa from Kiss 108. Photo on right: Santa came a little early this year for The Eagle Tribune. Under the tree, he left a stuffed bear with an Eagle Tribune Logo on the tee shirt, some chocolate and the November edition of The Valley Patriot. Trib. editor Al White is no longer talking to Santa.

Kiss 108 jockeys celebrate Festival of Trees in Methuen

Paula Porten

VALLEY PATRIOT WINE & FOOD COLUMNIST

The Festival of Trees is a beautiful yearly event held in Methuen and this year it was even more delicious with the Taste of the Festival.

This was the first year the Festival of Trees hosted the Taste of the Festival, which kicked off this year's Festival of Trees with wonderful food from more than 20 local restaurants.

Several hundred guests were treated with rice balls from Borrelli's Deli, ribs and crab cakes from Boxwood Grill at the Merrimack Valley Golf Club, wild mushroom ravioli from Celebrations in Beverly, chowda from Joe Fish and much, much more.

Matt Siegel and Billy Costa from the

"Matty in the Morning Show" on Kiss108 entertained the guests and called out winners of the raffles throughout the event.

Some of The Valley Patriot's favorite dishes were; a chicken marsala from the Original Cage in Methuen, a spicy sausage pasta dish from Salvarore's Restaurant in Lawrence, and the eggplant parmigiana and lobster ravioli from Scola's in Dracut.

There was so much food and after everyone enjoyed the myriad of tasty dishes available, patrons were able to go into the hall and enjoy the beautiful and creative Christmas tree display.

There were almost two hundred custom made or designed Christmas trees donated from local businesses, politicians and families all decorated with different themes.

Some of the favorites were the sports

trees decorated with memorabelia, the animal trees with doggie treats and the like, and the traditional Christmas themed trees.

The tree entitled "Rejoice" by Mayor Sharon Pollard and Tom Lussier was Kiss 108 Matt Siegel's favorite. But, Mavor Bill Manzi's favorite was the Eagle Tribune's tree "The Power of Print" with a copy of The Valley Patriot under it. I guess Santa came early and he also has a great sense of humor.

Anyone could buy a raffle ticket with a chance to win one of the donated trees. The event was well attended and everyone enjoyed the delicious food and the beauti-

The Festival of Trees Committee did a lot of hard work to make this a successful event for the 16th consecutive year in Methuen. The monies raised from this event goes toward historic preservation for Methuen. Some of the restoration projects include grants to the Methuen Memorial Music Hall, the ongoing Searles and Tenney Wall restoration projects, and North Andover's Stevens Library.

> Paula Porten is an attorney at the Tarshi Law Office in Lawrence and a former member of the North Andover Finance Committee. If you have a news tip or would like to sponsor

Paula's wine column, please email her at paulalporten@aol.com



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North Andover's Wine ConneXtion: incredibly low prices

Richard Auffrey THE PASSIONATE FOODIE

With the holidays approaching, it is a time when many of us are buying extra bottles of wine and seeking bargains. Though even when the holidays end, we will still want bargains. There is now a new local wine store to buy wine, a place where you will find incredible values and where you should stock up.

At the end of October, The Wine ConneXtion opened in North Andover. I have visited many local wine stores, including in New Hampshire, and Wine ConneXtion has some of the lowest prices you will find almost anywhere, even considering the Massachusetts alcohol tax.

Wine ConneXtion is run by Wine Director Sam Messina and Business Manager Tina Messina (Sam's sister). Sam has over 30 years of experience in the industry and Tina has over 20 years. So they are not

newcomers to the wine world. They bring with them lengthy experience and plenty of knowledge.

I got to meet both of them and chatted at some length with Sam. He was very personable, down to earth and showed that passion for wine which I always seek. He is definitely not a wine snob and is very open to suggestions and constructive criticism. The store is a work in progress, which will grow and develop over the next few months.

The store presents a warehouse atmosphere, most of the wines displayed in cardboard boxes rather than fancy wooden shelves. This no-frills ambiance gives the impression that this is a place for bargains and that is exactly what you will find

But low prices alone do not carry the day for consumers. So what else does the store have to offer? First, they carry about 700 different wines, a fairly diverse selection of wines from all over the world. Wine lovers will recognize most of

WINECONNECTION the labels but they will add some more unique and

esoteric wines in the future. With all those wines, there is sure to be something to cater to all tastes. Second, the wines are not close outs or

bin ends. They are the current vintages of all of the wines. Though once a wine is sold out, they may or may not be able to obtain it again. This means you are getting the newest wines on the market.

Each wine is accompanied by a descriptive sheet, which includes information on Drinkability and Food Pairings. That is a good idea and should help the average consumer looking to buy wine, especially if they want to pair something with dinner. Plus, the staff is available to answer your wines questions as well.

Wine ConneXtion even has a small, enclosed room for their most expensive wines, from Opus One to Cristal, And even these wines are significantly dis-

counted. No matter how much you want to spend at this store, you will find wines to match your budget. There are plenty of bottles priced under \$10, as well as a few priced over

\$100. And if you do not see the wine you want, they might be able to special order it for you, with a similar discount.

Besides wine, the store also sells several, excellent Japanese Sakés. In the future, they will add some unique and high-end spirits though they will not carry beer. Plus, their wine selection will change regularly, with new wines being added all the time.

The store accomplishes what it has intended to do, to be a customer-friendly place with excellent values. And as they institute some changes in the near future. it should become an even better place for wine lovers. I highly recommend that you check it out.

Wine ConneXtion, 117 Main Street, North Andover, MA, Phone: 877-469-5025, www.wineconnextion.com. Richard Auffrey - The Passionate Foodie -http:// passionatefoodie.blogspot.com









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30 The Valley Patriot Y_{OUNG} People December - 2009

Teen musician to play free holiday concert for kids of Lawrence

The holiday season has arrived and one young New England teenager is on a mission to spread goodwill and cheer. Salem New Hampshire's Tiffany Johnson, an eighteen-year-old singer/songwriter, will perform a Holiday Concert at the Lawrence High School's Performing Arts Center on December 17th at 10am.

The audience will be full of twelve hundred first, second and third graders from across the city. The event will mark the fifth consecutive year that Miss Johnson has performed a holiday show for the children of Lawrence. In past years the event has been held at the Lawrence's Parthum School. But at the request of Mayor Michael

Tiffany says "I love to make music and I love to perform. I feel that it is important to give back and to be able to do so with my music is beyond cool. I feel blessed to have had the opportunity to make these kids smile."

Sullivan the show was moved to a larger

venue so more children could attend.

The charity event is produced by Beverly Massachusetts, Illumina Concert Events, a national event production company. Illumina President Ronald Bellanti, a Lawrence native and a graduate of Lawrence High School, says, "This year is going to be amazing. The show will be bigger and better than ever before. Whenever I am in Lawrence kids always stop me in the street to tell me how much they loved the last show. I am happy that we can include more kids this year"

While the event is being held at a

local high school the show and the production are on par with a national arena concert. The band includes Marty Walsh, an instructor of the Berklee College of Music and other nationally known studio musicians. Mr. Walsh has recorded

> and performed with the likes of Supertramp, Donna Summer, and LeAnn Rimes. "It is quite an event to perform at. The holiday spirit is just insane. These kids scream like

its Beatlemania they are so excite says Walsh.

Bellanti originally conceived the concerts when he noticed that the children in his hometown were often passed over for these sorts of shows. "Lets face it

Lawrence has some problems and one of them is they don't have a lot of money. But I don't think should have to be a rich kid to be exposed to music and to see that people care about you. Tiffany Johnson does much more than sings songs to these children. She creates hope. She shows them that they can achieve their dreams"

This event will be taking place December 17th, 2009 at 10AM at the Performing Arts Center at Lawrence High School, 70-71 N Parish Rd, Lawrence, MA 01843-2914.

For additional information contact Nicole Van Eden at 603-703-4488.

Nicole Van Eden -Vice President/Public Relations -1loudstreet/Illumina Records & Promotions. (978) 922-5015 or email at niki@1loudstreet.com, www.1loudstreet. com, Saving Lives One Song at a Time...

Kid Corner with Morgan Cotnoir

Christmas Is...



To some, Christmas is a time of cheer. To others, a time to be with family. Soldiers who have fought for us come home to open arms.

People with diseases and problems find hope. And most importantly, the heavenly day when Jesus Christ was born. Most people get distracted with all the presents and excitement, that they forget the true meaning of Christmas. Every Christmas morning, I would wake up and pray. I pray that all the people in my family that have passed away have a wonderful Christmas with God in heaven. To remember to pray, I'd put a reminder on the white board in my room. Then, as most families do, I open presents I have gotten from Santa Clause. After,

I'd go to my grandparent's house for dinner. Then to my other grandparent's house for some dessert. It's so much fun to see my family. Especially my cousins. (I love to see my smallest cousin, Emma. She's so cute and there is a new one on the way!)

My family is very comforting, smart, and most importantly; loving. They always cheer me up. And they're at their best on holidays. (Especially on Christmas)

There is something about Christmas that makes you most happy. Maybe it's the snow that falls. Maybe it's the feeling of being comforted. They're all good responses. But are they right? And so, this Christmas, make sure you ask yourself "What is Christmas?" You'd be surprised at where it can take you!

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Stay At Home Dads

An At-Home Dad's Guide to Nighttime...

Stay-at-Home Dad

Pete Baylies

When your wife comes home you want the evening to go smoothly and you might actually get to enjoy each others' company for a few minutes.

One way to do this is by simplifying the

dinner-making process. When my wife cooks a meal she really goes nuts, she's got mashed potatoes on one burner, broccoli on another, a roast cooking in the oven than biscuits to follow and at the same time she's cutting all the veggies to make a salad.

The preparation time can take an hour or longer. Then when the kids finish the 10 minute chore of dumping the part that doesn't make it into their mouths onto the floor,

you've got another hour to do the clean up. If you have been cooking these fourcourse meals to prove to your wife and to the world that you can do this too, well then stop.

The key to making this part of your day easier is by cooking one massive meal earlier in that week that will provide you with days of leftovers. For example, you can eliminate some of the dinner prep and cleanup by making 10 lasagna, chili, spaghetti, or stew dinners and keeping them in the freezer for quick microwave heating.

This way you get the convenience of eating out without the costs. To do this, you can make Sunday evening a family cooking evening and all of you can cook a ton of food for the rest of the week—thus creating quality family time, while saving the more valuable weeknight time to just get your daily routines done.

Another thing you can do to make both of your lives' easier is establishing a bedtime routine. Kids basically hate to go to bed and will establish their own stalling routine to avoid it. The good news is that kids love routines that are established and adhered to. Let's say you have kids who take water breaks, last minute snacks, TV and achieving Mario Brothers levels in order to gain extra minutes of the day.

The only way to get them to sleep without playing for time is to trick them with your own hypnosis routine. It's pretty simple and you can actually do this cold turkey starting tonight. About an hour before bedtime we like to have bath time or at least have them put on their PJs. This

gives them fair warning and will slow them down a little. Now they have a whole hour start to think about bedtime. Then about ½ hour before bedtime we have them just lay in bed and read, which will put them into a bedtime mode.

By the time its lights out, we find that they are pretty calm and they drift off pretty quickly. At first they may complain but once they get the message that you will not waver in this routine, they will eventually follow the past

of least resistance and go with it.

Now I want to say a few words about what working moms can do to help your husbands and yourselves through this transitional time. There are a number of ways that working moms can alleviate the stress on their at-home husbands.

The first thing is to communicate your work schedule and do your best to stick to it. Simply not knowing when your wife will be home can throw off your entire night schedule, as you never know when to prepare supper. Charles Allen of Dallas, TX, came up with a good solution.

"I wanted her to get home close to when I am expecting her. This way I can plan my life outside of my time alone with my child and I can plan how to pace my kid's energy level during the day.

This frustrating situation was resolved when she got her cell phone and I talked her into using it to call me if she was going to be later then expected."



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

aol.com for more information.

Ad campaign at Wood Hill Middle School gets parents and kids talking about drugs and drinking.

14-year old Hemang Kaul became a role model in his school when he was selected as one of ten kids from Massachusetts to be featured in a poster. The poster shows Hemang playing soccer and encourages students to do the activities that they love and to avoid alcohol and other drugs. The experience of trying out to appear in the poster really made Hemang think about his future. "I didn't realize how much I didn't like the idea of using drugs," said Hemang. "Getting ready for the casting interview made me think about everything I like to do and how it would be wasted by doing drugs."

The poster is part of the "Picture Yourself: Alcohol and Drug Free" campaign, an innovative pilot prevention program sponsored by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health that aims to prevent alcohol and drug use among youth. The campaign brings messages developed together with local teens directly into five selected public schools across Massachusetts.

Last spring, when Hemang was in 8th

grade, he responded to a casting call by filling out an entry form and being interviewed. That process got Hemang and his dad talking about alcohol and other drugs. "It opened up conversations about the kind of things NOT to get into," said Hemang.

Hemang's father Sanjay, an engineer, is proud that his son is doing his part to make the world a better place. "I tell Hemang to follow the example of good people around him, and to see what they have done to uplift society."

Research shows that youth who are involved in activities are less likely to start drinking and doing other drugs. Parents play a key role in encouraging their children to pursue their interests and talking about the health risks of drinking and doing other drugs.

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





Mayor names Kate Zehnter November Artist of the Month

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

Mayor William M. Manzi has named Kate Zehnter as November's Artist of the Month. Kate has been an art educator and visual artist since graduating from Massachusetts College of Art in Boston, MA. The hard-edge oil narrative paintings with complimentary colors that emerged after attending college have been transformed since then into soft translucent multilayered acrylic paintings that represent light, passage of time and space. Examples of her new painting style with translucent images that appear and disappear as the viewer moves, are on display in the Mayor's office at the Searles Building.

Kate has always been passionate about the importance of art and uses her teaching and artistic skills to teach Color and Design at Northern Essex Community College. The desire to make art has always been an important part of her life. In the 1980s, she concentrated her creative energy in fiber art specifically a joining

technique known as Twining. Her oneperson show of wearable art at the Whistler House Museum in Lowell, MA was a success. However, the desire to paint was ever present and while she continued to explore other mediums she always returned to her first art passion painting.

The Kate's Imagery art web site http:// www.katesimagery.com showcases all her mediums and artistic skills. On this web site one will see mini-tapestries, which push the boundaries of accepted crewelwork using thread as her paint to create a unique narrative image of scenes from her experiences while traveling.

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



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RONNIE'S RANTS

Random Thoughts

Ronnie Ford

Kenny Henrick has done so much for so many. from sitting in as the Veteran's Affairs Officer, with no reimbursement, to gathering food and necessities for those people who need it. I can recite a litany of what we would call good deeds that Kenny has done for many people who need help, without any monetary or other consideration. Ken believes that is what his Creator would want him to do. He takes care of others with great gusto! He asks for nothing in return. Fortunately or unfortunately, depending on how you look at it, this spills over to his friendships with certain people. He is an emotional person as some of us are, and his feelings are often times displayed openly. He has a hard time hurting people; that is good! He has an easy time helping people; that is good! Now that the controversy over the Methuen School Board is over, George Kazanjian is a good person and he is a hard worker. That is what Henrick thinks

Elections are history, and from now on it is no longer Willy Lantigua (da chief), it is Willy Lantigua (da King). Be careful Willy, the whole world is watching. Get it "Todo El Mundo". Mayor elect Lantigua has displayed some courage with his stand on pro life and other moral issues. We wish him good luck in running the City of Lawrence.

and so do I. Please don't sweat the small

At this time of year, a time of giving, wouldn't it be wonderful if we did this all year, instead a few weeks around Christmas time? Helping those less fortunate should be a year round duty. United States Congressmen and women, United States Senators, State Senators and Representatives, start doing what you were elected to do. Do the peoples business, start proposing bills that are going to help the multitudes. How about the seniors who are getting belted all around. Medicare is increasing as are prescriptions, food, gas, no cost of living raises. Yet you voted yourselves a hefty increase while asking us to offer it up! We, who have paid our dues over and over. Start legislating the right way instead of feathering your own nests. I am very serious, in two years you can easily be Fired!

With another thanksgiving under our belts (literally) we look forward to the Christmas celebration. In the dictionary, Christmas is a holiday celebrated by Christians as the anniversary of Jesus Christ's birth. You would never know it now with Christmas trees being renamed holiday trees, and banished from public view and schools, as are the Nativity scene and the Menorah, that dare to be put upon public property. Yet, our nation was founded on Judaeo-Christian beliefs, which are the fundamental basis for both our legal and moral values.

The Ten Commandments are written on the Supreme court building. This change was brought about by a minority of non-believers who are offended by these displays. They were enabled by very liberal judges. We have to be politically correct now! Ha! Yet we retain some of the customs that belong to Christmas, the Christmas wreath, which signifies that Christ has no beginning or no end. The Christmas lights and candles that remind us that Christ is the Light of the world. Some retail business's demand that their employees say happy holidays instead of Merry Christmas. That is PC of course! I am waiting until they start on Santa Claus! After all Santa is the personification of the spirit of Christmas, usually represented by a jolly fat man with a white beard and a red suit. Santa was originated by a long ago Bishop from an early century; now named St Nicholas.

According to legend, he used to throw purses of gold to the young maidens to use as their dowries. This in turn led to children leaving their wooden shoes outside their doors for goodies left by St. Nick. OK you liberal politically correct people, take on the children! Try taking Santa Claus! Lets start saying Merry Christmas again and stop this happy holiday garbage.

Let the Menorah light brightly wherever they want in No Andover. Wake up America! Stand up and fight for our real lives and traditions. For you who are offended by all this tough! If you do not like it leave our country.

These customs were here before you came here. If you were born here, SHAME ON YOU. MERRY CHRIST-MAS, HAPPY CHANUKAH, HAPPY QUANSA, show the CRESCENT, and any other respect for our HIGHER POWER. when THESE ULTRA LIBER-ALS COME UP FOR ELECTION OR RE-ELECTION, VOTE THEM OUT! **MERRY CHRISTMAS!**

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



Ronnie Ford is a Methuen resident, the former host of the "Hot Line" radio program, a former Methuen police officer and a former member of the Methuen school committee and city council. You can email

The Merrimack Valley Irish Connection

Irish Lore's and Cures

Jack Doyle, County Sligo VALLEY PATRIOT GUEST COLUMNIST

While spending time with the folks in the "Gleann and Lough Bo" areas I was given a book, (In The Shadow Of Carran Hill) that was written in 1997 by the locals that tell stories of the past and also of growing-up in this historical area.

I have copied some of the "cures" that was used to fight the different ailments that would invade the these strong willed people for your reading enjoyment. I suggest you not try these remedies.

- * To cure whooping cough, food or milk left behind by a ferret is given to the person with the cough (this is still being used as a cure to this day). Also, Children were put under the legs of an ass foal that has never been ridden on in order to obtain the
- * To cure a pain in the back one should crawl out under a rock that had an opening in it and say a prayer. Another cure for this ailment was to remove some clay from a "holy well" and leave it under your mattress, thus giving relief.
- * To cure toothache put a frog under a heavy pot and whenever it dies, the pain is gone. Another cure is rub the finger around the gums of a person and this get rid of the pain.
- * To cure headache pain, crush an onion and place it on your forehead and the pain will go away.
- * It is said that a child that is born after his fathers death has the cure for the foulmouth (thrush). The child blows his breath on the person's mouth and they are cured.
- * The cure for heart fever, (a term used to describe someone with general heart problems).was dealt with a person who has this cure. He places a cup of oatmeal on the persons heart, blesses it and later bakes it into three cakes. The sick person must eat a bit off each of the three cakes

- and burn the rest. The person must come three times to have this remedy performed and the cure comes on Mondays and
- * If a person has a wart, and they take water from a whole in a rock, and then wash wart with this water, they will be
- * For coughs and headaches a tea made from mountain age will cure them.
- * The fat from a goose cooked at Christmas is a cure from rheumatism.
- * If an animal was 'elf shot' (an animal immobilized or made sick by the fairy fold) He would say some prayers and applied water from the ditch on the animal.

I don't know if any of these remedies cure anything. I do know that they are still in use today. My friend brought her son to a "healer" to have ringworm that was on his back removed. A preparation of different herbs or what ever the healer put together, was placed on the infected area and was told to leave on for three days. After the third day, the ringworm was

The Irish are well known for their outrageous stories, some are true but the majority of them are passed down from generation to generation, thus the little fib that was told long ago has expanded into a full length movie. Sometime I will right about the "we" people. Support "Jacks Irish Craic" by buying ad space from the Valley Patriot.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all.



Jack Doyle is an author and has published two books: Echoes of My Past, and Medjugorge, Heaven on Earth. To sponsor Jack's Irish Craic' in The Valley Patriot contact: Jack5772@comcast.net

NOVEMBER GRAND OPENINGS IN METHUEN

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Congratulations to Deborah Ingalls, the owner of Butlers and Bars, who opened a new location at 19 Hampshire Street in Downtown Methuen last month. Mayor Manzi was on hand to witness the grand opening and posted this photo on his blog.



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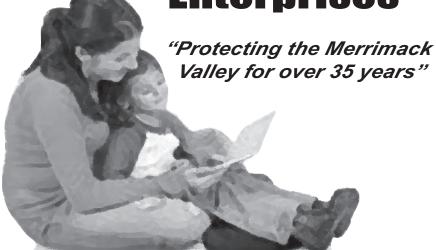
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Black Friday at Best Buy in Salem, NH A brand new experience

Dawn Rattelade-Brantmuller

VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

My first time was great, but a little rough at times... Obviously, I am making a reference to my adventure at Best Buy for the best deal with the Black Friday Sale.

Black Friday is what retailers and the media call the day after Thanksgiving as it is supposed to be the best shopping day of the year.

I was amazed with how early some people were willing to camp out at the store before the sale.

I was driving home after Thanksgiving Dinner and I found that there were people already camped out in their tents in front of the store on Rt. 28. So, I went home got my tent, sleeping bag and a bottle of water and off I went.

I met some brave and interesting people looking to save a buck. They were in great spirits, excited about the bargains and shared their strategies about what they were going to buy.

They were also willing to share their tents and food for anyone who needed it.

Many of us brought tents to brave the weather. Many of us shared tarps and formed a "Bargain Alliance" as the night went on and the line grew longer and

When morning arrived, the line was around the building and we started to break down our tents to get ready to enter the building. Mind you, we were there since "yesterday".

Well, people started pulling up in their warm cars and showed all of us (whom had been there since the day before) that they did not care and took their places cutting the line as they saw fit.

We told them not to cut in and informed them that we'd been waiting there all night as they pretended that they did not understand our words. So, we decided to call in the police officer who was standing not too far away from us.

There were people there who made it look like they knew nothing of the English language until the Police Officer spoke.

Some tried to go a bit further back and cut the people behind me, some went to the end of the line and some had no respect for anyone around them and got belligerent, deciding that swearing at us and being loud and belligerent was the best way to go.

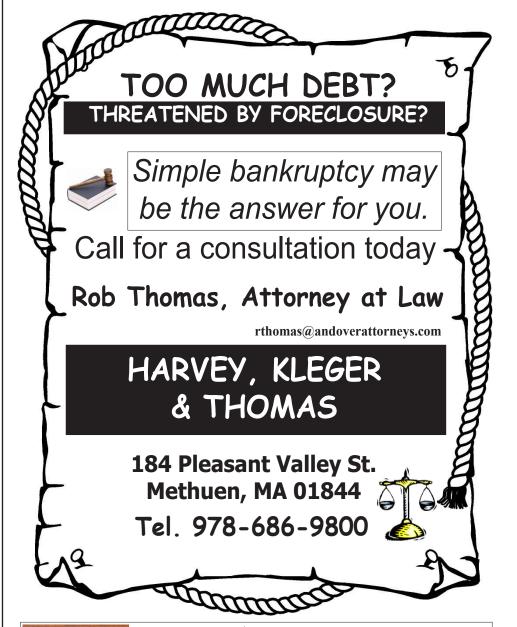
I guess threatening us seemed to be what one guy did best (his English, by the way, was very clear).

The doors opened and the Police Officers addressed the man that had just arrived 5 minutes earlier (who had been swearing at us and trying to cut everyone in line). The Salem Police officer was professional and did a great job diffusing an escalating situation.

When the store opened, every person in line piled into the store. It was very organized and very orderly. The staff members were clapping, cheering and they were prepared to make us all happy.

In all, it was fun, interesting and nerve racking, but I succeeded in my goal to get what I wanted for Christmas.

I am aware that our world is not perfect, by any means, but we should all learn to respect the boundaries of others. Black Friday was an educational experience that I will not soon forget.





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Politically active in the City of Methuen

New year may lend itself to a Methuen political makeover

Jamie Atkinson & George Scione VALLEY PATRIOT METHUEN COLUMNISTS

Aspirations of political candidates may be coming to fruition sooner than many around the Merrimack Valley anticipated - especially in the City of Methuen.

A majority of this political makeover may rest on the final result in the race for Ted Kennedy's open United States Senate

With this year's municipal election in the books for only one month, the nonstop chatter around the city has a Martha Coakley victory creating a domino effect that could reach as far as the Searles Building's corner office.

State Senator Steve Baddour is said to be eyeing the Massachusetts Attorney General's position. Should Coakley win the U.S. Senate seat, that AG position would be vacant for Baddour to make his move. A position Baddour has not been shy about expressing his interest in before.

Speaking as a representative of her campaign, Baddour was openly pushing for a Coakley victory during last month's Methuen Democratic Committee Holiday Breakfast. The results that morning didn't go as planned, with U.S. House member Mike Capuano pulling out a two-vote win over Coakley in the breakfast's straw poll.

Despite his apparent support for Capuano, Methuen Mayor William Manzi III may find a Coakley victory in the actual race more beneficial to his political future.

Baddour's support of a Coakley lends itself to clearing himself a path to the AG's seat – likely with Coakley's approval – thus opening a State Senate seat Manzi would more than likely be interested in.

Funny how a special statewide election can have such an impact on one city, but if the pieces fall into place that is exactly what could happen in Methuen.

MORE THAN A **FEELING**

The Coakley scenario aside, there's already some political maneuvering going on for another state legislator's seat, as well as, names being tossed about for the 2011 mayoral race.

State Representative Linda Dean Campbell could have two candidates already looking to steal her seat next year - both currently members of the City Council.

The first potential opponent is doing their best to remain anonymous until further review of the situation, while the second has done everything she can to hold back from officially announcing her candidacy.

During a recent taping of Politically Active on Methuen Community Television, current council chair Debbie Quinn expressed her interest in running for two positions. Quinn, who finished third in the recent election for West District Councilor to ticket-topper Jeanne Pappalardo and political-newcomer Jim Hajjar, admitted her interest in potential runs for both mayor and State Rep.

Of course, when questions were asked



of Quinn regarding what exactly she wants to accomplish for the City of Methuen and its residents going forward, point after point dealt with statewide programs, aid and issues.

Rumor has it that a run against Campbell may be about more than simple disagreements on the issues for Quinn.

While Quinn seems focused on the State Rep. seat, she has also left the door

open for the mayoral opening, which will be an open seat for sure in 2011 as Manzi is term-limited out.

She's not alone. There have already been some big names circulated regarding potential runs for mayor, including current at-Large councilors Steve Zanni and Ken Willette, and political heavyweight James

Only Quinn and Willette have admitted interest, with Willette telling the Politically Active radio show that he is "90 percent" certain he will be running for mayor in two years. With his consistent showings at the ballot box, including his most recent victory by topping the ticket for school committee, there is no doubt Willette is a viable contender.

Political resolutions and admissions of future ambitions - that is what this new year holds for political junkies in Methuen.

POLITICALLY ACTIVE HOLIDAY **SPECIAL**

The Politically Active crew will be out on the town this month, taking over the Methuen Senior Activity Center for two hours on Tuesday, Dec. 22 from 10 a.m. until noon in hopes of raising money for The Santa Fund.

The show will highlight the spirit of the season, including Christmas carols, childhood and adult memories of city officials and giveaways. Residents of Methuen are welcome to stop by and wish their family members a holiday wish over the airwaves for a small donation to The Santa Fund.

For this one day event, political agendas will be put aside and all are welcome to gather for a family-oriented celebration of

Any business interested in sponsoring a portion of the event and/or sending a representative from their business to join us live on air to make a donation to The Santa Fund should e-mail politicallyactivetv@yahoo.com, or call Jamie Atkinson at 978-394-7912 or George Scione at 978-397-1890.

Jamie Atkinson and George Scione are co-hosts for Politically Active, a television show which can be seen Monday at 7:30 p.m. and

Tuesday at 9:30 a.m. on Methuen Com-

munity Television (Comcast 22, Verizon 33) and heard live on the radio (WCCM 1110-AM) every Tuesday from 10-11 a.m. They can be reached by e-mail at politicallyactivetv@yahoo.com.



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CASINOS: FROM PAGE 7

booze; and target you to spend until you have nothing left.

Unlike many forms of gambling, casinos represent an enormous transfer of wealth from working families into the pockets of billionaire investors who live out of state and often out of the country. That is not money that stays in Massachu-

There is much we do not know about slot addiction, but there is much we do know. We know that thousands of families are ruined as the addiction rate doubles within 25 miles of a casino when it becomes accessible to more people to play more often. The Governor's plan called for on-site addiction counselors, so I ask a simple question: why welcome an industry into Massachusetts that requires on-site addiction counselors?

The Attorney General testified this past summer that the Legislature must update it's money laundering statute, it's wiretapping stature, and criminal codes before we even think of bringing in casinos. Again, no other industry requires such an array of new criminal statutes.

Proponents argue that we need the jobs casinos will bring, even if they cost us

money in the long run. We do need jobs, and we have choices of what kind of jobs to grow in this Commonwealth. New industries such as alternative energy are crying out for trained "green collar" workers to build new and better solar devices. Transforming Lawrence's mills into safe, new housing will create thousands of trade jobs and add to the state's supply of housing which will reduce the enormous cost of housing in our state.

Casinos don't deliver on their promises. Despite the millions of dollars being spent on lobbying and convincing you that this will solve our fiscal problems, I will continue to speak out about the downside of this industry.

I hate rip-offs. That is why I fought against the auto insurance fraud rings and ultimately saved customers hundreds of dollars a year on their insurance. That is why I fought against predatory mortgage lenders and am working to keep viable homeowners in their homes.

Steve Wynn, casino owner, on 60 Minutes in September, said it all. "The only way to win in a casino is to own one." Amen to that, Steven.



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2009 Methuen Exchange Club Awards

The Methuen Exchange Club held their 15th annual Recognition Dinner last month honoring police, firefighters and members of the business community for their contributions to the City of Methuen.

Master of Ceremonies Ken Leone announced the following award recipients: Police Officer of the Year James Moore. "Moore has been associated with the Methuen Police Department since 1993. In recognition for his overall dedication, professionalism and superior performance of his duties and responsibilities as a law enforcement officer the Methuen Exchange Club proudly honors Officer James Moore as the 2009 Police Officer of the year."

Also honored were Methuen Firefighter/ EMT's Tim Smith and Brett Paolantonio who responded to a call for a man having chest pains last year. "While transporting the patient to the hospital, the patient went into full cardiac arrest. With Advanced Life Support unavailable, Tim stopped the ambulance and assisted Brett in performing CPR as well as using an External Defibrillator at which point the patient's pulse returned. Since then the patient has made a full recorvery," Leone said.

The Book of Golden Deeds Award was

presented to past president of the Exchange Arthur Hutton.

"Hutton has been an Exchange Club member for nearly 25 years. There is not a project or event conducted by the exchange Club that Arthur Hutton doesn't participate in. Arthur donated his time to help build the new Methuen Arlington Neighborhood Center as well as the ball fields at Veteran's Field. For his three decades of community service and donating his time, energy and business resources to the citizens of the City of Methuen making it a better place to live we honor Arthur Hutton as our 2009 recipient of the Exchange Club's Book of Golden Deeds Award."

The Exchange Club also gives out annual awards called the "So Proudly We Hail" Award to individuals and businesses that proudly display the American Flag and other patriotic symbols in the city. In honor of those men and women who fought and died in the name of freedom and liberty. The Exchange Club awarded The Fitzgerald Family of Mann Orchard and Donna and James Meaney.

"Three generations of the Fitzgerald family have displayed the American



Methuen Firefighter Tim Smith receives the Exchange Club's Firefighter of the Year Award (along with Brett Paolantonio) for their efforts in reviving a man who died in their ambulance last year. At right is Exchange Club member Brad Jones

flag using the same flagpole. From the homestead to the "old farm" stand and now at their new location on Pleasant Valley Street Kathleen and Bill Fitzgerald, owners of Mann Orchard proudly fly the American Flag each day."

"Donna and James Doherty have been

flying the American flag in addition to other flags, at their home on Lowell Street for years.

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A COUCH WITH A VIEW

2009 - The Year That Was...

Ray Shackett

VALLEY PATRIOT COUCH POTATO COLUMNIST

Where did 2009 go?

It's funny that after 37 years on this fine planet it still boggles my mind every December that it's time once again to look back and pay tribute to the year that was and look forward to a "fresh start" in the year to come.

I thought I'd take my time here to talk about some of my favorite pop culture events from the past year.

As Tony Bennett sings... "Movies and TV and Tweeting from Oprah... Pageantry scandals and all of that hoopla... Reality break ups and all that it brings... These are a few of my favorite things." Ok... Not the actual lyrics but in my world who can argue.

Let's take a look back at some of my favorite things that 2009 had to offer and see if it was a year worth remembering.

Movies - 2009 was the year of origin stories and sequels. Of the Top 10 highest grossing movies from the past year only four were based on original stories; Up, The Hangover, Monsters Vs Aliens and The Proposal.

Being that they were huge moneymakers though, look for their sequels to be popping up in a mega-movieplex soon no doubt. Although swimming in familiar territory, I enjoyed my day at the beach overall. Not too much sand kicked in the face this year.

Star Trek could have continued its stale franchise with another desperate sequel but decided to start the series over with an origins flick starring a young hotshot cast in which they tell the story of how the beloved crew of the USS Enterprise came to be. High octane action, witty dialogue and J.J. Abrahms .

All the ingredients we came to love on TV now on the big screen. Check it out on

DVD

Out just in time for the holidays! The surprise hit this year was what could have been confused as a Three Men and a Baby sequel based on the movie stills but turned out to be one of the most original comedies to hit theatres since the 40 Year Old Virgin. The Hangover starring soon-to-be ATeamer Bradley Cooper, Ed Helms of The Office fame and comedian Zack Galifianakis. The Hangover tells the story of four friends enjoying a weekend bachelor party getaway to Las Vegas. The catch is that the story is told in sort of a reverse order.

The story begins as three of the guys wake up with no recollection of what happened the night before and a missing groom to be.

They must race the clock to find their friend before he is due back for his nuptials and make sense of all the obstacles they encounter along the way. The Hangover finds its way to an R rating without being totally offensive. A movie that is hard to not recommend to anyone with a sense of humor.

Television - TV took a step back this year, as ratings have finally proven, when Jay Leno gobbled up the 10pm timeslot five nights a week on NBC. That and the constant demand for overpriced production value have since damaged the quality and quantity of television as we know it. But... 2009 did make an effort to revitalize its landscape.

The oldies but goodies stood true to my heart and stepped it up a notch; FX's Rescue Me, Sons of Anarchy and It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia (which is pulling it's highest rating well into season 5).

That competitive pressure served them well this past year. The new kids on the

COUCH, PAGE 42

VALLEY PATRIOT TY REVIEW

Ryan Murphy

Beth Daigle

VALLEY PATRIOT ENTERTAINMENT REPORTER

"Glee" - Fox, Wednesdays at 9:00 pm
Who'd have thought that a show about
glee club could be so
riveting?

"Glee" is a new Fox series that focuses on an optimistic high school Spanish teacher, Will Schuester, who is charged with reclaiming the former glory of the McKinley High musical crew. The members of the club are a random mix of academic achievers, outcasts, cheerleaders and jocks who have

come together to showcase their vocal talents and win the national glee club competition.

The combination of characters, while odd, strikes a nice balance allowing the show to connect with its audience on many levels. Much like you'd expect in any teen club, "Glee" is loaded with drama, love triangles, feuds, crushes and cliques. Throw in a teen pregnancy and a bizarre fake pregnancy devised by Schuester's wife and you've got yourself a new hit show.

I didn't expect to like "Glee," but indeed I do. It reminds me a bit of "Fame" with a touch of "High School Musical." The incorporation of music along with the peculiar plot makes for an entertaining hour of television.

The soundtrack is not only up to date but performed quite well and the choreography isn't bad either.

At first glance the show seems most appropriate for a younger generation, but honestly I found it perfectly watchable and have now placed it on my exclusive DVR listing.

The quirky story line and awkward, if not slightly inappropriate, student -teacher interaction is relatable yet edgy enough to keep it thoroughly entertaining. It comes from the same creators as Nip/Tuck of the FX network so it has the possibility for some interesting twists and turns however it doesn't go so far as to make you cringe.

While the students of "Glee" are compelling on their own, one of the standout characters is that of the cheerleading coach, Sue Sylvester, played by Jane Lynch. Lynch has previously played so many memorable small roles from Charlie's snide psychiatrist on "Two and a Half Men" to Steve Carell's kooky boss in

"The 40 Year Old Virgin." Her dry, sarcastic way makes me laugh every time and her portrayal in "Glee" is no different. I'd love to see more of her in this series - she alone is worth the watch.

There is nothing like life set to good music. I wish I could break out into song every now and again. A good tune makes everything seem so much more interesting and dramatic. Sure, there are moments in "Glee" when I struggle with the poignantly placed ballads or questionably cool hits sung with passion and a strong message, but overall I am a fan.

Just in -rumor has it that remaining episodes of "Glee" will be pushed to April to make room for mid-season replacements. If you've yet to see it, it is worth the wait.



Beth Daigle is a freelance writer who writes for several area publications. Beth is a North Andover resident and happily reports on the good, the bad and the ugly in television entertainment. Beth's background is in marketing having

earned her BA from University of Massachusetts, Amherst and MBA from Bentley College. Send comments to Bethdaiglevp@comcast.net

2012 A Movie Review

Ben Flagg

VALLEY PATRIOT MOVIE REVIEWER

All right, let me come clean in right now before I get too deep into this. I do not hate this movie, as most critics do. It is certainly not perfect, and is by no means a good movie. However, I came out of that movie entertained, and that's all I ask for. Most critics hate it because of its "numerous scientific inaccuracies" or it has a bad script. I truly feel sorry for the poor sad sap who says this because he just doesn't get it. It never even wants to be a movie with a good script, or a good plot, it just wants to show you stuff blowing up real nice. In that sense, 2012 succeeds, because the special effects are absolutely gorgeous.

Maybe I should start talking about the plot about now. There are two main stories going on here. The first story stars Chiwetel Ejiofor (who you probably know from American Gangster), a geologist whose friend works in a mine in India who I'm pretty sure is studying seismic activity. In 2009, Chiwetel goes to visit his friend who tells him a catastrophic event is coming in the near future. Chiwetel flies back to the U.S and tells the Chief of Staff, played by Oliver Platt (who is fantastic in this movie). They talk to a ton of people and by the end Chiwetel is a sort of advisor to the evacuations that will be taking place.

The second plot is much simpler. In 2012, John Cusack plays a struggling science fiction writer and part time limo driver to a filthy rich Russian ex-boxer and his

sons. He hears from Woody Harrelson (in one of the worst roles of his career) that the world will soon end. When stuff does start to go down, he knows Woody was right and takes his family, rents a plane, and flies off to find somewhere safe.

As you can tell, this is textbook Roland Emmerich. A perfectly dumb movie with fantastic special effects, bad acting, and the occasional comic relief in the form of an annoying character. I know I've said it before, but I will say it again. The special effects are fantastic, and enhance the movie ten-fold. However, the biggest problem with this movie is its length. It is a two and a half hour long movie, and it could easily be cut down to two hours. maybe even less. The final few scenes are especially dragged out, and I was actually starting to get bored, and was constantly looking at the time to see when I could leave. A dumb movie should not be that long. If you spread out the tension too thin like they do at the end, you start to lose the sense of urgency you would have if the movie was shorter.

All of that said, however, it is an incredibly fun movie which you absolutely have to see in the theater. Go see it with a bunch of your friends just cheering, hollering, and having a good time. Just be sure to go in knowing the end is slow.



Ben Flagg is a freshman at Methuen High School. He participates in the JROTC and Drill Team. He also enjoys playing the bass guitar in his spare time.

Great Christmas classics!

Molly Auger

VALLEY PATRIOT ENTERTAINMENT REPORTER

I'm not sure which I loved more as a kid – presents, or Christmas specials. Okay, well, maybe that's a bit of an unfair comparison, but I'd have to say these animated little gems that were aired during the days leading up to Christmas truly added to all the magical bliss and were a close second to the gifts.

Adding to the excitement, I never knew
WHEN they were going to be on, and I always seemed to find out that night at the dinner table by my mother who would always seemed to break the news as if we just won a million dollars, which to a seven year old, was

pretty much the equivalent.

Even though I had seen them year after year, when watching them, it seemed as if I were viewing for the first time. And as a fully grown adult I still get all stupid excited when they start playing. Each year I notice something new. This list is a few of my most memorable and some details that I have picked up on and maybe you have too.

A Charlie Brown Christmas (1965)

This was one of the first animated Christmas specials featured on television. Mind you, the ol' Peanuts Gang never seemed to disappoint in the television special category. But this one really seems to nail it in the all around "feel good" category. The message is pure and wrapped nicely around the sweetness of Linus, Charlie, Lucy, Sally, Schroder, Snoopy, Woodstock, Pigpen and the rest of the gang. Charlie Brown is tortured by

the commerciality of Christmas, seeking the true meaning of Christmas. (Good grief! What would he think NOW?) His dog has been sucked in by a decorat-

ing contest, his mailbox is empty with no sign of any card wishing him holiday cheer and is even sickened by his own baby sister who is just looking for "all hat is coming to her, and her fair share."

At his breaking point he pleads for help on an empty stage. The true

meaning of Christmas explained by Linus who recites Biblical passage (Luke 2:8-14) recalling the birth of Jesus. When he is finished, Linus turns to his friend and says, "That's what Christmas is all about, Charlie Brown." Plain and simple. There is nothing flashy or over the top drama. It's simply told from the point of view of a child who is confused by all the hype and furor that comes with the holiday season.

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Shawn Hansen's Comedy Corner

An Interview with comedy legend Denis Leary

Comics Come Home brought nearly 6,000 people to the Agganis Arena in their 15th year. Saturday, Nov. 7, the night featured 10 comics as it sponsored the Cam Neely Foundation.

Talking to Cam about the foundation, he said, "Basically we raise money for cancer patients and their families through various programs," explaining that it started with The Neely House, and helped over 5,000 families.

Walking into the arena, two huge televisions were set up hanging over the stage. Just before the actual comedy show began, John Stewart had a message for Comics Come Home.

Stewart said, "When Denis Leary told me that he was going to be doing a cancer benefit, I figured he's just covering his basis, you know what I'm saying? I have never seen anyone smoke four cigarettes from all holes. Really, I'm not sure how he does it. He's done so much to promote cancer, I think he should at least do a little bit to fight it."

Talking to Leary backstage before the show about Rescue Me, he said, "I can't say much about it without giving something away. I can say this, as evidence by past seasons on Rescue Me if you die, sometimes your part gets bigger because you come back as a ghost."

Leary said there is going be two more seasons of Rescue Me, and next years episodes will kick off in May.

Starting the show, Leary went off in a tangent about the Yankees wishing Mariano Rivera's arms would fall off, and Kate Hudson would throw A-Rod's engagement ring to his feet.

Rifling off bits about baseball, Leary said, "The last guy from America to play on the Red Sox was Carlton Fisk, and he was from New Hampshire. A guy from Japan won the World Series... We had to get Godzilla to hit home runs for the Yankees..."

Ranting about The Biggest Loser, Leary said the only reason these people are losing weight is because they are either passing gas, or picking their nose.

"People say it's not fair Denis because you're so...skinny. We're going to keep making fun of you because you, you want to know why? Because, you can't catch us, that's why."

Following Leary was Tony V telling the audience to forgive him for his appearance because that is what he looks like.

Bringing up a conversation about pirates invading people in 2009, V said pirates are not easily recognizable and, "You got something in your head that a pirate looks like. Yeah, Johnny Depp."

He ended that bit saying he believes Captain Morgan is a pirate because he has hijacked him more then once.

Kenny Rogerson took the mike from V next and brought up the fact that Christmas

"I never know what to get for Christmas. My grandparents, one of them is 96, the other ones 98, and I don't know what to get them. I figured the calendars coming out."

Jimmy Fallon took the stage singing, "Car wash for peace, there's trouble in the Middle East. Put down those guns, pick up the sponge, car wash for peace."

After the song, Fallon thanked everyone saying Boston is awesome, and if he knew you could make a video like all the other talk show hosts, he might have made one himself. He said filming Fever Pitch in 2004 was the greatest experience of his life, and backstage, he told me, "It was a phenomenal thing, it will never happen again. It's just one of those things where it's like unless you were at a Cubs movie and shoot it every year until they win then it will never happen again."

Closing his act, Fallon impersonated Jerry Seinfeld, Bill Cosby, Chris Rock, Richard Lewis, Robin Williams, Lora Domai, Mitch Hedberg, Gilbert Gottfried,



Valley Patriot sports and entertainment reporter Shawn Hansen with superstar actor and comedian Denis Leary, star of Rescue Me, holding his copy of The Valley Patriot last month at Comics Come Home.

Larry The Cable Guy, Stephen Wright, Adam Sandler, and tried imitate Eddie Murphy.

The audience was in hysterics when he said, "Black people do not like hockey," impersonating Rock.

Whitney Cummings laughed up a storm joking about strip clubs saying everyone that most of her friends are getting married, therefore she has been going to a lot of these clubs. "The funniest thing to me about male strippers is they are always in police uniforms, firemen uniforms, because they say women like men in uniform, right? We don't like men in uniform, we like men with jobs," joked Cummings.

Right before Cummings left the stage, she talked about how girlfriends nowadays send their boyfriends pictures to their cell phones showing them what's waiting at

Pharmacist/Come-

"If I was going to take a here's what's happening photo shoot, I would take some pictures of the...dishes, or the bills," said Cummings.

Lenny Clarke then took the mike telling the audience that Curt and Shonda Schilling were in the crowd celebrating their 17th anniversary of marriage.

"I myself have been happily married for 35 years, five different women, but I'm no...quitter," said Clarke.

After Clarke, Adam Ferrara came to the stage saying he recently just came back from Jamaica flying Air Jamaica.

"Air Jamaica is a Bob Marley tour bus in the sky. The captain gets on the Air Jamaica intercom saying, 'This is your captain speaking,' breaking out in laughter saying,

COMEDY, page 41

Shawn Hansen's Comedy Corner with Johnny Pizzi & friends

Giggles Comedy Club packed a room full for the Pre-Thanksgiving Special.

Host Johnny Pizzi started the evening talking about kids asking a number of families how many kids they have. One family said six, Pizzi was startled and said, "We remember things about the first one we don't remember about the second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth." He said the first child is the one we most remember about when they're born because they are the first, and when you take them out of the hospital you wrap them up good and keep everyone clear from your newborn because you don't want any germs near him.

Brad Mastrangelo then took things over at Giggles telling everyone he grew up in Chelsea, and moved out of the city as fast as he could because he could speak English.

"I love Spanish people," said Mastrangelo asking if there were any Spanish people in the audience. "None? I hate those...I'm just kidding."

Talking about the holidays, Mastrangelo laughed, "I went to Wakefield High School. We played Melrose one year

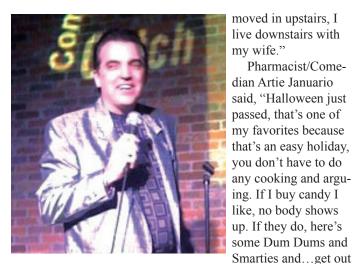
and I got so...faced I ended up at the Woburn/Winchester game. Don't laugh at me, the guy next to me was rooting for Brockton."

Paul D'Angelo took the stage talking about how women love the fall season.

"I remember when my father would talk about my mother would look out the back window

in front of the kitchen and say, 'Jack, its foliage, take me and the kids on a trip. We want to see foliage," said D'Angelo. "My father would be in the back with a rake, 'I got 12 bags full with... foliage. Why don't you and the kids take a trip to the gutter."

The man with multiple impersonations, Al Ducharme had the room in stitches saying, "I live with this absolutely gorgeous woman, she is stunning, and I'll be honest, she is totally out of my league. She just



Tony V laughed up a storm talking about ham.

"Maybe they will open more ham stores, like a 24 hour a day drive through Ham Emporium. The Hamarama, you don't even need money, you just get like a speed pass from the ham line, and they drive through, and they chuck a ham in the back of your car."

V ended his ham jokes telling the audi-

ence that if you hear a thud it means the

Greg Murphy then took the mike talking about Dunkin Donuts and how they should change their slogan to, "Dunkin Donuts, supplying your car with napkins for over 35 years."

Concluding the evening, Pizzi read a list of shows, and movies Lenny Clarke has been in when Clarke said, "I've got more failed pilots then an Iraqui Air

Talking about gambling at a casino, Clarke said, "I went to pick up my beer and I got a midget. I screamed, he screamed, I rubbed his head, rolled the dice," explaining that he won getting an

For schedule information about Giggles Comedy Club, go to their Web site at: www.princepizzeria.com/Giggles-Comedy.cfm. For more information about Shawn Hansen's Comedy Corner, go to: www.shawnhansenscomedycorner. blogspot.com.

The Valley Patriot is the **EXCLUSIVE** newspaper of

Businesses: working dogs allowed

Tracey Zysk

VALLEY PATRIOT DOGGIE COLUMNIST

On any given day I can be seen walking down Main Street North Andover with one, two or three dogs by my side. Some days I may walk by a local business once and other days I may walk by several times. It all depends on the day and the dogs I am scheduled to be with. It's just another day in the life of a local dog walker.

One thing that never changes is the welcome my dogs receive from the local merchants, businesses, and town folk. Everyone on Main Street has always been so pleasant and friendly to me and my dogs.

Our routine doesn't change all that much. We stop in to see Jane at the consignment store, we say hello to the barbers at Mal's, wave to Bryan at Main Street Hardware, visit the firefighters at the station, and drop some mail off at the post office. Hometown, Main Street, USA. Life is so good, life is so simple, and most importantly everyone enjoys my dogs.

In speaking with one of my clients, I realized life isn't always so good, life isn't always so simple and not everyone enjoys her dogs.

Sue Christensen a resident of North Andover, who is legally blind and has the assistance of a working dog, has a very different story to tell. Sue, unfortunately, has met some not so nice people throughout the Merrimack Valley. What is most disturbing are the problems that Sue has encountered have been with businesses and merchants.

Being a business owner myself, I looked at her in pure disbelief as she told me her story. Sue has been denied access to a cab, told by management she was not allowed in a restaurant and has even been told she wasn't allowed into a dentist office. All because she had her working dog Holly with her.

What kind of business owner doesn't realize that this is the law? This law has been in effect since 1990. You don't have to be an animal lover to know that this law exists. A law is a law and as a business owner you must obey to this. A business that doesn't follow this is obviously a business that should be questioned on it's Best Business Practices. It is also one that should be exposed publicly and one that should receive a hefty fine for their

ignorant behavior. Most certainly not a business I would ever entertain going into

A guide dog is not a pet. Just like a police K 9 dog, a guide dog goes to school with his handler and receives special training. This is a twenty seven day training program where the handler and dog are introduced and then trained to work together.

Seeing Eye dogs are the eyes to the blind. They are there to guide their handlers though the daily tasks of life. They are the eyes that allow their owner to retain their independence and freedom. With the help of these dogs, the legally blind are able to maintain and partake in every day life activities. The blind are able to work, go to church and even go to YOUR store.

The question is will YOU let them in? The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) defined by the US Dept of Labor prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in employment, transportation, public accommodation,

communications, and governmental activities. The ADA also establishes requirements for telecommunications relay services.

I recommend all business owners read the following questions below. This is from The Department of Justice website and can be found at www.ada.gov/qasrvc.

COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT SERVICE ANIMALS IN PLACES OF BUSINESS

1. Q: What are the laws that apply to my business?

A: Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), privately owned businesses that serve the public, such as restaurants, hotels, retail stores, taxicabs, theaters, concert halls, and sports facilities, are prohibited from discriminating against individuals with disabilities. The ADA requires these businesses to allow people with disabilities to bring their service animals onto business premises in whatever areas customers are generally

2. Q: What is a service animal?

A: The ADA defines a service animal as any guide dog, signal dog, or other animal individually trained to provide assistance to an individual with a disability. If they meet this definition, animals are considered service animals under the ADA regardless of whether they have been licensed or certified by a state or local government.

Service animals perform some of the functions and tasks that the individual with a disability cannot perform for him or herself. Guide dogs are one type of service animal, used by some individuals who are blind. This is the type of service animal with which most people are familiar. But there are service animals that assist persons with other kinds of disabilities in their day-to-day activities. Some examples include:

- * Alerting persons with hearing impairments to sounds.
 - * Pulling wheelchairs or carrying and

WORKING DOGS, page 40

Come to the Lowell Humane Society and take us HOME!

>>>**Nena-** I'm a sweet 6 year old American Staffordshire Terrier mix looking for a home to give me the love and attention I deserve! My previous owner found a new love of her life who sadly didn't love



me. BUT the folks here at the shelter LOVE my kisses and how I just don't stop wiggling! Don't you think I deserve a second chance with someone who will love ME forever?

Looking to do something special for the Lowell Humane Society this Holiday Season? Visit our lobby to check out our Giving Tree for gift ideas that will assist us in caring for the thousands of animals who pass through our doors each year or visit the LHS Holiday Wishlist online at www. amazon.com to have the items shipped directly to us! Your support is greatly appreciated! The Lowell Humane Society is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization which receives no local, state or federal funding. Your donations are tax deductible and will greatly impact the lives of the animals we care for. For more information on volunteering or making a donation to The Lowell Humane Society contact Community Outreach Coordinator Chris Arnott at 978-888-4770 or chris@lowellhumanesociety.org. For a full list of adoptable animals visit their website at www.lowellhumanesociety.org.

>>>Ollie - I'm a spunky little 3 year old terrier who wants to go home with you! I'm great with kids and dogs, and so I would make a perfect family pet. I love to run, so a fenced-in yard would be a plus for me! I will need an owner who will have the time and patience to work with me on my house-training because I'm not quite there yet, but who could resist this lovable face?





<<<Cinder - I'm a 7 year old lab whose looking for that perfect home! My prior home decided they didn't really want me after 7 years, so here I am at the shelter. As much as I love the walks and snuggles I get from the shelter staff, I really miss napping at my own home. I'm calm and snuggly

and can't wait for a new family to love me!

Contact Chris for details at (978) 452-7781 or chris@lowellhumanesociety.org

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PUPPY LOVE! with Kate Whitney

Keep your pets safe for the holidays

Kate Whitney
VALLEY PATRIOT PUPPY COLUMNIST

I hope everyone had a wonderful Thanksgiving! I had a great one...I can't believe it's come and gone already, just like Fall! Now we have the December Holidays to look forward to.

This is a time of year that we love to include our pets in. I'm excited to get out my two paw print stockings; one for Dash and one for Honey. In only a few more

weeks, those stockings will be busting at the seams with new toys and chewies. With the Holidays comes joy, presents, friends and family. But don't forget about the dangers that can sometimes sneak in, especially when you have pets.

I wanted to dedicate this article to talking about keeping your pets safe for the holidays. Whatever holiday you celebrate, this time should be magical and exciting. Don't let an accident keep your

family from celebrating with lots of cheer this year! Keeping your pets safe should be something that is always in the front of your mind, every day. So here is some information that I hope can help:

Presents and wrapping materials: Aluminum foil, cellophane wrappers, ribbon, and bows can case vomiting and intestinal blockage if swallowed. Remember to put tape and scissors away when you are done. You wouldn't want any sensitive paws accidentally stepping on them. Be careful of children's toys and puzzles. Small pieces are tempting to your pets. Although fun for kids, these toy pieces would not be so fun if they were stuck in our pet's throat.

Flowers and Plants: Many of us choose to decorate our homes with beautiful plants and flowers during the holidays. Although pretty to look at, some flowers

can be deadly to our four legged friends. Lilies can cause kidney failure in cats. Mistletoe and holly berries can cause vomiting, nausea, diarrhea, and cardiovascular problems. Poinsettias are very pretty and bring much holiday cheer, but can cause vomiting and nausea.

These flowers are lovely and of course you can have them displayed, just be thoughtful about where you put them. Ideally they will be in a place that is out of reach for your cat or dog. If you will be

gone for long periods of time, maybe try putting them in the closet or basement, or someplace that your pet cannot get to. It's better to be safe than sorry!

Food and Drink: We all enjoy many different special food items around the holidays. Keep in mind that although we might love this food, our pets' digestive systems may not. Chocolate is not good for your dog or cat. If ingested, effects of chocolate vary depending on the dose,

but include vomiting, diarrhea, seizures, hyperactivity, increased thirst and urination, and increased heart rate. Keep dogs and cats away from candy, gum, etc. Choose what type of meat you give your pets very carefully. Bones can splinter and cause blockages in the airway or perforate the intestines. To be safe, only give your pets "animal" designated treats. Also, foods that are greasy, fatty, or spicy can cause an upset stomach. Never give a dog nuts, grapes or raisins. For my dogs, I will sometimes break the rules a little and give them some special treats, like a piece of turkey or beef. My dogs never get table scraps and will never get anything if they beg. It's okay to reward your dog for good behavior.

If you are going to bend your rules a little too, make sure your dog is sitting and has manners prior to giving any treats. If beer, wine, eggnog, or hard alcohol spill, be sure to wipe it up immediately! Alcohol can cause a coma in dogs and cats. Make sure they have water that is easily accessible. Maybe put it in a location that will have less "traffic" so they don't have to feel anxious about going into a crowded kitchen to get a drink.

Open Doors: I know in my house the front door is opened a lot...even more so during the holidays. For some dogs an open door is very tempting and some dogs just can't resist. Make sure that your pet has his collar on at all times as well as an ID tag. If your pet does escape, entice them back with some treats. When they do return, don't scold or hit them. They won't understand why they are being reprimanded, so resist the urge to yell and scream. Reward the "I came back" behavior. If they know what praise and yummy treats they get when they walk back through the door, maybe next time they will think twice about leaving.

Christmas Trees: Picking out a Christmas tree is fun. Decorating a Christmas tree is even better! But don't forget to pay attention to what's lurking in that Christmas tree water bucket. Tree water can contain fertilizers that can upset a pet's stomach.

The stagnant water can also be a breeding ground for bacteria; maybe try investing in a tree stand that has a cover. Be mindful about what decorations (tinsel can cause intestinal blockages) you put on the tree and where you put them. Last year, I had to put decorations on the upper half of my tree because Dash would take them off the tree and play with them. Hey, my tree looked a little silly, but I knew that Dash would be safe.

It's also important to remember how your pet will be feeling during this busy time. If you are going to have company over, bring your dog for an extra long walk or spend an extra 10 minutes at the dog park. A tired dog is a happy dog. It's best to have your dog worn out a little before company arrives, that way the dog will be more relaxed and not tempted to exert all his pent up energy on your guests. Make sure your dog has a comfy bed in a calm place; someplace where they can resort too if the festivities become too overwhelming.

The last thing any of us want during our holidays is to end up in the emergency room with our pet. Emergency room visits can take forever and are usually very expensive.

So instead of risking an ER visit, be mindful of what you are doing. Take a

adopt a shelter dog during the Christmas holidays. For more information you can email One Tail at a Time at onetail@comcast.net

little extra time at the end of each task and make sure that everything you did is pet friendly! You will be happy when your holidays fly by without any incident. I'm sure like me you love to include your pets in everything your family does: birthdays, soccer games, hikes, etc. Holiday celebra-

The Valley Patriot's Puppy

Girl Kate Whitney with Cal-

puppies. PuppyGirl, Callie

lie, the latest of Kate's foster

and of course Dash (who has

the month off) all want you to

said, have a safe and Happy Holiday!

Kate Whitney is a Boxford resident and owner of the Swingrite Corporation. If you are interested in adopting a puppy or becoming a foster parent to a puppy waiting for a home you can email Kate at Kwswingrite@aol.com

tions are no different. So, with all of that

P1

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WORKING DOGS:FROM PAGE 38

picking up things for persons with mobility impairments.

* Assisting persons with mobility impairments with balance.

A service animal is not a pet.

3. Q: How can I tell if an animal is really a service animal and not just a pet?

A: Some, but not all, service animals wear special collars and harnesses. Some, but not all, are licensed or certified and have identification papers. If you are not certain that an animal is a service animal, you may ask the person who has the animal if it is a service animal required because of a disability. However, an individual who is going to a restaurant or theater is not likely to be carrying documentation of his or her medical condition or disability. Therefore, such documentation generally may not be required as a condition for providing service to an individual accompanied by a service animal. Although a number of states have programs to certify service animals, you may not insist on proof of state certification before permitting the service animal to accompany the person with a disability.

4. Q: What must I do when an individual with a service animal comes to my business?

A: The service animal must be permitted to accompany the individual with a disability to all areas of the facility where customers are normally allowed to go. An individual with a service animal may not be segregated from other customers.

5. Q: I have always had a clearly posted "no pets" policy at my establishment. Do I still have to allow service animals in?

A: Yes. A service animal is not a pet. The ADA requires you to modify your "no pets" policy to allow the use of a service animal by a person with a disability. This

Princess. Skeeter passed in 2006

does not mean you must abandon your "no pets" policy altogether but simply that you must make an exception to your general rule for service animals.

6. Q: My county health department has told me that only a guide dog has to be admitted. If I follow those regulations, am I violating the ADA?

A: Yes, if you refuse to admit any other type of service animal on the basis of local health department regulations or other state or local laws. The ADA provides greater protection for individuals with disabilities and so it takes priority over the local or state laws or regulations.

7. Q: Can I charge a maintenance or cleaning fee for customers who bring service animals into my business?

A: No. Neither a deposit nor a surcharge may be imposed on an individual with a disability as a condition to allowing a service animal to accompany the individual with a disability, even if deposits are routinely required for pets. However, a public accommodation may charge its customers with disabilities if a service animal causes damage so long as it is the regular practice of the entity to charge non-disabled customers for the same types of damages. For example, a hotel can charge a guest with a disability for the cost of repairing or cleaning furniture damaged by a service animal if it is the hotel's policy to charge when non-disabled guests cause such damage.

8. Q: I operate a private taxicab and I don't want animals in my taxi; they smell, shed hair and sometimes have "accidents." Am I violating the ADA if I refuse to pick up someone with a service animal?

A: Yes. Taxicab companies may not refuse to provide services to individuals with disabilities. Private taxicab compa-



Sue Christensen, North Andover resident with her Seeing Eye dog Holly and her retired Seeing Eye dog Issac. Sue works for the Mass. Commission for the Blind.

nies are also prohibited from charging higher fares or fees for transporting individuals with disabilities and their service animals than they charge to other persons for the same or equivalent service.

9. Q: Am I responsible for the animal while the person with a disability is in my business?

A: No. The care or supervision of a service animal is solely the responsibility of his or her owner. You are not required to provide care or food or a special location for the animal.

10. Q: What if a service animal barks or growls at other people, or otherwise acts out of control?

A: You may exclude any animal, including a service animal, from your facility when that animal's behavior poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others. For example, any service animal that displays vicious behavior towards other guests or customers may be excluded. You may not make assumptions, however, about how a particular animal is likely to behave based on your past experience with other animals. Each situation must be considered individually.

Although a public accommodation may exclude any service animal that is out of control, it should give the individual with a disability who uses the service animal the option of continuing to enjoy its goods and services without having the service animal on the premises.

11. Q: Can I exclude an animal that doesn't really seem dangerous but is disruptive to my business?

A: There may be a few circumstances when a public accommodation is not required to accommodate a service animal-that is, when doing so would result in a fundamental alteration to the nature of the business. Generally, this is not likely to occur in restaurants, hotels, retail stores, theaters, concert halls, and sports facilities. But when it does, for example, when a dog barks during a movie, the animal can be excluded.

If you have further questions about service animals or other requirements of the ADA, you may call the U.S. Department of Justice's toll-free ADA Information Line at 800-514-0301 (voice) or 800-514-0383 (TDD). Reproduction of this document is encouraged.



Tracey Zysk, owner of Wiggles & Jiggles Pet Care in North Andover MA is a local pet care professional. She has been featured on local radio, tv and newspapers educating

the general public on animal care and animal health & wellness. Tracey is a proud supporter of Police, Fire & Military K9 units. Tracey may be reached at wiggle-walk@comcast.net

Got Poop? We Scoop!

muzzles. They have had great lives and she will be missed dearly.

SASSY

She was almost 16 years old. She was a great dog, Dave's first dog, and had lived with

Dave in five different states: Arizona, Alaska, Florida, Texas and Massachusetts, with

Methuen MA in 1994 before he went on active duty. She and her siblings have chased

moose and been chases by moose. They have had cactus and porcupine spines in their

Sassy is survived by her owner Major Dave Skiba, USAF, North Andover and her sister

her "brother" Skeeter and "sister" Princess. Dave adopted her from the MSPCA in



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Santa takes Christmas lists from puppies at the MSPCA



Alli 7months old is all excited to get her picture taken with Santa at the MSPCA.

Alli resides in
Lawrence with
Lisa MedeirosGrieco, owner of
GroomTown Pet
Spa & Boutique of
North Andover and
was a rescue from
One Tail at a Time
Animal Shelter in
Amesbury.

HOLIDAY: FROM PAGE 36

And gets the answer from blanket toting, prophetic little boy and a little Christmas tree who simply needs a little love. What grabs me every single year is the music played. The piano played weather it be festive or somber truly captures the mood and the message. The rendition of "Hark the Herald" the children sing at the very end never fails to slingshot myself into the holiday season of singing. I love how they incorporate the children taking a breath between verses. Not one to miss.

Frosty the Snowman (1969)

Narrated by the ever-so-talented Jimmy Durante this popular Christmas song came to life visually via animation. It pretty much tells the story true to the song, however, the Frosty that was created on television was a little more confused and to be quite frank a little stupid. I am not sure if the overall lovability to Frosty or just made me worry about him. There was an evil, selfish magician thrown in the mix I have to say still gives me the creeps. I can remember crying my eyes out and having to be consoled by my mother and father every time Frosty melted. It was a tough scene to watch. It got to the point where they would ask me if I was okay with watching it when I found out it was on. Call me an uber-sensitive kid, but I need be cut some slack here. If someone you loved melted and all was left was a corncob pipe, a button nose in a pool of water, wouldn't that scar you a little? Thank goodness for Christmas snow and that old top hat.

Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer (1964)

Ahhhhhh, the wonderful world of claymation. This is truly a timeless classic that is by far the longest running television special, ever. Narrated by Burl Ives, it's the classic tale of Rudolph with his red nose and his quest for fitting in. Santa calls and asks Rudolph to save Christmas. Which he does, of course! (After that, he's the rockstar of all reindeer and Dasher and Dancer and Comet and the rest of them can suck it.)

Really, he even gets the girl. The grand moral being never judge a book by its cover because it's wrong and it just plain hurts. There are so many details to this

television special that I pick up on year after year. For example, the narrator, being the snowman, shivers at the thought of being cold. What? Isn't he a snowman? He is of course wearing a vest. And he walks. More like scoots, but Frosty walked on legs?...I digress. Yukon Cornelius licking AND sniffing his ice-pick hoping for gold. What does gold really taste like? And really, what does it smell like? I am sure there are lots of people who would like to know. And, of course, Shermie. Who can forget Shermie, the rebel elf that who was very unhappy with his destined career path making toys, but felt the life of crowns, molars, cavities and root canals was where he was suppose to go. Kind of gross that he pulled out the ALL Bumbles teeth. Do you think he used Novocain? I digress, yet again. And we must not forget the island of misfit toys. A classic tale with a strong moral message visually set to the wonderful world of claymation.

How the Grinch Stole Christmas (1966)

The wonderful world of Dr. Suess, truly one of the Good Doctor's finer pieces. The story of The Grinch who was mean, ugly and well, a very distinct shade of green, who tried to steal Christmas from the gentle and kind Whos' of Whooville. To me, he looked like one big green turd. I was never afraid of him, more just annoyed that he would treat his little dog so poorly and how he tried to ruin Christmas. The message is a powerful one. Presents, Christmas trees, wreaths and all the trimmings do not make Christmas, being with who you love in person and in spirit makes Christmas. For years, and I mean YEARS I tried to figure out where I had heard the voice of the man who sung "You're a Mean One Mr. Grinch". The man who sings this catchy little ditty is none other than Thurl Ravenscroft, the voice of none other than Tony the Tiger. For some reason this gave the song a whole new meaning. It's like it was sung by an old friend I had known all my life.

They have since made this cartoon treat into a motion picture starring Jim Carey as The Grinch. He still looks like a big green turd to me.

LEARY: FROM PAGE 37

'Don't look at me, I can't do it now, I'll call you back," said Ferrara impersonating a Jamaican pilot. Seconds after the captain hangs up the phone, Ferrara says, "This is your captain again. I apologize for that drop in altitude (while laughing) saying, 'I saw a cloud and thought it was a Chicken Salad Sandwich."

Back stage, Ferrara told me that he has been doing Comics Come Home for at least 10 years, and, "I've been a standup comic since July 13, 1988. That's probably one of the pertinent facts I can remember.'

Bringing up the topic of Michael Vick playing football again, comedian Patrice Oneal is perfectly okay with that. Oneal said Vick did his time in jail and should be able to do whatever he wants now that he is out, and not have to apologize for anything. Oneal went on saying the reason he keeps doing it is because he is good at it.

After Oneal's "time" on stage, host Leary introduced the next comedian Jeffrey Ross.

"He went to school here at B.U. before they had the really good...like this place. You remember when B.U. kind of... Now its like, I'd rather skate here then at the... Garden. They have a movie theater in the back where the players can come off the ice in their skates and watch highlights from the first period. What the... Popcorn and... I have to stop hitting him, I have to hit him."

With a wonderful introduction, Ross took over saying, "Denis, man, great job hosting tonight. Never realized Wilem Dafoe and Anne Heche had a baby."

Working out to stay physically fit for the ladies, Ross said, "I work out at the jungle gym right in front of McDonalds," explaining that his trainer is 4.5 but is built like a nine year old. "We do like 20 reps on the slide, a couple hours in the sandbox, then we...in our pants and our moms come pick us up."

Talking to Ross before Comics Come Home kicked of their 15th year, Ferrara said, "Believe half of what he says."

In his second year at Comics Come Home, Ross said B.U. was his alma mater.

"B.U. is finally getting recognized, I'm just kidding. B.U. has always been a great conglomerate, always taking over Boston, and now it's unreal," said Ross who recently came out with a book titled "I Only

your holiday season. Research indicates

that happiness increases with experiences,

rather than things. This season, resist the

urge to become preoccupied by holiday

shopping. Go skiing at Bradford Moun-

refine your tastes for fine wine and malts

at the Annual Holiday Gala at Winnekeni

Castle or head to a local performance like

Miracle on 34th Street by the Acting Out

This time of year can be tiring, finan-

cially difficult and bring up painful situa-

tions and feelings. Try a few of the above

activities to get through the season with a

Theater Company in Lawrence.

tain, ice skating at Phillips Academy,

STRESS: FROM PAGE 23

Roast the Ones I love.

"It's a how to for making fun of people without upsetting them," said Ross.

Lastly, Bill Burr closed the night blowing the audience away with his lunch joke. Before he closed the night however, he told me he was in a movie called Date Night this past summer, and has been in four Comics Come Home shows.

Burr said when Leary called him the first year he appeared in the lineup he was star

He left a message saying, "Hey, Billy, this is Denis. You're really...funny, thank you for coming on, something like that,"

"I went to order a turkey sandwich the other day," said Burr explaining that he wanted lettuce, tomatoes, and mayonnaise on Rye. "They go, 'turkey sandwich, lettuce tomato on Rye." At this time, Burr agrees with them telling them he also wants mayonnaise.

"The guy goes, 'Oh, the mayonnaise, its right over there," said Burr. "Really, then why don't you...go over there, and put it on my sandwich. I'm on this side of the register. Guy who orders the sandwich, guy who makes the ... sandwich."

Burr then told the sandwich maker that he paid full price for everything and he refuses to do work he should be doing.

"This isn't like a relay race. You make half the sandwich, you... hand it off to me, I run over and pick a line full speed over to my mom, she puts a tooth pick in it."

After Burr's performance, Leary sang the A-Hole song. Listen to the A-Hole song by going to www.youtube.com/ watch?v=OzoPTtTfcrA. For more about the Cam Neely Foundation, go to www. camneelyfoundation.com. For more information about Shawn Hansen's Comedy Corner, go to: www.shawnhansenscomedycorner.blogspot.com.



and calm and peace.

Shawn Hansen is currently in his last year at UMass Lowell. He wrote for "The Campus Report," and was sports editor. Hansen now writes for "The UMass Lowell Connector," and the "Billerica Minuteman." To get in

Christy Matta M.A. is

a DBT trainer, consultant

and freelance writer. She

is intensively trained in

Therapy (DBT) and has

designed and provided

clinical supervision to

award winning DBT resi-

Dialectical Behavior

touch with sports journalist Shawn Hansen of The Valley Patriot, email him at smharticle@

little less stress and a few more moments

dential programs. You can find more tips

and strategies for managing stress on her

blog www.christymatta.wordpress.com.

CELTICS: FROM PAGE 15

and in great shape." And on the depth of the team: "I feel good, I mean we have Rasheed Wallace and Marquis Daniels who were starters on NBA rosters last year, coming off the bench for us," Allen

Lester Hudson had this to say on what he thought his role might be this season: "I think I am a great player and I know it within myself. I will be making the open shots and playing great defense." When asked what was the worst hazing he had gotten after Rasheed Wallace had interrupted with some humorous expletives that cannot be written Lester said: "Before a preseason game against the Toronto Raptors at the Garden they told me I had to sing happy birthday to Paul Pierce and Doc before the game in front of all the fans." When asked how he felt

during it he replied, "I was shook up and

nervous, I have never done anything like

that before and I can't sing, so they got me right there."

All that can be left to say is that the unity and depth of this team is going to be a force to be reckoned with in the NBA. Although the Lakers are reigning champions, I would be clutching my old Kobe Bryant No. 8 jersey and praying to old Jack Nicholson if they think they are due for a repeat. After the impressive opening night win in Cleveland, something that hadn't been done since 2004, the Celtics set the standard as the team to beat.



*Chris Papoulias is a Dracut resident, avid New former co-host of Front

Access with George Papoulias.

England sports fan and Row, a sports talk show on Dracut and Lowell Cable

MORTGAGES: FROM PAGE 20

industry, personal integrity and a strong reputation in that field. Ask your accountant, your real estate attorney, financial planner, elder law specialist or other financial professional to bring in a reverse mortgage specialist for a face-to-face meeting to educate you, your spouse and family as well as your advisor.

Only then can you intelligently and independently decide if a reverse mortgage meets your specific needs. Don't risk your home based on bad advice or misinformation perpetuated by the media.



Bob Irving is a veteran Sr. Reverse Mortgage Consultant with First Integrity Mortgage, LLC in Lawrence MA and a Certified Senior Advisor. He is fully licensed in MA, NH & ME (NMLS # 19086)

and works with senior clients, their families and trusted advisors by referral. He may be reached at 978-686-0394 or by email at rhirving@gmail.com. Visit his website at www.rhirving.com for more detailed reverse mortgage information.



NOTEBOOK: FROM PAGE 19

13, 2009, Burtons Grill presents their second annual Angels & Elves Holiday program to benefit The Boys & Girls Club of Lawrence, MA. Burtons Grill of North Andover asks their guests to "Be an Elf "and donate any cash amount or choose to "Be an Angel " and donate \$50.00 to benefit the Boys and Girls Club. The donation is a contribution towards a hot meal and present from good old Santa Claus for 650 kids at the Boys & Girls Club of Lawrence, MA. The program was created by Burtons Grill CEO Kevin Harron and General Manager Mike Tynan of the North Andover location. "In this current economic climate everyone should try to do something. We've had a strong relationship with the Boys & Girls club of Lawrence, MA. They especially look for help during the holiday season, so we created the Angels & Elves program to give our customers the opportunity to give back."- Mike Tynan, General Manager. The Angels & Elves program rose over \$4,000 dollars last year. This year, dine at Burtons Grill and be "angel" or an "elf" and help make the holiday season for children at the Boys & Girls Club a very special one.

HAVERHILL - Mayor James J. Fiorentini announced that the City of Haverhill has received \$262,645 in funding through the Municipal Fire Staffing Grant to add 3 new firefighters to the city's force and support staffing overtime. In addition, the city will receive \$63,786 through the Municipal Police Staffing Grant to retain a police officer previously slated for layoff. In all, \$326,431 will be added to the City's public safety salary line items.

SALEM, NH - Congratultions to James P. MacLean from Salem, NH who graduated from Marine Corps Boot Camp on Nov 19 2009. He was born on Sept 20 1988.

METHUEN - Mayor Manzi has announced that Jacob Cohen of Methuen High School is the recipient of the November S.O.A.R Award. Jacob scored a perfect 800 on his SAT's in Mathematics. He presently takes AP Calculus, AP Physics, AP Biology, and AP English Literature. He is in the top 4% of his class with a 4.03 GPA and is ranked 18th out of 453. Last year Jacob was one of two juniors who excelled in the UMASS Lowell Teams Academy Program. Jacob will be applying to Penn State, Cornell, WPI, and RPI. He plans on majoring in Nuclear Engineering, Aerospace Engineering, or Biomedical Engineering.

HAVERHILL - The Verizon Foundation recently donated \$10,000 to support a unique program called "Shared Reading Saturdays", a partnership between Northern Essex Community College and Gallaudet University, designed to encourage literacy in deaf and hard of hearing children. The goal of the program is to teach parents how to read storybooks to their deaf and hard of hearing children using American Sign Language. Research shows that children whose parents read to them regularly do better academically in school. One Saturday morning each month, families gather at Northern Essex Community College's Lawrence Campus to participate in workshops where they learn how to read children's storybooks in American Sign Language to their deaf children. Shared Reading Saturdays welcomes new families. Those interested in participating can contact Vesey at kvesey@necc.mass.edu or 978 556-3701.

HAVERHILL - 'Edwin V. Johnson Newsroom' Dedicated at WHAV. Pat Johnson, widow of Edwin V. Johnson who passed away in 2003, unveiled a permanent metal plaque last month during the formal dedication of the "Edwin V. Johnson Newsroom" at the new WHAV studios in Ward Hill. Mrs. Johnson of Haverhill was joined by announcers Phil Christie of Andover, who worked with Mr. Johnson at WHAV during the 1950s and who is still heard daily on the station. Former Haverhill High School colleagues, including Elinor Curtin Cameron,

PHOTO: COURTES)

Georgetown Kiwanis making a \$1,000 gift to the Merrimack Valley Hospice House

Left to right – Bob Tandy, Past Lt. Governor for the Kiwanis Club of Georgetown, Starr Shallow, Director of the Merrimack Valley Hospice House and Beth Dimitruk, External Relations Manager for Home Health Foundation, which is comprised of Merrimack Valley Hospice, Home Health VNA and HomeCare, Inc.

and students such as Merrimack Valley Hospital's Mary O'Neil and local public access television fixture Larry Seaman also participated in the ceremony. Mayor James J. Fiorentini, whose father worked with Mr. Johnson, also attended the event. Mr. Johnson went to work for WHAV in June, 1951, immediately after graduating from Emerson College. Mr. Johnson interviewed John F. Kennedy during the future president's campaign swing through Haverhill. Later, he would have the solemn task of reporting the assassination on his 6 p.m. newscast. He pioneered local talk show programming and was the first host of the Open Mike Show. He interviewed personalities such as Danny Thomas and Frankie Fontaine. Broadcasts of today's iteration of the Open Mike Show with Jack Bevelagua will emanate from the new Edwin V. Johnson Newsroom. Mr. Johnson went to work for WHAV in June, 1951, immediately after graduating from Emerson College. Mr. Johnson interviewed John F. Kennedy during the future president's campaign swing through Haverhill. Later, he would have the solemn task of reporting the assassination on his 6 p.m. newscast. He pioneered local talk show programming and was the first host of the Open Mike Show. He interviewed personalities such as Danny Thomas and Frankie Fontaine. Broadcasts of today's iteration of the Open Mike Show with Jack Bevelaqua will emanate from the new Edwin V. Johnson Newsroom

LAWRENCE - Mr. Maali's Lawsuit laughed out of court. Mr. Maali, the former school committee candidate in

District "E" filed a bogus federal lawsuit against incumbent Peter Larocque before the election claiming that Larocque's name should be taken off the ballot because he "cheated" in the 2009 election, something Maali has yet to prove to anyone. Maali had said that he filed the lawsuit as a campaign strategy in case Larocque won in the election (which he did not) so that he could try to have Larocque unseated after the election. But Maali filed his lawsuit after the primary election, meaning that the court date in Boston federal court would be held after the election, making his bogus lawsuit irrelevant. As predicted, Maali's lawsuit was thrown out of court "with prejudice", meaning that the issue can never come up again. He was also ordered to pay Larocque's court costs and incurred more than \$300 himself in court fees.

This was a gross abuse of our court system and our legal process. For a guy who was so adamant about his claims that Larocque abused his position as a member of the school committee, I find it hypocritical that Mr. Maali would waste the courts time and resources on a lawsuit he knew he could not win. Mr. Maali knows better as a Harvard educated man. It really makes you wonder if Mr. Maali really is anything he portrays himself to be.



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 from 10am-1pm. You can

email your comments to Tdugjr@aol.com.

StayWell Safety Solutions partners with Lancer 1 to offer affordable Evacuation Training Aid

Lancer 1 Inc. announced today that

its patented WHAT NOW???® Evacuation Training Aid is now available through StayWell Safety Solutions (www.staywellsafetysolutions.com), a MediMedia USA Company.

The unique WHAT NOW???® Evacuation Training Aid blocks exits during evacuation

training drills, emphasizing the need to know alternative escape routes – a critical element for surviving an actual emergency. The device

is an effective, affordable solution for fire departments, nursing homes, hospitals, schools, college dormitories, child care centers, hotels and other workplaces where fire drills and evacuation training drills are held.

Constructed of heavy-duty laminated cardboard, this two-sided training aid is 6' x 4', but weighs less than 5 pounds and sets up in seconds.Offering the

WHAT NOW???® Evacuation Training Aid through StayWell brings significant

exposure for Lancer 1 in the health and safety training space. StayWell is an industry leader known for offering health, safety and wellness tools that help employees and students stay prepared and protected.

StayWell Safety Solutions is a member of the StayWell family of companies, which includes Krames Patient Edu-

cation, StayWell Health Management, StayWell Consumer Health Publishing (A Harvard Medical School Strategic Alliance), Vitality Communications, StayWell Productions and StayWell Custom Communications. StayWell, which is a division of MediMedia USA, represents the largest patient education and consumer health information publisher in North America.

For more information call (800) 667-2968 or visit www.StayWellSafetySolutions.com.

See our Ad on page 13 OR ... Ask Bryan at Main St. Hardware, N.A.

COUCH: FROM PAGE 36

block came out kicking and screaming for the most part. I'm happy to report that I can find something of value to watch every night of the week. It's been a while my friends. Some highlights include the comedies Modern Family on ABC and Community on NBC. Unfortunately the latter is due for cancellation... I can feel it in my bones.

The cast is fresh, the writing is funny, albeit subtle and it features a tolerable and decently funny Chevy Chase who finally decided being the second banana ain't half bad. But it's the type of show that most of the viewing audience just won't get. I'll say my goodbyes now.

An honorable comedic mention was the one comedy I never gave a chance... until I did. ABC's Cougartown with Courtney Cox. I know! Give it a chance and you'll see what I mean. Last but not least a quick mention to my other 2009 small screen

loves... V, Trauma (another dead in the water show, blah.) and FlashForward.

Well, it figures, I used up all my time on TV and movies... just like my weekends! Let me end with a lightning round of my favorite pop culture happenings from the year that was... 2009.

The Jon and Kate Debate, Dan Brown's The Lost Symbol, AC/DC's Black Ice, Party In The USA, The TV Land Awards, Neil Patrick Harris, wacky Joaquin, hating Speidi, Family Guy's Emmy nomination, Letterman's oopsie and anticipating the ATeam.

Happy New Year friends... talk to you next year!



Ray Shackett radio veteran and fan of all things entertainment. For questions, comments or suggestions, email Ray at kidcruise2003@yahoo.com

Squandering your right to vote?

John Lenotte

Congratulations to all those who won the elections last month. Those who did not win should also be congratulated for their efforts and their desire to serve the community. The pay, if any, is minimal with long hours and often very few thanks. It takes a lot of commitment to do the job. Very similar to those who are active in veteran's service organizations and other groups like the Lions, Knights of Columbus and many others.

I do find it personally disturbing when I heard one Haverhill city official commenting that they had expected a 20% turnout and were pleased and surprised that 25% voted. Given the heated race for Mayor and all the candidates running for city

council and school committee, one would have thought the voter turnout would have been greater.

This does not include the amount of money that was spent by candidates running for office. And Haverhill was not alone in what I call a poor turnout. Given all the online comments, letters to the editor, discussions among the public, where was everyone? It was a nice day so weather cannot be blamed. I guess apathy strikes again. As I wrote last month, don't complain about how the city, state or nation is being run if you did not vote. Shame on you!We continue to have men and women making daily sacrifices so that we could have the opportunity to vote and yet the majority does not. I am reading Team of Rivals by Doris Kearns Goodwin describing the Lincoln presidency. Those

were times when over 70% voted. Yes, smaller numbers, but a different mindset. What has happened to us?I shudder to think how many will vote for the US Senate race to replace Ted Kennedy. This is a critical time in our history and we need a strong voice in the Senate. Don't you want a say in who is elected? Recent elections have shown how close votes can be. I know I will be voting. I want my voice to be heard.Don't you?

Following my theme from last month, I have some additional names of football hall of famers who served the nation during World War II. These include: Charlie Bednarik, Norm Van Brocklin, Tom Landry, Lou Groza and Charlie Connerly. And let us not forget Pat Tillman who gave tative, State Senator and the Governor's up a career in the NFL to join the military and made the ultimate sacrifice for you

It is very easy on Thanksgiving to watch the Macy's parade on TV; think about the wonderful meal we will have with family and friends; and plan our run at the Black Friday specials. Now we begin the preparation for Christmas, Hanukkah and New Year holidays.Let us not forget our troops and their families. Especially hard the holiday season can be for those who are separated because of duty to the nation. Open your hearts, say a prayer, make a donation. They need to know that we care about them.

The recent crowds at the Santa Parades show that we can be motivated, that we do care. The Veteran's Day turnout is good but pales in comparison. I hope we will see you next Memorial Day and Veteran's

Day as part of a bigger crowd.

There is one area of major concern within our Commonwealth. I recognize we are in tough economic times, budgets are tight. However, the Governor has made cuts in the budgets for the Soldiers Homes in Chelsea and Holyoke totaling over \$2 million. This has the impact of eliminating the outpatient clinics at those facilities. Veterans are being told they can be seen elsewhere.

If they cannot afford the co-pay or the 20% cost they can go to the local veterans agent for local/state assistance. Does this make sense? They are at the Soldiers Homes because they don't have anywhere else. Please contact your State Represen-

Let your voice be heard. This is an injustice to men and women who served our country and now need our help. At the Haverhill Veterans Day ceremony, Mayor Fiorentini noted that veterans health care is an important issue.

I call on him and all our State Representatives and Senators to take up this cause. Veterans and their families need to be heard. Do not wait until it is too late.

May God bless our troops and their families as they continue to protect us from those who would do us harm and take away our freedoms.



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

Edith Nourse Rogers Veterans Memorial Hospital's Opens Dementia Special Care Unit.

BEDFORD - - Edith Nourse Rogers Veterans Memorial Hospital, Bedford MA is pleased to announce the opening of a new Women's Living Center for women veterans within the Geriatric Research Education and Clinical Center (GRECC) Dementia Special Care Unit. The Dementia Special Care Unit is a clinical program at the Bedford VA Hospital GRECC, a center of excellence to improve health services to Veterans with Alzheimer's and related conditions. The unit design is based on the concepts of culture transformation, which focus on creating a warm, home-like environment for residents in VA Community Living Centers.

The number of women veterans is growing and women veterans are growing older. Consequently, the number of women veterans with dementia needing long-term care in a residential setting is increasing. In accordance with the Women Veterans Health Program, established in 1985, the new women's section will promote the health, welfare and dignity of women veterans and their families.

FYI for Veterans and military personnel

Susan Piazza VALLEY PATRIOT VETERAN COLUMNIST

ALERT - VA PHARMACY SCAM The VA is warning its people about telephone scams. It appears some veterans have received phone calls from individuals claiming to be from the VA pharmacy. These individuals are looking for your personal information, and are not representatives from the VA pharmacy, or any other department related, directly or indirectly, to the VA. These individuals try to elicit credit card information by stating that the VA's billing procedure has changed and that before any prescription can be filled a credit card number must be charged. This is NOT true. This is a scam. Please alert your fellow veteran friends, tell them and their loved ones not to fall for this ploy. The only person authorized to accept credit card payments is a VA agent cashier!

SCAM HELP - In today's world one

must worry as much about identity theft and scammers as one does about robbers, and people who break and enter homes or businesses. All of us online are well aware of this problem, and even those not online are aware of the famous Nigerian scams. (They have millions of dollars but they need money to pay the taxes. If you send them tax money they will split the millions with you. Those who have sent money have never seen their money again, or any cut of millions. This scam comes in many versions.) A recent "Judge Judy" drew attention to a check scam. You receive a check for \$2,800, and deposit it into your account. You send \$2,200 back to the company that issued the check, as requested. Your bank freezes your account. Why? The check given by the company was no good to begin with! You can try to sue the company, but these scammers are usually gone before one is able to locate them. If located, the scammers quickly file bankruptcy making it impossible to collect any funds.

To prevent scams, especially during this holiday season, do not give out your personal information to anyone, especially anyone who calls you up. If you do not want to talk to the person who calls, thank them for their call, and then tell them you are going to hang up. And hang up. Do not listen for a reply. I do this, and it works

If you find yourself victim of a scam contact the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). The Commission has a Consumer Sentinel/Military website www.ftc.gov/ sentinel/military that helps the FTC and other law enforcement agencies shut down scammers. It also gives tips for avoiding identity theft, it gives useful consumer tips, ways to stay safe online as well as important information regarding credit, loans, mortgages, etc.

Remember, if you want to donate to an

organization, do so. My motto is "Give locally, it ripples globally." If you give to a veterans' organization that money goes to help people here and abroad - globally. If you give to "Habitat for Humanity", it aids the poor, maybe even a new immigrant - globally. You get the idea. Be proactive.

We want everyone to enjoy his or her holidays and remain safe this season. We pray all our service men and women, here and abroad, stay safe. May god bless them and may god bless this great democracy, the United States of America.

Until later, I remain, Sue Piazza, Past Commander, Chapter 2 Queen City, DAV



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

DEVILS: FROM PAGE 15

Saturday, Nov. 21, defensive lineman Jarvis Green visited the Tsongas Arena to not only promote The Jarvis Green Foundation, but to sign autographs as well.

Before the game against the Manchester Monarchs, New England Patriots defensive lineman Jarvis Green was on hand and spoke with the Valley Patriot.

"The Jarvis Green Foundation started four years ago, after Hurricane Katrina," he said explaining why he was there for the game. "I lost a lot of family members down there, but I started it because I wanted to help disadvantaged single working mothers." Green said he raises money and awareness for his foundation by going to see the Lowell Devils and holding autograph sessions at the same time.

Green did talk about his injury, saying

the information was disclosed publicly and, "right now, I'm doing pretty good. I'm taking it one day at a time, but hopefully I can be ready to play football whenever it comes."

Green said that rumors about him going to Lousiana to become a member of the New Orleans Saints at the end of his contract was falsely reported in the press and he has no intention on leaving New England.

"Hey, I'm here man, I've been with the Patriots for eight years, and I will love to retire as a Patriot, so I'm here and the rumors you heard were just rumors," he said. Over the coarse of his career, Green has won two Super Bowl rings with the Patriots, and is eager to win more.

* After #18 Andrei Loktionov scored to

open up the game 1-0 for the Monarchs, the Devils scored two goals by #11 Stephen Gionta, and #23 Michael Swift taking a 2-1 advantage at the end of one.

In the second period, the flood gates opened for Manchester as they scored consecutive times to take the lead. Oscar Moller tallied two goals for the Monarchs putting them in the lead within three minutes. With the thought of leaving the second period in the hands of the Monarchs, think again as #17 Vladimir Zharkov knocked in a shot with only 7.7 seconds on the board.

"We have a good team this season," Zharkov told the Valley Patriot about his thoughts on this years team. "I don't think tomorrow, I think today," explaining that he looks at each game one day at a time.

In the third period, the Devils scored

from a goal by #9 Ben Walter as #14 Nathan Perkovich tallied home the games final goal leaving 3:52 left in the game.

Devils Head Coach John MacLean, said, "The guys are playing solid hockey right now and we stuck with our game plan."

With the win, as of Nov. 22, the Devils improved to 12-6-3-0 sitting in a first place tie with the Monarchs 12-5-1-2.



Shawn Hansen is currently in his last year at UMass Lowell. He wrote for "The Campus Report," and was sports editor. Hansen now writes for "The UMass Lowell Connector," and the "Billerica Minuteman." To get in

touch with sports journalist Shawn Hansen of The Valley Patriot, email him at smharticle@ gmail.com

ERIC NELSON: From page 1

Georgia. He then joined the 82d Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, NC from 1884 to 1987. From 1988 to 1999 he was part of the 56th Medical Evacuation Battalion, Air Ambulance at Fort Bragg and the 3rd Military Intelligence Battalion. During that time Nelson also flew numerous combat missions in Saudi Arabia and Iraq as an Aeroscout Observer Section Sergeant during Operation Desert Shield and Desert



In 2003, Sargeant Major Nelson was an Aviation Mission Operations Manager for the 4th Aviation Brigade stationed in Baghdad, Iraq., During that mission, he trained over 300 personnel on convoy operations with no combat accidents or injuries. He also led and managed a team of 15 staff in an Operations Center responsible for assigning missions and tracking aircraft and ground vehicles throughout area of responsibility, 24 hours per day.

He developed planned, and implemented training on to track the movement of 2,000 personnel, 50 helicopters, and over 300 ground vehicles daily. Because of his outstanding contribution during this time, most notably through developing realistic training that directly influenced the combat success of the organization, Nelson was warded the Bronze Star Medal.

In 2004 Sergeant Major Nelson became a Senior Aviation Trainer and Performance Coach stationed at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center in Europe until 2007. During that time, he facilitated workshops in community leadership, led a team of 45 trainers and experts and coached senior

For his contributions, Nelson was awarded the Army Aviation Association of America's Order of Saint Michael Medal for contributions in training and developing future Army aviation leadership. He was also recognized for the collaboration with multi-national forces.

In 2007, Nelson received an honorable

discharge from the military and began working at Valley Works Career Center in Lawrence to help other veterans. He continues to work there as the Local Veterans **Employment Representative assisting** veterans to find employment.

During his military career, Nelson received numerous awards and decorations that include: Air Medal (#2), Army Commendation Medal (4 OLC), Army Achievement Medal (3 OLC), Good Conduct Medal (6th Award) National Defense Service Medal (2), Southwest Asia Service Medal (2 Bronze Service Stars), Humanitarian Service Medal (#2), NCO Professional Development Ribbon (#3), Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon (#2), Kuwait Liberation Medal(Saudi Arabia), Kuwait Liberation Medal (Kuwait), Meritorious Unit Commendation, Army Superior Unit Award, Drivers Badge, Master Parachutist Badge, Senior Aircraft Crewman Badge, and the Turkish Parachutist Badge.

Nelson is married to the former Juliet Elisa Wilson from the Canal Zone, Republic of Panama. Juliet is also a veteran.

The Valley Patriot is proud to be able to honor such a man who was so willing to sacrifice his life and the future happiness of his family to defend this country.

Thank you Eric Nelson for your service to this nation and for the countless contributions you have made to your community. The debt that we owe you and the men and women you served with is immeasurable and can never be repaid.

PC: From page 10

around and listens to his parents.

In the mean time, the state's taxpayers keep subsidizing a systemically dysfunctional government.

Similar to the treatment of the city's financial house, the Patrick administration ignores the chaos that is now the Lawrence school department and the soap opera that is Wilfredo Laboy that began before summer.

The state completely funds Lawrence's education activities. Again, the Patrick Administration's benign neglect, not wanting to embarrass a Latino superintendent and other Latino administrators and school committee members and a system that is 98% Latino, allows a continued lack of resolution to the Labov drama to the detriment of the system and her students. Where is the state Department of Education? There appears to be no sense of urgency to right the school department ship. The state checks keep coming, everyone keeps smiling, and the Laboy ghost in the room is looked upon as the crazy uncle at holiday dinner - keep ignoring it and maybe it will just go away.

But one has to ask – as the state throws money at Lantigua to cover up a financial mess that should have receivership written all over it – as the state continues to give the city's schools 100% funding – all in the face of municipalities up and down the Merrimack Valley laying off teachers and teachers aides, cutting curriculum programs, eliminating after schools activities, laying off fire and police – just where is the political and taxpayer outrage from our neighbors?

Are neighboring state legislators afraid to raise questions and demand resolution of these problems for fear of being labeled racists? Why does Lawrence keep getting a free ride while your children and public safety and elder services suffer?

Is Lawrence getting a free ride because of political correctness? If the same political and economic perfect storm were to be found in lily white Andover or North Andover or Georgetown, would the state just give a passing glance to the political superstructure in place with a wink and a nod, or would the state and its substantial resources step in and institute immediately an action plan to right the financial and educational ships?

Those are the questions that demand answers as we head into this holiday season. Merry Christmas and Happy Hanukah to



You can email Robert O'Koniewski, Esq. bobokesq@hotmail.com

LAROCQUE: From page 10

Math. Children should not be sitting in groups to discuss what 4x4 equals. They call this inquiry? No inquiry or discussion is needed. The focus of students should be on the Teacher at all times. If the Teacher wants to break up into groups later during the class for group work that's okay. But at the beginning of class all should be seated in rows facing the front.

* Discipline, put some real muscle behind the Lawrence School Discipline Code, Teacher Interventions, especially Level 1 Infractions. Language used among some of the students is terrible especially the F-word and the N-word. They are used too much in what is called normal conversation. These words are not allowed to be used in the real world especially at the work place and they lead to real problems! Disciplined schools attract good teachers. Good teachers will not tolerate undisciplined schools. This is why we loose so

many of our young teachers every year!

* Don't be afraid to talk about the Elephant in the room, the lack of Parental Involvement! Stop making excuses for it! Now that the Majority of the political leaders in the City of Lawrence are Hispanic, get them to help promote education in the Hispanic community. The new Mayor and Chairman of the Lawrence School Committee needs to get behind parents being involved in their children's education. The way out of poverty in Lawrence is by way of education! There is no easy way out! There is no magic pill! This is the only way to improve MCASS Scores in Lawrence.

It will take work on the part of the students and parents and the community! Everyone needs to take ownership of this issue! I now become one of Mr. Gray's constituents and I wish him all the best.

In conclusion, again I say to all the

voters of District E, I thank you for the privilege you allowed me to have the last 3 years. I will never forget it. Also to the volunteers and supporters of my campaign, a special thank you goes out to you.

I will see you around, I am not going away! I'll be volunteering doing something and making myself available to be of help where needed. I am taking my time considering my options.

Have a Merry Christmas and a Wonderful and Safe New Year.

God Bless you all!



Peter Larocque is a member of the Lawrence School Committee. He was elected by the City Council to fill the unexpired term of Amy McGovern in 2006 and then elected in his own right

in 2007. You can call him at 978-682-0900, email him at <u>peterlarocque@hotmail.com</u>



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