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State fines Lawrence \$5,750 for violating Clean Water Act

MassDEP punishes city for failing to test drinking water, threatens \$25K a day fine for further violations

Tom Duggan
VALLEY PATRIOT REPORTER

Documents obtained by The Valley Patriot last month reveal that in May and August of 2008, operators at the City of Lawrence's new \$26 million water treatment facility failed to test the city's drinking water for a chemical called chlorite. The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) requires that the city test for the chemical each month under the Clean Water Act.

Because of the city's failure to do the required testing MassDEP has fined the city \$5,750.

Within two days of being notified of the fine, Lawrence City Attorney Charles Boddy called for an "investigation into who is responsible for these continuing violations."

Boddy also called for disciplinary action against any city employee responsible for the failure to comply with state mandated water testing, demanding "action must be taken to prevent any further violations."

Lawrence City Councilor David Abdoo said he was concerned that there seems to

be no accountability at in the Water Department and in particular the Water treatment facility.

"There need to be accountability and we need to start doing things right," Abdoo said. "There are questions as to who is accountable for what is happening at that plant and what has been happening at that plant. But whenever a question arises nobody seems to have an answer. As far as I am concerned the buck stops with Bob Fazio the water commissioner and ultimately his boss, DPW director Frank McCann.

"What I have seen since coming onto the city council is that the employees are not being adequately scrutinized, nobody is ever written up, there is never any disciplinary actions taken, nobody loses their jobs, and nothing is ever put into the personnel files when things like this happen."

The enforcement order against the City of Lawrence by MassDEP dated July 10, 2008 states: "[The city of Lawrence] reported that it failed to collect the three sample distribution set for chlorite

WATER, page 12

INSIDE

SECTION 1 - AROUND THE VALLEY

Editorial/Opinions.....	2
News Update.....	3
National.....	5
A Couch with a View.....	5
Haverhill.....	5
Tom Duggan's Notebook.....	6-7
Local Political Cartoon.....	7
Lawrence.....	8-13
North Andover.....	11 & 16
Jack's Irish Craic.....	13
Veterans.....	14
Your Pets!.....	24-25
Haverhill, Georgetown.....	26-27
Lowell.....	28-29
Dracut.....	29
Methuen.....	30-31
Valley Patriot of the Month, Cont.....	32
Salvatore's.....	33
Classified.....	34-36

PULL-OUT SECTION 2 - HEALTH & FITNESS

Dr. Rustum, The Doctor is IN.....	15
Dr. Rallie McAllister.....	16
Trivia and Puzzles.....	17
Innovation Valley.....	18
Law & Insurance.....	19
Healthy Kids.....	20
Live the WOW!.....	21



**Puppy Love
with Kate
Whitney**
Page 24



**Dracut News with
Goerge Papoulias**
Page 29



**Our new Methuen
Reporter Traci
Michele Byrne**
Page 30



**Dr. Rustum,
The Doctor is IN!**
Page 15



**Local Cartoonist
Dave Sullivan of
Dracut**
Page 7



Happy Birthday
Uncle Frankie!

VALLEY PATRIOT OF THE MONTH: SEAN MCLAUGHLIN

James Moore USAF
VALLEY PATRIOT HERO REPORTER

**Citizen Patriots support
Soldier's family-a "Thank You"**

This month's Valley Patriot of the Month is Army Major Sean McLaughlin of Haverhill.

The military family is a resilient institution. While serving in the Armed Forces takes its toll on the member serving, military service permeates through to the core of the family. From long hours and deployments, to having to relocate upon receiving orders, to moving on to the next assignment and uprooting from a location that you just spent four

years together as a family, the loved ones of the ones that serve pay the price. With all of the dynamics that it entails, the day-to-day routine wouldn't be possible if it weren't for good friends and neighbors. Army Reserve Major Sean McLaughlin wants to express his gratification for those who have helped his family and he would like to create a heightened awareness of the presence of military families in your local community.

Major McLaughlin has lived in the Merrimack Valley for most of his life and is originally from Manchester, NH. He has lived in Haverhill for over 10 years. He and his wife Cynthia have known each

HERO, page 32



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Haverhill Veteran Sean McLaughlin

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EDITORIAL



Public should have been told about Lawrence water

In March and August of 2008, the City of Lawrence did not perform the states' required monthly chlorite testing on the city's drinking water.

The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection fined the city of Lawrence \$5,750 for failing to do those mandated chlorite tests and has warned the city it will face a \$25,000 a day fine for any further infractions.

Chlorite testing must be done every month as water is drawn into Lawrence's new, \$26 Million water treatment facility so that engineers can treat the water with the correct level of chemicals, ensuring that the water is safe for bathing, drinking and other necessities.

In a memo to other city officials, DPW Director Frank McCann reveals for the first time that for eight days in August last year, the chlorite testing machinery was broken. For those eight days the mandated chlorite tests could not be done yet the people of Lawrence knew nothing about it.

McCann blames the private company charged with maintaining the chlorite testing system for failing to fix the machinery during those eight days and says he believes it is unfair for the city to be fined for the failure of this private company to do their job.

Assuming that McCann's claims are true, as the DPW director he had a duty to warn residents and businesses not to consume the Lawrence water since neither he nor anyone else had a clue as to whether or not the water was safe to drink during eight days in August.

DPW Director Frank McCann owes the public an explanation. Moreover, he and other city officials ought to be held accountable for the debacle currently going on at the facility.

What did he know, when did he know it?

Lawrence City Council President Patrick Blanchette has refused to pay nearly \$9,000 in federal taxes to the IRS.

The feds placed a lien on Blanchette and, according to reports, tried to garnish his wages early last year. The IRS sent a letter to officials at Lawrence City Hall demanding that they start deducting what he owes from his city council paycheck every week, but that never happened as the City Attorney Charles Boddy (a long time ally of Blanchette's) says he suspects the letter was "misdirected" by "somoene" in city hall.

For his part, Blanchette refuses to answer any questions on the issue.

What did Blanchette know? When did he know it? Who received the Blanchette letter in the city's payroll department? Why wasn't it processed like every other IRS demand? Did they act alone?

As a public official entrusted with collecting and spending other people's taxes, we believe Blanchette has a duty to answer these questions and answer them fully.

In a sad attempt to spin this latest scandal, Blanchette told the daily paper "I don't have a money tree in my back yard," adding that he would love to pay his taxes but he's like everyone else in these tough economic times.

We just don't buy that story.

Blanchette makes more than \$70,000 a year from the taxpayers. He has free health insurance, no mortgage, a city paid cell phone, a travel allowance and a city paid blackberry, not to mention his 401K. No, Patrick Blanchette is not like everyone else, the majority of his constituents do not make \$70,000, do not get free health care, do not have a free cell phone ... but they do have one thing in common with Patrick Blanchette ... his constituents do not have money trees in their back yards either ... yet, somehow they manage to pay *their* taxes as required by law.

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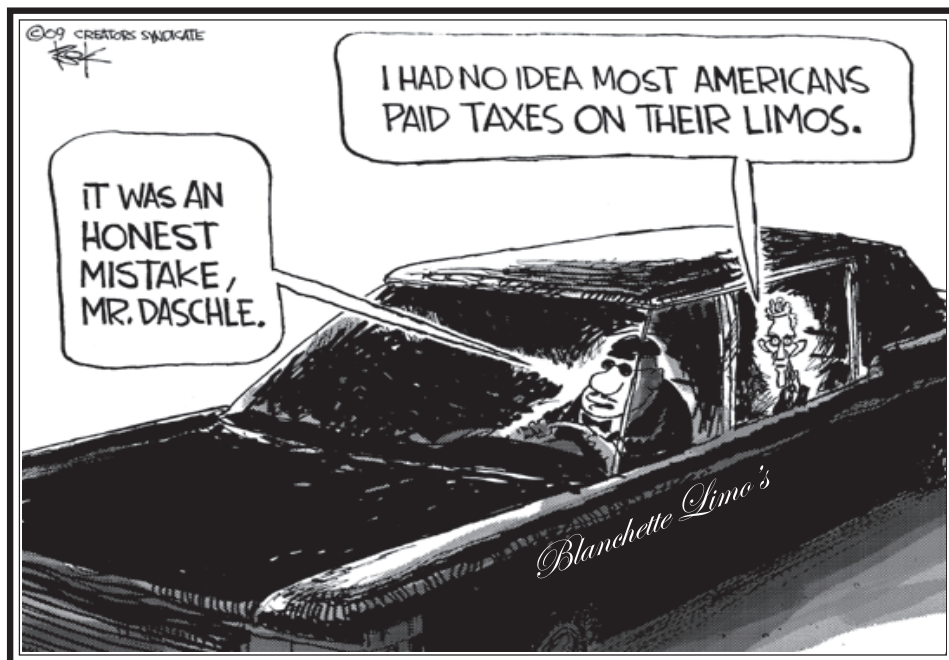
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Corrections; Please contact the editor at valleypatriot@aol.com

Editorial Board:
President: Tom Duggan, Jr.
VP/Director: Ralph Wilbur
Editor: Dr. Charles Ormsby
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LETTERS

To the editor,

I just read Mr. Palermo's column in The (January 2008) Valley Patriot.

Unfortunately, there is nothing patriotic about it.

As an educated man, Mr. Palermo, I can read between the lines and see the unpatriotic and treacherous meaning of your article.

You start off by insinuating that President Bush is a man who drinks on the job and sees himself as Harry Truman. You next move on to the "Indian" village where you fear that the President will gun down innocent women and children while he looks for WMD. Then you tell the President to move to Paraguay, where his kind is accepted because he can learn German there. This obviously being a reference to the Nazi war criminals who escaped to Paraguay after WWII. You blatantly compare President Bush to Nazi war criminals!

Your column goes well beyond that of sarcasm and political satire. It trends into the waters of treason and anarchy. I'm sure when my friends at the Secret Service read this article, they will have some serious questions to ask you. I am also sure they will have some questions for the editors of the Valley Patriot as well. Your

article does nothing but make up a fantasy of yourself as a knight in shining armor trying to run a bully out of town. In fact, you are the bully who is kicking a great man when he is down. Everything in your column is a fabrication and if you are any kind of man or American at all, you will write an apology for this treacherous yellow journalism. It's people like you who really take our freedom of speech for granted and use it in harmful ways.

Would you have the courage to read this article to President Bush face to face? I doubt it.

If your intent was to try to be funny, you failed miserably. If you intended to make a patriotic American angry, you succeeded. Even the most left-wing liberals know when to draw the line. You don't compare the President of the United States to Nazi war criminals or a killer of women and children.

With all due respect to the great Harry Truman, he killed thousands of innocent women and children when he dropped the atom bomb. He lived with that burden the rest of his life. A great man like Harry Truman would never be friends with the likes of you.

You are a disgrace to your community, your college, and your country.

Tim Fram - www.tfram.com

To the editor,

Liberty – A Lost Concept – A column by Dr. Charles Ormsby recently appeared in this paper. I agreed with parts of it, but at times I just had to wonder about the conclusions Dr. Ormsby reached.

Of all the aspects of liberty – self-government, freedom of religion, the press, assembly, freedom of speech, the one Dr. Ormsby singles out as most important is the right of a person to use and dispose of his or her property as he or she chooses, without government interference, as long as he or she doesn't interfere with other's rights.

As always, the Devil is in the details. If my neighbor has loud late-night parties, or has a junkyard on his property, most people would agree he's interfering with my rights. What if he fills in wetlands on his property? No direct interference with my rights, but in a way, he's harming me and everyone else by harming the environment. Suppose he has a construction business and stores several tons of dynamite within twenty yards of my home. Again, no direct harm, but certainly the potential.

Where would Dr. Ormsby come down on these issues?

Not related to property, but pertaining directly to persons, certainly more important than property, are other issues. If me and my sister, or my brother!, agree and want to be married, or if four women agree freely to be my wives, would Dr. Ormsby, believe that the community, and its agent, the government, be unable to prevent these actions because they do no harm to anyone? It's hard for me to credit this, but that's what he states!

If a group, by majority vote, cannot decide to tax people, because as Dr. Ormsby states, they do not have this right as individuals, what is he doing on the School Board? The School Board is a government entity, supported by tax dollars, voted by a majority, - but not all – of the citizens. Certainly taking a portion of the property of those unwilling to support public schools infringes on their rights, and they're not harming anyone. And if School Board member Dr. Ormsby has no problem with those individuals paying tax, how can he oppose other majorities imposing other taxes?

This all sounds to me like Dr. Ormsby doesn't like paying taxes for things he doesn't agree with. Who does?

Carl Gurtman, York, ME



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Judge dismisses lawsuit against The Valley Patriot

VALLEY PATRIOT STAFF

Judge Marita Hopkins dismissed a lawsuit against The Valley Patriot last month ruling that a column appearing in the May 2006 edition of the monthly publication did not slander or defame Methuen resident Kevin Thompson.

Thompson who is a member of the Fatherhood Coalition, had written a book and sought publicity from the Valley Patriot, which published Thompson’s own interview with himself.

On the page opposite Thompson’s self interview, The Valley Patriot also published an op-ed piece challenging some of Thompson’s claims and criticizing Thompson.

Thompson, who alleged the opinion piece slandered him and caused him emotional distress sued the newspaper for \$3 million.

Judge Hopkins ruled:

“One cannot be so prominent and vocal a partisan in a public debate, particularly

when one has had a hand in creating the debate in the first place, and then cry foul at the rough and tumble of the marketplace of ideas.

Thompson cannot establish that any of the claims in the op-ed are anything other than opinion or, if they are fact, that they are false. Therefore, he cannot, a fortiori, prove that they were made with “actual malice. Consequently his claim must be dismissed.” – Judge Merita Hopkins, Justice of the Superior Court.

Valley Patriot president Tom Duggan said that he was not surprised by the judges ruling and that he always believed Thompson’s claims were without legal merit.

“Many people erroneously believe that they can sue someone for slander or libel because you wrote something about them that they do not like, or because you got a minor fact wrong in a story. It is sad that so few people are educated about the law regarding free speech in this state and in

this country. It’s very hard for a population to fight for a concept they really do not understand. Everyone has a right to their opinion and the judge clearly confirmed that, when you criticize a public figure, you cannot be silenced because the person you are expression your opinion about sees things differently.”

In Judge Hopkins’ ruling she stated:

“...in this case, most of the op-ed piece is properly characterized as opinion. Those portions which are arguably asserted as fact are either not false or not defamatory. The court has considered all the statements in the op-ed that Thompson claims are defamatory, but for the sake of brevity will summarize, by way of a few examples, the nature of Thompson’s complaint about these statements and the reason why the statements fail to meet the legal definition.....

....Thompson takes issue with the following statement ; (published in the Valley Patriot) “*Thompson is a teacher in the Methuen public schools and sources in the school system have said that his book and custody battle have disrupted and affected his teaching, and Thompson has been given several warnings about his behavior.*”

Thompson says his problems with school officials arise out of a union-related conspiracy to drive him out of the school, and are not related to his custody dispute or the book and media exposure that followed.

Thompson himself, however, provided the editors of the Valley Patriot with documents on which he described how officials disciplined him because they believed, or at least claimed to believe,

that he was discussing his custody dispute and the surrounding media fallout with his students during class time. There was therefore, nothing false about the aforementioned statement.”

Valley Patriot attorney Peter Caruso of Andover, who was the Eagle-Tribune’s attorney on first amendment issues for decades, said that the lawsuit against the Valley Patriot should be seen as a triumph for free speech and the right of newspapers to encourage citizens to participate in healthy debate in the market place of ideas. Thompson filed a motion for the judge to reconsider her ruling, which was denied. In a separate court action, Lawrence attorneys Carmine and William DiAdamo have also sued The Valley Patriot claiming slander but that lawsuit has been put on hold as the newspaper editors counter-sued the DiAdamos under what is called “Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation” suit or “Anti-Slapp” legislation.

According to the Citizens Media Law Project website, “the state’s anti-Slapp laws were designed to allow a special motion to dismiss a complaint filed against you based on your “exercise of [your] right of petition under the Constitution of the United States or of the Commonwealth.”

The statute, by its terms, does not apply to speech activity that is not connected to petitioning the government, but Massachusetts courts have interpreted petitioning activity to include some online publishing activities.

If a court grants a motion to dismiss under the anti-SLAPP statute, it will dismiss the plaintiff’s case early in the litigation and award attorneys’ fees and court costs.

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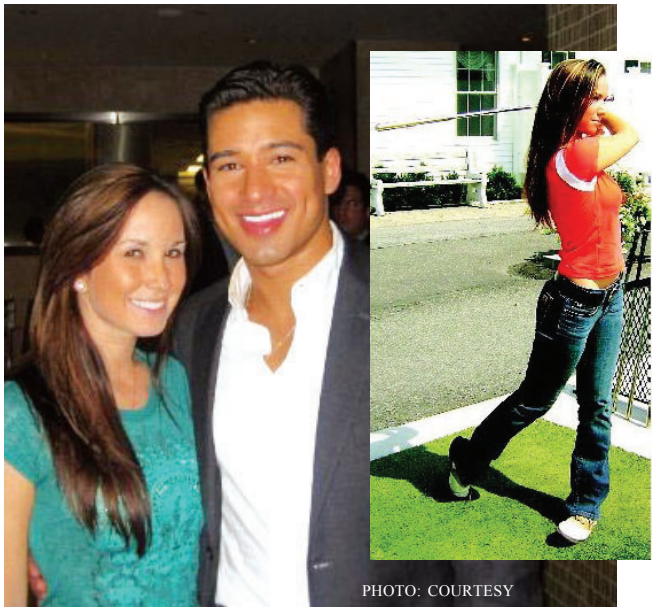


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The Valley Patriot's "Puppy Girl" Kate Whitney, a resident of Boxford and the president of Swingrite Corporation, hangs out with Mario Lopez in Las Vegas, Nevada last month. To learn more about Swingrite visit swingrite.com

INSERT PHOTO: TOM DUGGAN

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John Stossel
SYNDICATED COLUMNIST

This week the Left arrived in Washington, excited about the wonderful things it will do to us — I mean, for us. They always do it for us.

Liberals say that they, unlike those reactionaries who've held power for too long, want to give us more choices. Abortion-rights advocates (<http://tinyurl.com/94zwwh> and <http://tinyurl.com/584bvk>) want women to have the "right to choose." Gay-rights advocates want the choice of marrying someone of the same sex and serving in the military.

Choice is good. As a libertarian, I'm all over choice. But strangely, today, liberals are mostly about what Americans should not be allowed to choose.

AFL-CIO boss John Sweeney says, "[O]ur top priority is passage of the Employee Free Choice Act, legislation that will restore workers' freedom to bargain for a better life" (<http://tinyurl.com/83f48q>).

That sounds nice. But it really means that workers will no longer have the privacy and safety of a secret ballot when voting on a union. If a union can round up signatures from more than half the employees at a plant, other workers will be forced to unionize, too.

Unorganized labor — better known as most of us, or free people making our own way — won't be helped by this coercive limiting of choice.

Parents have little choice when they send their children to school. Government forces everyone to pay into a system that locks most kids into a unionized monopoly.

If low-income parents were allowed \$11,000 vouchers (that's about how much government spends per student), that would give poor parents a choice. But liberals don't want that.

If you take risks with your own money to build a business, liberals want to limit your choice as to what you can say, how much you pay, and whom you can hire or fire. Freedom of association? Fuggeddabout it. You cannot choose to offer newcomers on-the-job training at less than \$7.25 per hour. You can't choose to pay older people or pregnant women less because their medical costs may be higher. So newcomers, older people and pregnant women can't choose those jobs. Liberals don't want to liberalize that.

In a job interview, you better not ask about age, citizenship status, disability, or whether the person goes by "Mr." "Mrs." "Miss" or "Ms." Those questions are forbidden (<http://tinyurl.com/9jpf4w>).

Liberal litigators have essentially outlawed racial and sexual comments in schools and workplaces.

A cashier at the Senate coffee shop was threatened with firing for addressing customers as "honey" and "baby" because one man complained it was "sexual harassment." (<http://tinyurl.com/9m25cu>).

STOSSEL, page 13

Israel wants peace but must defend itself

Laurie Tishler Mindlin
MERRIMACK VALLEY JEWISH FEDERATION

Monday, January 5, 2009 - The media images from southern Israel and Gaza chronicling the embattled region, the loss of life and the deteriorating human conditions are overwhelming. It is terribly tragic that innocent people are dying and injured in both Israel and Gaza. No one wants the hatred to continue and many wish for peace. However the current situation was necessitated because Hamas, a terrorist organization in Gaza whose covenant states on page 1, “Israel will exist and will continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it,” has been attacking Israeli civilians at will for many years.

Israel is now acting in defense, reacting to a situation forced upon her. Rocket fire began in 2001, and since the Israeli government completed the withdrawal of its troops and citizens from the Gaza strip in August of 2005, over 6,300 rockets have been fired from Gaza at the homes, schools, businesses and synagogues of Israel’s southern communities. Six months ago, the two sides agreed to a “tahdia” — or short-term cease-fire — but the rockets never fully ceased. On Dec. 19, Hamas unilaterally declared this cease-fire over, and large-scale rocket fire resumed.

I had my own taste of terror from Gaza when I visited several towns and communities along the Israel-Gaza Border on November 18, 2008. On route, my fellow travelers and I were instructed that if we heard the “Color Red” alert, we had 10-15 seconds to file off the bus, run for cover, curl up into a ball and protect our

heads. If a rocket hit the bus, the shrapnel could travel over 50 meters. I was sitting in the middle of the bus and knew I would not be able to get out.

When we reached our first destination, we were instructed to always keep our eyes moving about to locate places we could run to within 10 seconds. I looked around and keep trying to identify bomb shelters, reinforced buildings...anyplace where I might be safe. A rocket had hit the town of Sderot on November 16. We met with people who were trying to live normal, productive lives while under constant terrorist attack. While we were visiting with some seniors and learning about the rockets that hit their homes (last year 700 rockets hit near this one kibbutz), there was a huge, loud noise and my fellow visitors and I jumped up, ready to seek refuge. The seniors did not move, for they recognized that the noise was an Israeli jet and it had not been preceded by a “Color Red” alarm. One person from my trip used his blackberry to see what was taking place and it turned out the jet had taken off because a rocket had just hit Yad Mordecai, a kibbutz 5 kilometers (3 miles) away.

We met with school children, teens, young adults, parents and seniors, each with nightmare stories of living through years of constant bombing. Eighty-four percent of the children in the area have symptoms of trauma: wetting beds, picking fights and scared to come out of their houses, for example. Adults panic, forgetting to grab a child as they run to a shelter or flee a bus. Businesses have

ISRAEL, page 14

A COUCH WITH A VIEW

Those were the days...

Ray Shackett
VALLEY PATRIOT ENTERTAINMENT REPORTER

I think that based on my first three articles in this fine publication it is safe to say that it’s the little things in life that give me pleasure.

Fine wine, aged cheese and the theme song to the Love Boat. Where have all the memorable opening credits to television shows gone?

Most shows today choose to skip this lost art form in place of more ad time. Or they opt for a flashy CGI opener. Don’t get me wrong, sometimes subtlety scores.

Take the digital clock emerging piece by piece to form the numbers 24... very exciting. Or this phantom letters that spell out LOST that drift across our screen on Wednesday nights... very suspenseful. It may be flashy but I do dig that opening sequence for the NBC spy comedy Chuck. Bouncy tune, artistic and colorful pictures of the cast... fun for all. What I miss the most as a child whose boob tube memories date back to the mid 70’s is the hit theme song and show clip intros of yesteryear.

As I write this questionable piece of journalism I am surfing the ever popular YouTube in search of old memories. There are a couple things that make for a great television show opening sequence.

First you need a catchy theme song. A tune that is written and produced for that specific show. Today’s shows rely on discovering new artists (which I do support whole heartedly) with material already in the can.

There is a lack of originality and soul with this approach. To assure authenticity you may consider calling on Greg Evigan (B.J. and the Bear, My Two Dads) or Alan Thicke (Diff’rent Strokes, The Facts of Life). Can a theme song become a radio hit after the fact you ask? Yes! Welcome Back Kotter spent some time on the Billboard charts as well as the themes to Miami Vice and S.W.A.T. Believe it or Not from The Greatest American Hero spent some time at #2 on the charts and the theme to Cheers can be heard from time to time on those “we play everything” radio stations.

Second you need to have most of your season already in the can so you can pull out the best clips to ad to your opening sequence. Hardcastle and McCormick promises lots of sports car action and young buddy/old buddy hijinks and adventures. Magnum PI lets you know right from the start, with a classic 80’s guitar riff theme song, that all you need is a moutached smile, cool car and a helicopter pilot friend to fight crime in Hawaii.

Would you know that Murdock was “the crazy one” without that gem of an opener for The ATeam? I think not.

The list is long and complicated but I’ve narrowed it down my favorites for your YouTube viewing pleasures. These are what I consider to be the best television show opening sequences of all time from the mid 70’s to the mid 80’s... the golden age of television (I’m 36... just go with it). Look them up and enjoy the trip down memory lane.

10) CHiPs – After the 90 car pile up that started every episode this opener always brought the mood back up to “Estrada” on the “cool” scale.

9) Cheers – Opting to take the non-clip route, it still delivers a desire to visit the place where everybody knows your name. *Writer’s note* – Beware, the actual bar that they used for exterior shots in Boston looks nothing like the shows bar on the inside.

8) Simon and Simon – A great 80’s guitar riff with a little synth thrown in make for a great set up for the total opposite, sibling detectives.

7) The ATeam – The opening sequence sets you up for all the fun to follow with an explanation of this ragtag rouge army unit and their quest for goodness.

6) WKRP – Double points for this one with the standard, but memorable opening

sequence and the bonus closing credits with a whole new tune!

5) Bosom Buddies – Tom Hanks cross dressing sitcom gem with actions that seem to be in time with the theme song. Just a whole lotta fun! *Writers note* – Billy Joel’s “My Life” was used as the theme but not performed by the Piano Man. The DVD versions have cut out the song completely which ruins the whole opening sequence!

4) Silver Spoons – Another sweet theme, but for me it was all about the train that ran through the living room! How cool was that?

3) Family Ties – A shining example of the catchy theme and clip montage at its best.

2) The Love Boat – Enchanting theme song with special guest stars featured one by one... in alphabetical order of course.

1) The Greatest American Hero – How about the Greatest Opening Sequence of All Time! Nuff said...



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



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TOM DUGGAN’S NOTEBOOK

LAWRENCE - Budget Director
Contributes to mayoral campaign

It may not be illegal or a violation of the ethics laws (though it probably should be) but Lawrence Budget and Finance Director Mark Andrews has been listed on City Council President Patrick Blanchette’s campaign finance reports as donating \$100 to Blanchette’s mayoral campaign. Andrews answers directly to Mayor Sullivan on all day to day issues but also answers to the city council on all budget issues. With Blanchette sitting as the Council President there is more than an appearance of impropriety here as Andrews will be either working for a Mayor Blanchette (having donated money to him) or subject to the whims of the council president between now and election time. But Andrews is not the only department head to have done this. In the past, police chief John Romero has contributed to Mayor Sullivan’s campaign and appeared at several city councilors’ fund raisers. Water Commissioner Bob Fazio also gave Blanchette money for his campaign. Planning Director Michael Sweeney gave money to City Councilor Grisel Silva two years ago and Fire Chief Takvorian was seen at a Blanchette for Mayor fundraiser two months ago. No department head in any community should be giving money to elected officials who control their budget, sign or confirm their contracts or have the power to hire, fire or discipline them. The ethics commission may be a toothless, paper tiger when it comes to Lawrence politicos but the public should be very wary of any politicians who accepts such contribution or any department head who makes them.

MASSACHUSETTS Pangi’s
revelation

State Senator Steve Pangiotakos has a great new idea. And he is going to push that idea through the Massachusetts legislature. And if his idea is passed, poor people in Massachusetts will not be able

to take their kids sledding in the wintertime. “Come on” you say. “Tommy, now you’re just making things up.” No, I’m completely serious. Without realizing it, one of our states BEST legislators at The State House has proven that the members of state legislature really have nothing better to do than to make up reasons to pass new laws. Laws which make it seem as though the politicians are doing something significant, when in reality they are taking away personal liberties and making life harder for the poor people of Massachusetts. His idea....forcing parents to put helmets on their kids when they go sledding in the wintertime. Yup, that means, if you don’t put a helmet on your kid, or you child goes out sledding without your knowledge, you will be fined by the state for failing to keep your children safe. And the best part? Well, there is no best part, only absurdity as a debate will now take place at The State House on “sledding safety” instead of *public safety*, as thousands of police officers and firefighters face layoffs across the state. This is just one more example of Nero fiddling while Rome burns. I expect this kind of ridiculousness from the likes of a David (Where-is-he) Torrisi or ultra-liberals like Barbara L’Italien, but never in my wildest dreams could I have imagined it from a well grounded, common-sense legislator like Senator Steve Pangiotakos. Maybe he’s been drinking the Lawrence water.

LAWRENCE_
Israel Reyes

Former Lawrence City Councilor Israel Reyes is running for mayor of Lawrence and despite the fact that Councilor Patrick Blanchette is considered the front-runner in the race, Reyes out raised him by a margin of almost 5-1 last year. Reyes, who is not even a current office holder raised in excess of \$54,000 for his mayoral bid this November while Blanchette raised a mere \$14,000.

LAWRENCE_
Speaking of campaign finances

While the majority of the Lawrence City Council filed their campaign finances to the city clerk’s office on time, Council President Patrick Blanchette (who has run in at least 6 elections) did not. Blanchette submitted his finances late, but at least he filed them! Councilors Grisel Silva, Jorge Gonzales and Nilka Alvarez are in violation of campaign finance laws as the State’s office of political finance under Secretary of State’s Galvin’s officer requires all elected officials and candidates to submit a list of donations and expenditures in January every year. We will be looking at Methuen, North Andover and Dracut next month to see which politicians in those communities are in violation as well.

NORTHANDOVER
Five Year Anniversary

It’s hard to believe we have been publishing The Valley Patriot for as long as we have, even more hard to believe is how successful this little monthly newspaper has been since our very first edition in March of 2004. Next month marks the fifth anniversary of The Valley Patriot and with all that is going on in The Valley, I am sure our five year anniversary edition will be just as informative and controversial as each of our previous editions. Since we are going to be extremely busy putting together next month’s paper, we encourage advertisers and contributors to try and submit material as early as possible! And, if you are not advertising your business in The Valley Patriot, NOW is the time to come on board! Give us a call at (978) 557-5413!

HAVERHILL
Valentines Day Dance

The Haverhill VFW Ladies Auxiliary is holding a Valentine’s 50’s Dance on Saturday, February 14, from 7:00 to 11:00

p.m. at the VFW Hall, 64 Kenoza Ave. Dance to the hits of the 50’s with DJ Kenny Merrill. Refreshments, prizes, contests will be included in the great night of fun. Proceeds will support Ladies Auxiliary programs such as cancer aid and research, veterans and family support, Americanism, and aid to veterans. Tickets are \$10 per person, and tables can be reserved. Tickets are available at the VFW Call or contact Pat Paradis at 978-372-8347.

LAWRENCE
THNA Meeting

Due to Catholic School’s week and Ash Wednesday falling on the last Wednesday in February, the Executve Board of The Tower Hill Neighborhood Association has combined the January and February meeting. The new date for the meeting will be **Wednesday February 11, 2009**. If you have any questions please don’t hesitate to call, 603-548-9929. For additional information and updates, check out our new website at www.thnalawrence.com

DRACUT - Democrat Caucus

The Dracut Democratic Caucus was held on January 31st, 2009, to elect delegates to the State Democratic Convention. The convention will be held on June 5th and 6th in Springfield, Massachusetts. Dracut elected 7 male delegates, 5 female delegates and 3 alternates. The following males were elected: Pete Wilde, Phil Greene, Howie Savard, John Kelly, Joe Gangi Sr., Joe Gangi Jr., William Zielinski. The following females were nominated: Donna Wilde, Janet Gangi, Sandi Cunha, Mary Gail Martin, Lou Ann Jendro. The following were elected to be alternate delegates: Ken Cunha, John Zimini, John Dyer

MASSACHUSETTS

Governor signs “Move Over Law”

On December 22, 2008, Governor Deval Patrick signed Senate No. 2103, An Act Relative to Operating a Motor Vehicle

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When Approaching Stationary Emergency Vehicles, into law. The passage of the “Move Over Law” will protect roadside service workers and public safety officials on our highways. The law will go into effect in 90 days. The legislation requires motorists to move over one traffic lane when approaching a stationary emergency roadside vehicle if it is safe to do so. If the volume of vehicles on the roadway does not allow for a safe lane shift, then the motorist is required to reduce their speed to a reasonable and safe level for road conditions. Violators will be faced with a ticket up to \$100.00. The law was strongly advocated by the “Statewide Towing Association, Inc.,” And I am sure they did it... for the children!

LAWRENCE
LHS/Reggie Comedy Night
Event: LHS/REGGIES COMEDY FUNDRAISER NIGHT - “COME LAUGH AND HAVE FUN, SUPPORT OUR REUNION” - Host: Erin Livingston Carroll, Friday, February 27 at 8:00pm. - 10:00pm. at the Claddagh Pub. To see more details and RSVP, visit: <http://www.facebook.com/n/?event.php&eid=43032653229>

ANDOVER
Free weight management classes
Curves of Andover & Lawrence is offering free weight management classes to teach its proven method for losing weight and raising metabolism. More studied than any other program, Curves’ classes are based on the groundbreaking new research findings of the Exercise & Sport Nutrition Laboratory at Texas A&M University. Now, the women of Andover & Lawrence can learn the powerful secret that has helped millions of women lose millions of pounds and keep them off for good. Classes are open to members and non-members. Classes include: * Start-Up Class (90 minutes) for first-time participants. * Phase 3 (30 minutes) to teach the last and most important stage of the Curves Weight management Plan and the secret that makes the plan work. * Special Topics Classes (30 minutes) will cover a different topic each month, including Smart Grocery Shopping, Choosing the Right Carbohydrates, Eating Out, Emotional Eating and more. Classes will be taught by Curves’ Registered Dietitian, Nadia Rodman, and facilitated by weight management coaches from Curves of Andover & Lawrence, through a series of DVDs that will alternate teaching with hands-on activities. Participants will be encouraged to make a weekly appointment to weigh in with their weight management coach, who will provide accountability.

All classes are free to members and non-members, but participants will be able to take advantage of special pricing on essential tools that will enhance their success. For just \$49.95, participants can purchase a bundle including: a bottle each of Curves’ multivitamin and Curves’



News Item: Lawrence Council President Blanchette refused to pay fed taxes, Feds place lien

The Valley Patriot is always interested in reader suggestions for local, political cartoons (valleypatriot@aol.com) You can email Dave at Sull93@aol.com.

calcium supplements, a can of Curves’ protein shake, and a copy of the new book “The Curves Fitness & Weight Management Plan.” Products are available for purchase separately and no purchase is required to attend classes.

For more information, contact the Curves trainers at 978.794.1800 or Shauna@AndoverLawrenceCurves.com.

HAVERHILL
NECC Holds Financial Aid Program
Northern Essex Community College will hold a college financial aid night at the Haverhill YMCA, 81 Winter St., in Haverhill, at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, February 24, 2009. The NECC financial aid night is free and open to the public. The presentation will include an explanation of the types of financial aid available as well as a demonstration on how to navigate the financial aid application process. Babysitting services will be available free of charge. For additional information contact Tracy Fuller, executive director of the Haverhill YMCA at 978-374-0506 or at fullert@northshoreymca.org or Charles Diggs, associate director of enrollment services at NECC at 978-556-3608 or cdiggs@necc.mass.edu

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Making education better in 2009

Peter Larocque

LAWRENCE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

As we go forward now that all the Ceremonies and Celebrations and Pageanties in Washington D.C. have finally come to an end, Public School Education in the City of Lawrence continues to be the subject that I choose to focus my attention upon. I would like to spell out for you some initiatives that I believe and support in this February edition of the Valley Patriot.

The Superintendent has put forth the issue of Same Sex Classrooms for our Middle School children. The Current research has shown some good merit to this idea and a grassroots interest is moving in this direction. We in the LPS are establishing a Same Sex Classroom Task Force to study the data and then bring to the table what they have found. As we go forward on this issue, I have put forth a request to change the word Sex to the word Gender. I felt that for us citizens in Massachusetts when we hear the words same sex it is usually followed by the word marriage. This is not to offend anyone's beliefs system. I just do not want any confusion in the minds of anyone on this most important initiative.

So I put forth this small change in terminology which would allow parents and students and the Same Gender Classroom Task Force to be a little more comfortable discussing this subject.

Next, I support the need for parents being held more accountable for the education of their children as well as our good qualified teachers.

We are seeing a turn around in this area in the City of Lawrence. Just take a look at the Parent Informational Forum that we held this past November which I helped organize.

This event will now be an annual one. We have heard the suggestions made about our first event and we will incorporate them into next year's event. Thank you to all who attended and for all your input.

This is how we together will improve our school district. But I would be remiss if I didn't say that the need still exists for more participation from parents in the education of their children. In spite of what you may have heard, all are welcome.

Next I support the availability to give incentives to Certified Teachers to teach classes in their content area in our most difficult Schools like the Arlington Middle

School and the Guilmette Middle School, and the Leonard School. I believe we have wonderful teachers in the Lawrence School District and I would just like to be able to have incentives given to Teachers who choose go to these more difficult Schools when student scores are improved.

Another idea that I support is to have a standardize test rather than 50 different test across the United States. Our students are not in competition in my humbled opinion with other students in the US. They are competing globally. They are in competition with China, Europe, Japan and others across the Globe. Keep accountability apart of the equation but let each School District set Goals that are realistic and attainable to reach. Now AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress), Goals set by the state are not realistic.

Plus the State needs to stop moving the finish line. Now a student needs a score of 220-229 to pass the MCASS with a Needs Improvement Low. In the year 2010 the new Needs Improvement Low will be 240. Also the closer we get to 2014 the more school districts are underperforming. Even the Suburban School Districts are now finding themselves falling behind.



PHOTO: TOM DUGGAN

Lawrence School Committee member Peter Larocque

The reason being is that the AYP Goals set by the State are not realistic to the needs of schools and their students.

These are just a few of the ideas and concepts that I support and agree with. We are now entering the FY10 Budget process and what the experts are telling us is that hard and difficult choices will have to be made. I will not be shrinking away from this responsibility that my constituents have elected me to make.

Everything is on the table for discussion. Stay tuned. God Bless you all.

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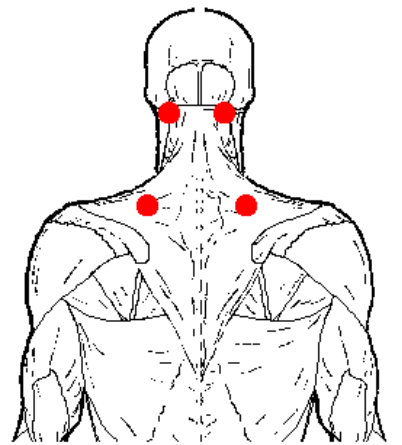
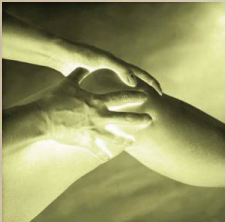
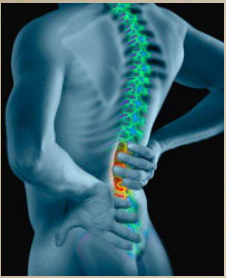
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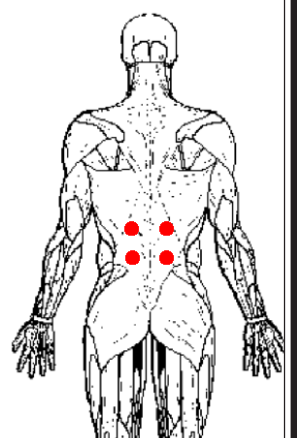
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Lawrence Family Dentistry named “Storefront of the Month”

The Office of Lawrence Mayor Michael Sullivan is pleased to announce that the winner of the prestigious “Storefront of the Month” for January 2009 is Lawrence Dental Center at 314 Essex Street. The efforts of Dr. Sam Makkar and his colleagues at 314 Essex St. are an inspiration to the business community of Lawrence to eliminate litter and make shopping in Lawrence more inviting.

Lawrence Dental Center has made great efforts to keep its property free of snow, ice and litter right out to the street, often removing snow and litter in front of

neighboring stores. Lawrence Dental Center has a fine reputation for its clean business entrance and welcoming reception area for clients to enjoy. Lawrence Dental Center constantly shows great creativity and pride in its storefront, which has earned it the *Storefront of the Month Award* for January 2009.

Nominations for next month’s *Storefront of the Month* are accepted via email to FOConnor@cityofLawrence.com or can be submitted to the Community Development Department located at 147 Haverhill St.

Governor Deval Patrick exhibits community service at Little Sprouts

Martin Luther King Jr. Day was celebrated this year not only as a day of remembrance for one of the most influential leaders in American history, but also to honor his mission through community service.

Governor Deval Patrick issued the weekend of January 17-19th as a service weekend, and participated himself through reestablishing environments within Roxbury Community College.

Along with YouthBuild Boston and the Red Sox Foundation, Governor Patrick chose Little Sprouts @ Roxbury Community College as a site for service. The volunteer team was joined by Little Sprouts teachers and literacy team to reorganize classrooms and paint multicultural murals inside the school. The mural, which spans 3 walls, showcases Little Sprouts literacy, math, and science curriculum and characters from WGBH’s *Between the Lions* and *Peep and the Big Wide World*.

Governor Patrick’s artwork is now memorialized inside the school as is the inspiration of Martin Luther King Jr.’s vision and a reminder of the importance of

service to others. “Governor Patrick’s dedication to ensuring that “All means All” with both access and quality for all preschool children in the Commonwealth is underscored by his support in creating this community service day. This beautiful mural represents literacy rich art for our children,” noted Susan Leger Ferraro, Founder and President of Little Sprouts.

“We are honored to serve with the Governors administration in creating models of early education excellence in the nation.”

Governor Patrick and community volunteer painting mural inside Little Sprouts at Roxbury Community College.

About Little Sprouts Inc.: Little Sprouts has been a leader in providing award winning early education since 1982. As group of humanitarians, we trust in the power of literacy to change the world; social, emotional, intellectual and physical literacy for children, youth, teachers and families. We believe in the commonality in humanity. We embrace that unity is best achieved by celebrating diversity. Little Sprouts has 9 schools in Massachusetts supporting families that reflect 32 cultures speaking 23 languages from all walks of social, economic, religious and ethnic backgrounds. To learn more about how you can join us in making the world a better place, visit us at www.littlesprouts.com

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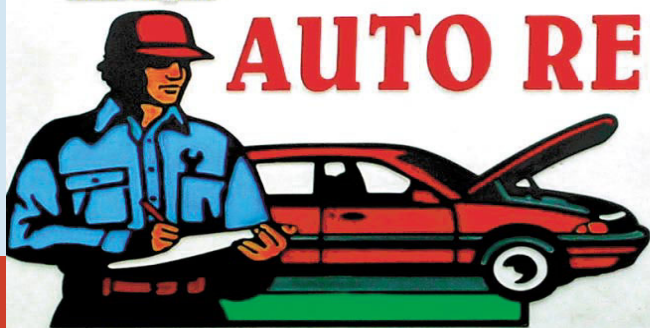
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North Andover activities

A representative from AARP will be at the North Andover Senior Center starting on Fridays in February to assist North Andover Seniors with the preparation of their 2008 Income Tax Returns. Please bring with you a copy of last years tax return (State & Federal) as well as your real estate tax bill, your water and sewer bill and form MA 1099HC and rental receipts if applicable. Information will be available for the Circuit Breaker Tax Credit for low and moderate-income seniors whose real estate tax payment are greater than 10% of their income. You must file a state income tax return to claim the Circuit Breaker Credit, whether or not you have to file otherwise. If your credit is greater than the amount of income taxes you owe, the state will give you a check for the difference. The maximum credit for tax refund for tax year 2008 is \$930. For an appointment, please call the North Andover Senior Center and speak with Paula. This is a volunteer service and donations are encouraged.

Blood Pressure Clinics: Starting on Wednesday, February 4, North Andover Senior center will once again host the Walk- In Clinic on a weekly basis. This program has been reinstated through Title 111 funding and will be held at the McCabe Court community room during the renovation of the Senior Center.

Seniors on the go:
Foxwoods, Tuesday, February 17 & Tuesday, March 17, 2009, \$25.00, pick up at St. Michael's Church parking lot at 6:45 AM **Mardi Gras Madness** at the Holiday Inn in Boxborough, MA, Monday, February 23, 2009, \$42.95 – includes show, lunch and transportation. Pick up time and location to be determined. **Andy Cooney's Forever Irish** at Venus De Milo, Tuesday, March 10, 2009, \$69.00 – includes show, lunch and transportation. Pick up time and location to be determined. Call the Center at 978-688-9560 for more information.

Mystery Ride: This month will be a real treat, "Down by the river don't you know!" February 5, 2009 depart at 11:00 and return approximately 3:00PM, sign up opens on January 15 at 8:30, lunch and a great time, \$5.00.

Sketching & Oil Painting: Thursdays 12:00 PM– 2:00 PM at the Youth Center located at 33 Johnson Street. The new

session started on Thursday, January 8, 2009 and runs through February 12, 2009. This is a six-week session for \$24.00. Please call 978-688-9560 or stop by the office at 85 Main Street to register. This class is taught by Mary Ann Manning who is an award winning artist and is geared to all ability levels.

New Programs: Attorney George White will be presenting a seminar on Wednesday, February 18, 2009 from 6:30 PM – 8:00 PM at the Town Hall in the Selectmen's Meeting Room. We will be starting a Cancer Support group beginning on Wednesdays, April 15 – May 20, 2009, once a week from 12:30 PM – 2:00 PM. A Grief Support group will be starting in May and will meet once a week for 6 – 8 weeks. Watch for more details on these programs in future articles or call the Center at 978-688-9560.

Walking Group: The Senior Center is starting a new Walking Group which will be held at the indoor gymnasium at the Youth Center located at 33 Johnson Street. This class will be held on Friday mornings at 9:00 AM beginning on Friday, January 9, 2009. This is a free class and all ages and ability levels are welcome.

Lecture Series: Join our weekly Lecture Series from 10:00 AM – 11:30 AM at the Town Hall Selectmen's meeting room on Mondays. Each week is a different topic on Health and Social issues, cultural lectures on countries and inspirational speakers. January 26, 2009, Associate Professor Mark Allman speaks on "The Gods of War: The Jewish, Christian and Muslim Perspectives on War & Peace." February 2, 2009, Dorit Sandorfi speaks on the Culture of Tunisia, Africa. February 9, 2009, Nancy Wilson, Wells Fargo on Reverse Mortgages and February 23, Michelle Ellicks from the Registry of Motor Vehicles. Come early and enjoy coffee and treats.

Mr. Fix It and Company: located at Fountain Drive on the first and third Monday of every month during our renovation. Bring in your broken lamps, watches that need batteries and small appliances that do not work. He will try to fix them! Cost is \$2.00/\$4.00 depending on the amount of work required, plus parts. All Funds are given to the Senior Center to support programs and activities.

Bikram Yoga Merrimack Valley


Located at the East Mill - 43 High Street, North Andover MA - www.bikramyogamv.com - 978-689-9642

CLASS SCHEDULE

All classes are open to all no prior experience necessary

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
7 am	*		*		*		
8 am						*	*
9 am	*	*	*	*	*		
4 pm						*	*
5pm	*	*	*	*	*		
7pm	*	*	*	*			

Schedule subject to change, check website for updates
www.bikramyogamv.com



New student special \$20 for 10 days - 10 consecutive days of unlimited Yoga!

LAWRENCE VIOLATES CLEAN WATER ACT: From Page 1

required for the month of May, and required by [state law]...For the month of August 2008, [The City of Lawrence] again failed to collect the three sample distribution set for chlorite as required by [state law].”

In addition to the \$5,750.00 fine levied against the city, MassDEP also ordered the city to conduct three sample set distribution [tests] for the chemical chlorite, and warned that if the city fails to comply again, they will face a penalty of \$25,000 per day, for every day the tests aren’t done. The order also threatens additional civil penalties against the city and the possibility of criminal charges and imprisonment of up to one year for anyone involved in failing to comply with the MassDEP order.

A History of Water Problems
This is not the first time the city has been fined in the last two years by the MassDEP.

In October of 2007 the state fined the city \$39,500 for inadequate security procedures, noncompliance with the plant’s disinfecting process, violating sampling protocols and inadequate turbidity requirements. An investigation by state officials revealed that “from April 4, 2007 through April 17, 2007 the new plant was operated without any chlorine dioxide or chlorite testing equipment and the required daily samples for chlorine dioxide and chlorite were not taken,”

In February of 2008 The city and MassDEP entered into a consent decree whereby MassDEP would reduce the \$39,500 fine to \$19,500. In return, the city agreed to beef up security at the plant, provide an updated operations plan and

make sure all chlorine dioxide systems were working properly.

“The current situation at that plant are a direct violation of the consent decree the city signed last year,” Councilor Abdoo said.

Unauthorized work
In October of 2008, Lawrence Mayor Michael Sullivan blamed DPW director Frank McCann for what he called \$493,000 in “illegal work” done at the water treatment plant in violation of state bidding laws. Sullivan said that McCann authorized the installation of fiber optic wiring at the water treatment plant without his approval and without going through the proper channels. McCann later denied knowing anything about it, even though witnesses at the time said that McCann and Water Commissioner Bob Fazio were “actively present at the plant” when some of the work was being done.

In a memo written by Department of Public Works Director Frank McCann (dated January 6, 2009), McCann claims that the latest failure to do the required monthly testing of chlorite in May of 2008 was due to a “misunderstanding of when the chlorite samples were to be taken.”

McCann also claimed in his memo to Mayor Mike Sullivan, Water Commissioner Bob Fazio, and Budget and Finance Director Mark Andrews that the lab technician “thought that they were quarterly samples (tests) thus not taken in May, the second month of the quarter.”

McCann also says that at least one contributing factor in the May testing failure “was a learning curve for the operator and the lab technician since the operator was starting up that system for



PHOTO: COURTESY BOB FAZIO

Lawrence spent more than \$26 Million to build a brand new Water Treatment facility on Water Street along the Merrimack River. The above picture was taken in May of 2006 while the plant was still under construction.

the first time in mid-April since taking over the operations the previous December.”

According to Mark Andrews, the city’s Budget and Finance Director, costs of the chemicals being used at the plant have skyrocketed just in the last year and has nearly doubled the amount of money the city was paying causing a \$500,000 deficit in the Water Department budget.

“Why was this not forecasted?” Councilor Abdoo asked. “And why was nobody told about it before we started paying out all this money when we could have been purchasing generic chemicals and saved the city money??”

Members of the city council trying to get an answer from department heads in the Sullivan Administration walked away frustrated saying the budget and finance committee meeting raised more questions than answers.

“I can’t get an answer to most of the questions I had, and part of the problem is that there is no one person who is hands-on responsible for anything that goes on at that facility,” Councilor Abdoo lamented.

“There needs to be one person, a point-person that the mayor and the council can call upon to get the information we need to make sure Lawrence’s drinking water is safe and that plant is being run effectively. One person who can answer the questions or get us the answers we need. Right now that is not happening and I have seen very little that shows me we have corrected any of these problems outlined in the DEP reports.”

Plenty of blame no accountability
DPW Director Frank McCann blamed his department’s failure to do mandated testing in August of 2008 on a breakdown of the very “chloride dioxide system” machinery that the city promised to adequately maintain in the MassDEP consent decree after the 2007 violations.

At first, McCann said that part of the city’s failure to comply with state law in the August incident was due to “personnel absence that month” but later admits that the city’s chlorine dioxide system was down that week, “due to mechanical failure and did not come back on line for the remainder of August.”

For eight days, McCann contends, the chlorite dioxide system machinery was not operational, no tests were done on the city’s drinking water. Yet nobody from his department or the City of Lawrence warned the public about the fact that the drinking water was untested and that city

officials simply did not know if the water was safe to drink.

Four workers too many, More cost overruns

The city of Lawrence hired the private firm, Woodard and Curran to run the operations of the new \$26 million water treatment plant, as ordered by the MassDEP when it was learned that some of the pump operators and other city employees were not certified or licensed to run the machinery.

As a result, the city laid off four workers whose jobs were replaced by Woodard and Curran.

But, because the City of Lawrence did not follow the correct procedures in laying off the four unnecessary employees, each employee was brought back to work with the same job title and pay, but no job duties.

Finance Director Mark Andrews estimated that the duplication of personnel at the water department is currently costing the city in excess of \$200,000 a year.

“So basically, we are paying these guys to be security guards, because the city messed up when we laid them off. And we brought them back to work but the work they were doing before the layoff is being done by the private company now. It’s a total waste. These are very expensive security guards and I am a little puzzled as to why we can’t just lay them off again only this time do it right,” Councilor Abdoo said.

“With all the new T-1 wiring that was put in last year I don’t see why we can’t have closed circuit security cameras instead of paying four people a pump operator’s salary to watch a gate.”

City officials disagree on the total amount of cost overruns in the Water Department due to the chemical situation, duplication of personnel, duplication of services, MassDEP fines, illegal wiring at the plant and other mechanical issues. Conservatively, Councilor Abdoo put the number at \$1.2 million, while members of the Sullivan administration are saying the total number is closer to \$3 million.

Abdoo says he has been talking to officials at the Department of Environmental Protection and will be discussing it at several upcoming meetings.

Abdoo says that though it is not the job of the city council to micromanage a city department “it may need to be done, we may need to start asking for quarterly reports, expense reports and really dig into what is going on over there ...

Two Local Credit Unions Merge
Commit to Keeping Strong Presence in Lawrence



Pictured at the NESC FCU Lawrence Firefighters Branch are Lisa Morelli, VP of Human Resources; Sharon Birchall, Business Development Officer; Elaine Sullivan, CEO; Alan Jenne, COO; Erin DiDomenico, Senior Loan Officer.

The merger of NESC Federal Credit Union and Lawrence Firefighters Federal Credit Union has been completed. Although the signs have changed to reflect the new name of NESC Federal Credit Union Lawrence Firefighters Branch, the credit union philosophy of people helping people and the commitment to the City of Lawrence remain the same.

NESC has been serving members since 1958 and we have built strong relationships with our members and the Select Employee Groups that we serve. Lawrence was a natural expansion to our Andover and Methuen branches and allows us to better serve our members in the communities where they live and work.

We look forward to serving you in the future. Please visit us at any one of our locations soon.



Andover

Lawrence

Methuen

The Merrimack Valley Irish Connection

Jack’s Irish Craic

Jack Doyle, County Sligo
VALLEY PATRIOT GUEST COLUMNIST

Reels, Jigs, sweet and harmonious music could be heard coming from Bunnanadden, County Sligo the other evening, or should I say, through-out the whole night, as the Cunningham family celebrated the 81st birthday of their uncle Paddy Finn. The whisky “flowed like water” and the craic continued with hilarious stories of the past. Among the musicians was Philomena Cunningham on guitar and tin whistle, “Phil” is well known through-out county Sligo, Mayo and Roscommon for her traditional Irish music and American style country music.

On banjo was Liam Kearns who also is the local mechanic and right hand man for the Mike Denver Show Band. He was awarded the duty of keeping Mike’s van in working order for Mike to travel the many miles, night after night, through-out the North and South of Ireland. Liam is a personable man with a flavor for all kinds of music. Francie Doddy, a self taught musician played the harmonica and the accordion, and I must say, to perfection. Jim O’Donnell a “transfer” from England, kept everyone’s feet stomping with his rendition of “The Orange Blossom Special” and the many jigs and reels that he played. Everyone took a chance at singing solo, some were good, some awful, but all in all, very enjoyable. I sang a special rendition of Galway Bay.

Two of the 14 guests were Michael Commins and Patsy Browne of Midwest Radio 96.1fm | Clare St, Ballyhaunis, Co. Mayo. Patsy Browne, a talented singer in her own right, sang her personal rendition of Noreen Bawn that brought tears to the eyes of a few. She is also outstanding on the guitar. Her personality and love of people is transmitted through her and I can see why Michael has her as his “right hand person” when he is on and off the radio. Michael kept the family laughing with his witty and hilarious humor. He certainly is a comedian in his own right and enjoyable to be around. The listening public through-out Midwest Ireland wait patiently every Wednesday and Sunday nights to listen to Michael’s self styled presentation. You too can hear him on the web. www.midwestradio.com

In conversation with Michael Commins, he related to me that at one time, these types of parties would go on in mostly every home in Ireland where neighbors would come with their instruments and voices and sing and play to their hearts content. He said that it is sad that this

tradition, like many traditions in Ireland have stopped. It is a shame, for it kept the family in harmony,(sorry about the pun), with each other.

Like most Irish people, the Cunningham’s have relatives through-out the United States. Locally, some live in Lawrence, Lowell, and Boston but the majority of them live in the Cleveland Area. There was a police officer in Lawrence by the name of George Cunningham, mmmmm, I wonder? If anyone in the Valley Patriot reading family knows any of the following Cunningham’s, you can contact me through my email address below: Martina (Cunningham) Small, Ann (Cunningham) Roddy), Della (Cunningham) Doddy, Michael Cunningham, Pat Cunningham. All the Cunningham’s from this family were raised in Kilturra, Gurteen, County Sligo.

I would be amiss if I didn’t mention the song that my partner, Martina and her sister Della sang at the affair. It was taught to them by a local “older” woman, when they were children. I wonder how many of you readers remember hearing it. “I went to Killkenny to see miss Brown”. it’s a silly little ditty that most children sang years ago.

Not far from Culfadda where I live, are the Bricklieve Mountains situated in Castlebaldwin, County Sligo. Atop these mountains are the Carrowkeel Megalithic Tombs dating back over 3000 BC. There are 14 in all. These burial grounds of limestone and piled-up bricks had been in use up until 1500 BC. You can always see visitors climbing the mountain to view the ancient tombs. One day while I was atop the mountain I meet a local family who have lived nearby all their lives and didn’t know about the tombs until recently. It was like someone living in New York City and not knowing the Empire State Building is there.

Looking at the panoramic view from the top of the mountain you can see Croagh Patrick near Westport, County Mayo, where in 441 AD St. Patrick fasted for 40 days. There are daily pilgrimages to the top of Croagh Patrick and it is surprising at the ages of the people who climb, most of them in their bare feet, to the top, youngsters and senior citizens alike. it’s a sobering experience to see.

Below the Tombs of Carrowkeel is Lough Arrow, a large lake surrounded by ancient ruins of Pories, cemeteries

IRISH, page 7

Two soldiers' remains to be buried at Arlington National Cemetery

Additional remains of former POW/MIA soldiers SSG Alex Jimenez and SPC Bryon Fouty will be interred with full military honors

U.S. Army official are planning a joint funeral with full military honors for SSG Alex Jimenez of Lawrence, MA and Corona, NY along with SPC Byron Fouty of Walled Lake, MI.

SSG Jimenez and SPC Fouty were ambushed during a mission May 12, 2007 in Iraq which resulted in the capture of both soldiers whose remains were later found in a shallow grave on July 8, 2008. The families of SSG Jimenez and SPC Fouty held memorial and burial services for their sons’ partial remains last July and August in their respective states of New York and Texas.

The U.S. Army has planned this military service for additional intermingled remains of both SSG Alex Jimenez and SPC Byron Fouty which is to be held on February 17 at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia with visitation hours being held on the previous evening.

Maria Del Rosario Duran and Ramon “Andy” Jimenez, parents of SSG Alex Jimenez released the following statement this week;

“This has been a very hard, difficult and extremely emotional year and a half for our family. This gathering in February to bury the final remains of our beloved son with the remains of Byron will again be a very emotional time for our family and friends and for the Fouty family who have become like family to us. We feel our son would be proud to have been given such an honor to be buried at Arlington National Cemetery alongside with so many other heroes who have served and protected our great country. We would also like to thank everyone who has kept Alex and Byron in their prayers throughout the long ordeal and who have shown and given our family such great support. We know Alex would be proud that so many people cared and honored him in the way you all have done.”

At the request of the Jimenez family there will have no additional comments at this time and they ask for privacy as they try to deal with the emotions of another burial.

If there are any questions you may contact :
Jim Wareing. - Founder/New England Caring For Our Military - Cell 978-835-7464 - jim@necfom.org



Lawrence residents Shauna Lamirande (l) and Jami St. Aubin (r) with St. Aubin’s 11 year old daughter in Hollywood California outside the studios of the Judge Judy show.

Judge Judy settles Lawrence dispute

Two Lawrence residents, locked in a legal dispute over a Baby Packman video arcade game took their case to the Judge Judy television program in Hollywood California two months ago.

Adrian Santana of Newton Street and Jami St. Aubin of Bailey Street, both agreed to dismiss their small claims actions against each other and let prime time television’s Judge Judy settle the dispute which began when Santana broke up with St. Aubin and left his video arcade game in her garage. St. Aubin warehoused Santana’s Pacman game for more than seven years and says she sold the machine after warning Santana to pick it up or it would be sold. Judge Judy excoriated both St. Aubin and Santana as they have an eleven year-old child

together. Judge Judy told them both that the issue was silly, encouraging them to be civil to each other for the sake of their minor child.

Since St. Aubin admitted that she did sell the Baby Pacman machine (owned by Santana) for \$300 she was ordered by Judge Judy to pay him the \$300. The judge refused to give St. Aubin any money on her counter claim that Santana owed her money for a sofa and living room furniture she lent to him.

Dracut Street resident Shauna Lamirande accompanied St. Aubin to Hollywood as a witness in the dispute was not called to testify. The show aired on national television on January 29, 2009 at 4pm.

STOSSEL: From Page 5

Liberal senators like Dick Durbin (<http://tinyurl.com/285nlf>), John Kerry (<http://tinyurl.com/8fnx8a>) and Charles Schumer (<http://tinyurl.com/6zzk5w>) want speech limited further by the "fairness doctrine." Fairness here means depriving people of the choice of all-conservative radio.

And what's more liberal than voluntary exchange between consenting adults? Free trade lets everyone in the world find the best buys, no matter where they are. It gives us more things for less money. Even Paul Krugman supports free trade. But liberals don't want to allow buyers and sellers to make their own choices. Liberals want trade curtailed.

Even life-saving trade: 95,000 Americans are waiting for organ transplants. Thousands die while waiting (<http://tinyurl.com/8o6uq2>). Legalizing the sale of organs would give people the choice of life, while allowing sellers to choose cash over an extra kidney.

But liberals don't want to let willing buyers and sellers have that choice.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) decides what you may put in your own body. A truly liberal FDA would acknowledge that adults own their bodies and can decide for themselves what risks are appropriate. That would give consumers more choice. But liberals want the FDA to be tougher.

Liberals don't want you to have the choice of owning a handgun, a big car or keeping your own money so you can use it as you see fit. Liberals want to restrict our choices.

I'm a classical liberal. I believe people should have the freedom to do anything that is peaceful (<http://tinyurl.com/7ykjje>). That's truly liberal.

I want the word back.
John Stossel is co-anchor of ABC News' "20/20" and the author of "Myth, Lies, and Downright Stupidity." To find out more about John Stossel and read features by other Creators Syndicate writers and cartoonists, visit the Creators Syndicate Web page at www.creators.com. COPYRIGHT 2008 BY JFS PRODUCTIONS, INC. DISTRIBUTED BY CREATORS SYNDICATE, INC.

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VETERANS BENEFITS

Preparation is the key

Susan Piazza

VALLEY PATRIOT VETERAN COLUMNIST

As we begin the New Year it is a good time to make sure that one's affairs are in order. Illnesses and emergencies come up out of nowhere oftentimes finding us unprepared.

For myself, an unexpected illness has kept me sidelined for the last few months, which is why there have been no columns from me in the Valley Patriot of late.

We must prepare for eventualities such as illness and the eventual death, which may follow.

One of the best ways to prepare, and to make sure that our loved ones are covered, is to make sure that one's survivors know exactly where important documents are located. Survivors need papers such as the veterans DD-214, the veterans discharge papers, to qualify for any number of benefits that they may be entitled to.

From the simple grave marker to survivor benefits, from federal to state benefits, the DD-214 is one's proof of military service, proof of type of service, and a showing of enlistment type and duration. Without this document acquiring the benefits that one rightly deserves is almost impossible.

Filed with one's discharge papers should be any award letter that the Veterans Administration has given the veteran. The award letter details whether the veteran is (was) entitled to benefits based on a service-connected disability or not, the percentage of the disability, when the rating was established, and what the disability/rating was for. Different and/or additional benefits may be available for the veteran whose disability is service-connected.

Life insurance is another one of those vital documents that should be kept together with one's important papers. There are policies that were given to military members during prior

engagements (wars/conflicts/police states, etc.).

Some of these policies gave dividends some did not. But whether a dividend was given or whether the policy was paid by virtue of the veteran being 100% disabled the survivor needs to know the type of policy and its location. I am a great fan of color-coding; my military documents are in a purple folder, veterans in a blue. Both folders are together so that when I pass my survivors can access my information easily.

My whole family knows exactly where these documents are.

It is a good idea to keep any civilian documents that pertain to one's final burial wishes (cremation, private cemetery burial, burial in a veterans cemetery, or burial at sea) with all these other files. Any will, trusts, or any other documents regarding one's estate should also be kept together.

It is extremely important to let someone other than your partner know where your

documents are. If husband and wife normally travel together then chances are greater that both may get into an accident together. If both die at the same time their family/friends may not be aware of the location of their important documents. If your information is in a safe deposit box, make sure that your family knows where the key is and where the bank is located. This article is a basic reminder of what needs to be discussed with one's survivors.

A belated Happy New Year. I pray all have a healthy, happy, and prosperous New Year. May God Bless those now serving in the military, and those who served. And may God Bless this great democracy - America !



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

CARING FOR OUR VETERANS

John Lenotte

VALLEY PATRIOT VETERAN COLUMNIST

Now that we are in February, winter is almost over. At least that is what the calendar tells us.

This month is probably best known for Valentine's Day and President's Day.

Remember to get your significant other a card and some type of gift. Or the rest of the winter may be very cold! And while we have warm thoughts of family and those we love, let us not forget that there are many who cannot be with their loved ones.

These are the US service men and women who are all over the world protecting us and our way of life. This can be a difficult time of separation for them even with email and messaging and video cameras. Until you have been there, you don't know the heartache.

And this ties right into President's Day, when we recognize President's

Washington and Lincoln. These are two great leaders who rose out of times of great conflict in our nation. In their own way, they knew the heartache of war and its sacrifices. Washington noted that "When we assumed the soldier, we did not lay aside the citizen". Let us not forget that the citizen soldiers of today's all volunteer force are our neighbors, family and friends.

It was Abraham Lincoln who said "Our defense is in the preservation of the spirit which prizes liberty as a heritage of all men, in all lands, everywhere. Destroy this spirit and you have planted the seeds of despotism around your own doors". And these quotes are as true today as they were when spoken by these great men.

A wonderful ceremony each year is Four Chaplain's Sunday. By the time you are reading this article, the event will have happened (Always held on the first Sunday in February). This is the story of four Army Chaplains of varying faiths

who all gave their lives for their fellow soldiers in the sinking of the USS Dorchester on February 3, 1943 after being hit by a torpedo from a German submarine. This year's annual program sponsored by the American Legion was in Danvers. It is held in a different location each year. Watch for announcements on this event next year. Once you have been, you cannot stop going.

When we forget the sacrifices of men and women for their comrades, we are in deep trouble.

Also at this time of year many families are applying for college scholarships. Remember that the American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary both have scholarship programs. If you go to www.masslegion.org or <http://www.masslegion-aux.org> you can find the specific information on how is eligible and how to apply. And please do not forget the Boys State [<http://maboyssstate.org>] or Girls State [<http://www.masslegion-aux.org>].

[aux.org/](http://www.masslegion-aux.org)]. These are great learning events for high school students about to go into their senior year.

On another note, many athletes have been real heroes.

There were a number of them who served during World War II. US Ski champions like Roy Mikkleson, Lyle Munson and Friedl Pfeiffer served with the 10th Mountain Division. Hockey stars Turk Broda

(Toronto Maple Leafs) Sid Able (Detroit Red Wings) and Frankie Brimsek (Boston Bruins) also served in various branches of the military. I have other examples I will note in future columns.

These are the heroes we should look up to!



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

ISRAEL: From Page 5

closed and unemployment and poverty levels are sky high. Those who can afford to have left their homes and moved away. We heard myriad stories of the compromises people make each day, such as whole families sleeping in living rooms to be on the first floor making it easier to escape, radios and TVs never used so to hear the "Red Color" alert, bus stops turned into bomb shelters and new shelters built on soccer fields and playgrounds.

We visited a police station where the rocket remnants were collected and stored. Eight years ago, the kassams were home made and very unpredictable. At first they traveled about 2 miles and then as they became perfected went to 3 miles and then 5 miles. The latest weapons are GRAD missiles that are like Kayusha rockets and they have hit targets almost 30 miles away. GRADs are not made in Gaza and are imported from Iran. With rockets now hitting civilian sites in Ashdod and Beer Sheba, over 1 Million

Israeli men, women and children are under daily attack from Hamas in Gaza.

Today, Israel is reacting just like any other nation under constant attack. If Detroit was hit by Canada or San Antonio was hit by Mexico with 50 rockets in 50 hours, the United States would act decisively to end the threat. As President-elect Barack Obama, when visiting Sderot, Israel in July of 2008 noted, if his own two girls were to be hit while sleeping in their beds, he for one would not stand still.

The reality of the conflict is that Israel takes every possible measure to protect innocent lives, often putting its soldiers at additional risk in the process. Hamas attacks indiscriminately, seeking to maximize the number of civilian casualties on the Israeli side, and intentionally operates in Palestinian population centers, thus using non-combatant men, women and children as human shields in clear violation of legal and moral norms.

Israel continues to work diligently with members of the international community

to alleviate the human suffering in Gaza. During the past six months, Israel has facilitated more than 14,624 truckloads of humanitarian assistance including more than 185,000 tons of supplies and 39 million liters of fuel. There have been more than 4,130 medical evacuations to Israeli hospitals. On Dec. 28 alone, Israel shipped four truckloads of flour, three of medicines and medical equipment and one of heating gas. It also facilitated the delivery of more than 15 truckloads from the United Nations relief program, the World Food program and the Red Cross. More than 4,000 medical evacuations have taken place from Gaza into Israeli hospitals. Since the beginning of the current conflict, some 6,500 tons of aid have been transferred at the request of international organizations.

The situation in Gaza contrasts sharply with that in the West Bank where real progress is being made both in terms of security and economic development. Forced out of Gaza by Hamas, Palestinian

leaders Abu Mazen and Sallam Fayad eschew terrorism. Israel looks forward to the possibility of engaging with them in credible negotiations toward peace and security in the near future.

So, we pray and tirelessly strive for a day when suffering will be known no more by all peoples of this troubled region.

The long-term answer to this situation is for Hamas to lay down its weapons, recognize Israel, and participate with the Palestinian Authority in negotiating a two-state solution — two states for two peoples living side by side in peace and security. Israel has demonstrated time and again that it will embrace any genuine opportunity to achieve peace with its neighbors, and that remains the case today.

Laurie Tishler Mindlin,
Executive Director
Merrimack Valley Jewish Federation
P.O. Box 937 - Andover, MA 01810
(978) 688-0466 - www.MVJF.org

Visit Methuen Village Opening March 1st

See our ad on page 29



Trigeminal Neuralgia (TN)

Rami Rustum, M.D.
VALLEY PATRIOT MEDICAL COLUMNIST

Trigeminal neuralgia (TN), also called *tic douloureux*, is a chronic pain condition that causes extreme, sporadic, sudden burning or shock-like face pain.

The condition reflects a problem affecting the "Trigeminal Nerve" which is responsible for providing most sensation to the face on each side (shown below in yellow).

The pain seldom lasts more than a few seconds or a minute or two per episode. The intensity of pain can be physically and mentally incapacitating. TN pain is typically felt on one side of the jaw or cheek.

It is estimated that 1 in 12,000 people suffer from trigeminal neuralgia, although those numbers may be significantly higher due to frequent misdiagnosis.

Although TN usually develops after the age of 50, more commonly in females, there have been cases with patients being as young as three years of age!!!

Despite of its brief duration, Episodes can last for days, weeks, or months at a time and then disappear for months or years.

In the days before an episode begins, some patients may experience a tingling or numbing sensation or a somewhat constant and aching pain. The attacks often worsen over time, with fewer and



PHOTO: TOM DUGGAN

Rami R. Rustum, M.D. is the Director of Merrimack Pain Associates. For any questions or concerns, please email Dr. Rustum at: ramirustum@comcast.net

shorter pain-free periods before they recur.

The intense flashes of pain can be triggered by vibration or contact with the cheek (such as when shaving, washing the face, or applying makeup), brushing

teeth, eating, drinking, talking, or being exposed to the wind.

Many theories were suggested regarding TN but unfortunately, strong evidence to back any theory is still lacking!.

One of the presumed cause of TN is a blood vessel pressing on the trigeminal nerve in the head as it exits the brainstem. TN may be part of the normal aging process but in some cases it is the associated with another disorder, such as multiple sclerosis or other disorders characterized by damage to the myelin sheath that covers certain nerves.

Approximately five percent of patients with trigeminal neuralgia have multiple sclerosis. Patients with TN and multiple sclerosis are generally younger, and tend to first experience TN symptoms while in their mid 40s. These patients are more likely to have pain on both sides of the face (bilateral trigeminal neuralgia) and often have other neurological

abnormalities, such as weakness or numbness in the arms or legs, dizziness, unsteadiness and double vision. Most patients in their 40s and 50s who have trigeminal neuralgia do not have multiple sclerosis. Patients who have TN but not multiple sclerosis tend to first experience TN symptoms while in their mid 50s.

Diagnosis

In addition to a thorough history and physical examination, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) of the brain is recommended. This procedure helps identify a brain tumor in the rare cases in which it is present along with TN. It may also help to diagnose multiple sclerosis. Often when the MRI is performed, some contrast material is injected into the vein so that the appearance of a small tumor, blood vessel, or other structures in the brain can be enhanced and made easier to detect.

Treatment

The available treatment for TN falls short from expectations!!! No single treatment is known so far to stop the problem but could modify and reduce the symptoms in best case.

1- Nonsurgical Treatment: Mostly relies on medications.

There are some patients who have very mild face pain that may subside and even disappear without treatment. For severe pain, medications, especially Tegretol, are often highly effective. Tegretol can cause many side effects including sleepiness, forgetfulness, confusion, drowsiness, dizziness and nausea. Tegretol can also cause more serious problems such as bone marrow suppression, which can lead to anemia or a decrease in the number of white blood cells. A low white blood cell count can predispose a patient to contracting an infection. Rarely, these problems are life threatening. Blood counts must be monitored in order to lessen the chance of these complications occurring. Tegretol can also harm many other parts of the body, so patients who take this medicine must be under careful medical supervision. Tegretol interacts with many medications, so patients must advise their doctor of all the medications

DR. RUSTUM, page 17

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YOUR HEALTH WITH DR. RALLIE MCALLISTER

Bacteria blamed as leading cause of stomach ulcers

Dr. Rallie McAllister
SYNDICATED COLUMNIST

If you've got symptoms of a stomach ulcer, don't blame them all on holiday stress or even the fact that you've been overindulging in your favorite festive foods. Although stress and overeating can worsen stomach discomfort, they aren't the primary causes of ulcers.

The leading cause of stomach ulcers is an infection with a type of bacteria known as *Helicobacter pylori*. Infection isn't rare by any means: Experts estimate that about half the world's population harbors the microorganism.

In many cases, infection produces no signs or symptoms, but some individuals will develop gastritis, an inflammation of the stomach lining. Over time, gastritis can lead to ulcers of the stomach and the first part of the small intestine.

These changes can cause discomfort, and even worse, they increase the risk of gastric cancer, the second leading cause of cancer deaths worldwide. *H. pylori* is now recognized as the major cause of both stomach ulcers and gastric cancer, and is classified as a group I carcinogen by the World Health Organization.

Infection with *H. pylori* occurs when the bacteria gain access to the mouth and pass into the digestive tract. Although the stomach is a hostile environment for most microbes, *H. pylori* bacteria are capable of thriving in highly acidic conditions.

Because the bacteria may be transmitted from person to person through contact

with saliva, sharing eating utensils with an infected individual is a risk for infection. *H. pylori* may also be contracted through contact with human waste as a result of poor sanitary conditions or inadequate hand-washing practices.

Signs and symptoms of *H. pylori*-induced gastritis can vary in severity, but may include an aching or burning pain in the abdomen, nausea and vomiting, frequent belching, bloating and gastrointestinal bleeding. Gastric cancer occurs in a minority of cases, and typically arises when the infection has been present for decades.

Treatment with a combination of antibiotic drugs can help control or eradicate the bacteria. When antibiotic treatment is started early in the course of a *H. pylori* infection, it can reverse damage to the lining of the stomach and significantly reduce the risk of developing gastric cancer.

How do you know if you're infected? To determine if *H. pylori* is the cause of stomach pain or other digestive disturbances, physicians may perform diagnostic tests on samples of blood, stool or exhaled breath.

In some cases, doctors employ X-rays or endoscopy to make the diagnosis.

An endoscopic examination consists of placing a long, flexible, camera-equipped tube down the throat and into the stomach.

If you test positive for *H. pylori*, your physician will likely prescribe a 14-day course of antibiotics. Unfortunately, this

treatment isn't always successful on the first attempt.

Like many other types of bacteria, *H. pylori* are becoming increasingly resistant to commonly used antibiotic drugs. Because the antibiotics may cause unpleasant side effects, including stomach upset and diarrhea, many patients find it difficult to complete the two-week treatment program.

In light of these challenges, scientists and physicians are investigating the use of natural alternatives in the prevention and treatment of *H. pylori* infections.

Cranberries have long been used to prevent bacterial infections of the urinary tract, and recent research suggests they also may help avert stomach infections. Natural substances in cranberries can prevent the attachment of *H. pylori* bacteria to cells of the stomach lining.

Plant compounds in red wine and green tea also appear to reduce the risk of infection with *H. pylori* and to protect the stomach from damage. A growing body of research links green tea consumption with significant reductions in the risk of stomach cancer.

Eating broccoli and broccoli sprouts may help protect against *H. pylori* infection. Scientists attribute broccoli's antibacterial effects to a chemical known as sulforaphane.

Although common sense may suggest otherwise, consumption of certain spices may help reduce the risk of stomach ulcers. *H. pylori* bacteria are sensitive to a number of herbs with antimicrobial properties, including oregano, thyme and

capsaicin, the heat-producing ingredient in chili powder.

Garlic not only inhibits the growth of *H. pylori*, it also appears to help guard against the development and

progression of cancer. Epidemiological studies reveal a lower incidence of stomach cancer among populations with high intakes of garlic.

If you've got symptoms of a stomach ulcer, it's important to discuss them with your physician to determine if you should be tested for a *H. pylori* infection. Proper treatment might help you feel better in a matter of weeks — and more importantly, it could save your life.

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

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North Andover Board of Health closes China Blossom for health violations

Allowed to reopen but cannot serve sushi

On January 21st, the China Blossom restaurant in North Andover was closed by the North Andover health department after an inspection revealed multiple critical violations of the MA sanitation food code.

According to a 7 page inspection report, this inspection was triggered by a complaint from a customer.

The problems found by inspectors included: poor food preparation, unsafe temperature of sushi and other foods, improper storage protocols and multiple other critical concerns.

According to Board of Health Chairman Tom Trowbridge, the closure action was made by two members of the health department who are trained in the "Foodsafe protocols" and are qualified inspectors, as well as a member of the board of health.

Since that time, China Blossom has addressed sanitation and cleaning issues.

On Friday, January 30th, the health department performed a reinspection and allowed the restaurant to reopen.

According to Tom Trowbridge though, there are certain restrictions.


"They are not preparing sushi until a fully compliant plan is in place. They will also pursue construction work (within a very short time frame) to upgrade the kitchen area and a food consultant will be retained for at least 2 months to assure proper food handling procedure on a routine basis."

Progress reports will also be submitted to the health department.

This is not the first time the China Blossom Restaurant has been closed by town officials or the board of Health.

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Sitting in the waiting room

The Answer Man

A century birthday

1. The FBI is celebrating its 100th birthday. What is the spell out of the initials FBI?
2. What is the official name of the FBI headquarters building in Washington, D.C.?
3. Of what national nonprofit organization was Elizabeth Dole (R-N.C.) the executive director for a long time period before her election to the U.S. Senate?
4. The founder of the first American political party was killed in a duel by a political opponent. Name him.
5. Name the defeated presidential candidate who killed the political party founder in the preceding question.
6. What is the length of time for Lent?
7. Walt Disney was once asked if Mickey and Minnie Mouse were married. What was Disney’s response?
8. According to Roman mythology, who is the god of love?
9. What country has the largest number of active duty troops as of 2007?
10. The world’s largest island consists of 840,000 square miles. Name it.

- Answers:
1. The FBI is the Federal Bureau of Investigation.
2. The national headquarters is in the J. Edgar Hoover FBI building. Some critics of J. Edgar Hoover have tried to have his name removed from the building, but their anti-Hoover efforts have failed. Hoover has many supporters for his outstanding long-term record as FBI chief.
3. Dole was executive director of the American Red Cross.

Sudoku

	4	2				7		5
		6		4			9	
			6		2	1		
2	9	3						
7								6
						3	7	4
		8	1		9			
	2			6		5		
1		5				4	8	

Puzzle by websudoku.com

4. It was Alexander Hamilton, the founder of the Federalist Party.
5. Aaron Burr, who lost in a presidential tie against Thomas Jefferson, shot and killed Hamilton for his part in Burr’s defeat.
6. Lent consists of the 40 days from Ash Wednesday to Easter eve.
7. Disney said they were never married on the screen, but they were married in their real life.
8. Cupid is the Roman god of love.
9. It’s China with 2,255,000. The United States was second in the listing with 1,507,000.
10. The world’s largest island is Greenland, Denmark.
- Take “The Answer Man” to work or to school. Challenge your friends for “Bragging Rights.” Send your questions and answers to: The Answer Man, Andy Seamans, Horizon House #603, 1300 Army Navy Dr., Arlington, VA., 22202. -

Newsday Crossword NOT FOR BREAKFAST

by Doug Peterson
Edited by Stanley Newman
www.stanxwords.com

ACROSS

1 Feudin’ with

5 More plentiful

11 One way to stand

14 Meat alternative

15 Star system

16 Commando weapon

17 Michael Keaton film of ’88

19 Wrinkly pooch

20 Playground retort

21 3-D medical test

22 Ireland alias

23 DK rival

24 Film-rating org.

27 Penn’s partner

29 Russian royal’s treasure

32 Go kaput

34 Financial-pg. heading

35 Make one’s case

39 Rummy relative

41 Be subjected to

43 Medal site

44 DEA officer

46 “High Hopes” lyricist

47 *Apollo 13* actor

50 Parliamentary centre

53 29 Across collector

54 Work-sweat link

57 Rider’s strap

58 Louis XIV, for one

60 Company with a spokesduck

62 Chopper

63 Unassertive one

66 Frat letter

67 Corkers

68 Football great

69 Acuity of a sort

70 Charges for spots

71 Forest foragers

DOWN

1 Cornered

2 Museum regulars

3 Beatles tune of ’64

4 Bar-counter snack

5 Epoch

6 Capt.’s superior

7 Feathers

8 Dragon’s home

9 Stimulate

10 Something to toast

11 Class member

12 Sky-blue

13 Fierce one

18 Big name in eye health

22 Spanish Renaissance artist

25 Fuel from fens

26 Big name in suits

28 Quaint oath

30 Skagway resident

31 Outlying communities

32 Air overseer

33 “What a relief it is!”

36 Process sugar, perhaps

37 “That’s

38 Quite a stretch

40 Brood

42 Hoops grp.

45 Far from new

48 Diverse

49 Ending for bureau

50 Expound

51 State of the Union

52 Keep busy

55 Adhesive

56 Lead, e.g.

59 Minnesota’s St. __ College

61 Sustenance

63 Wharton specialty

64 Shoshone Indian

65 Pothook shape

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9	10		11	12	13
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62				63				64	65					
66				67						68				
69					70						71			

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Dr. Rustim: from page 15

they are taking. Elderly patients and those with multiple sclerosis are more likely to experience the side effects of Tegretol.

There are other medications that can be used either alone or in combination to control trigeminal neuralgia pain. These are usually less effective than Tegretol. They include Lioresal (baclofen), Dilantin (phenytoin), Klonopin (clonazepam), Neurontin (gabapentin), or Lamictal (lamotrigine). All of them, except baclofen, are also used to prevent seizures.

It is important to mention here that there is very little and limited role for opioids in treating TN!!

2- Surgical treatment:

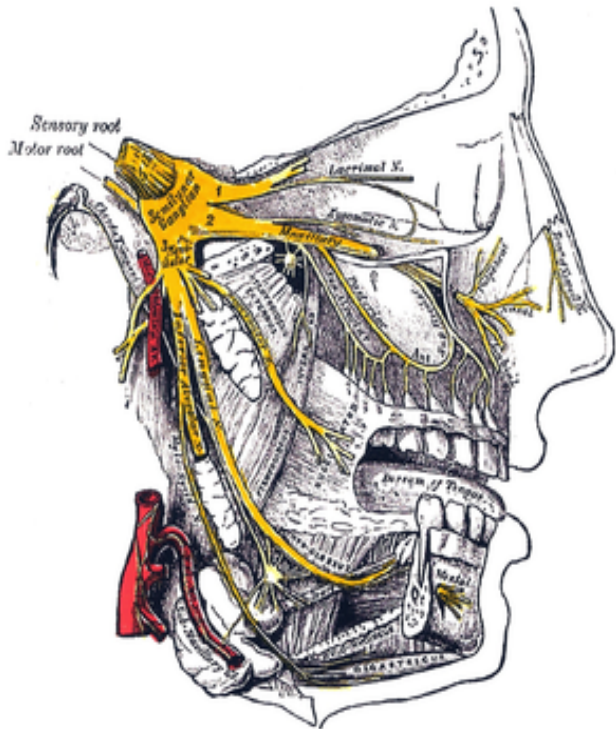
A surgical procedure is recommended for patients who continue to experience severe pain or side effects from medications. In the past, patients with TN did not consider neurosurgical options until the pain or medicines became unbearable, because surgical procedures carried higher risks. Now that surgery is safer, and especially with GKRS, which is not only highly effective but safer than any of the other procedures, patients no longer have to wait to be in agony in order to undergo neurosurgical intervention.

There are five important neurosurgical procedures. Each is effective, but not always, and occasionally has to be repeated. These procedures are: Gamma Knife radiosurgery (GKRS), radiofrequency electrocoagulation (RFE), glycerol injection (GLY), balloon microcompression (BMC), and microvascular decompression (MVD). All of these procedures treat the trigeminal nerve at around the same place, close to where it leaves the brain.

Gamma Knife radiosurgery is the most recent and least invasive neurosurgical treatment for trigeminal neuralgia. Of all the surgical procedures, it is least likely to cause complications and uncomfortable new facial sensations.

Complementary treatments

There are some things that a patient can do to minimize the frequency and intensity of TN attacks:



- * Apply ice packs or any readily available source of cold to the area of pain. Cold often numbs the area and will reduce the pain.
 - * Warming packs, wrapped in a towel to protect one’s skin, can also provide relief as they stimulate blood flow to the area they are placed upon.
 - * Get adequate rest in normal rest cycles.
 - * Manage your stress well and keep stress levels low. When you feel a TN attack coming on, try to relax immediately.
 - * Practice healthy living principles such as diet and exercises.
 - * Avoid foods that may act as nerve stimulants, such as coffee, tea, and foods that are high in sugar.
 - * Maintain adequate hydration and electrolyte levels at all times.
- References: 1- Trigeminal Neurologia Association. 2- National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke. 3- Emedicine website. 4-Medline plus



MV Hospice welcomes new bereavement coordinator

Lawrence, MA, January 21, 2009 – Merrimack Valley Hospice is pleased to announce that Catherine Ricketson, LCSW, of Westford, MA has joined the staff as Hospice Bereavement Coordinator.

Ms. Ricketson has a master’s degree in social work from Columbia University in NYC and over twelve years of experience in grief support work in the community.

“My goal at Merrimack Valley Hospice is to further the good work of our Patient Care Teams and offer companionship to individuals and families experiencing the loss of a loved one,” says Ricketson.

Merrimack Valley Hospice bereavement services include counseling, bereavement support calls, as well as community support groups for people of all ages. If you have questions about bereavement services contact Catherine Ricketson at 800-475-8335.

Merrimack Valley Hospice is a not for profit agency dedicated to serving the medical, social and emotional services to terminally ill patients and their families. The agency is a member of the Home Health Foundation and affiliated with Home Health VNA and HomeCare, Inc. Together, the agencies serve more than 80 communities throughout the Merrimack Valley, Northeastern Massachusetts and Southern New Hampshire. For more information visit www.merrimackvalleyhospice.org.

INNOVATION VALLEY (ivalley.org)

The rise of carbon neutral cities

James Moreau & Seth Itzkan
INNOVATION VALLEY/PATRIOT COLUMNIST

A sustainable future is not something that can only be enjoyed by certain segments of society or by certain parts of the planet. Many “green” innovations have been displayed in beautifully crafted, yet very expensive homes and buildings. The real, holistic purpose of living sustainably is so that everyone can live cleaner, healthier lives and leave the Earth less of a mess for future generations to clean uCity bikers in San Francisco Environmentally conscious bikers in traffic in San Francisco, California. Motion blur on the subjects - faces unrecognizable.

p. How does a world like this come to fruition? It certainly doesn’t happen over night. Most of the world’s big cities were developed large in scale and breadth as we know them after the industrial revolution. Over the course of time, cities and towns have grown in order to accommodate huge populations and the demands that come with them. Urban sprawl and suburbia seems to be a poor idea in hind-sight, but certain socioeconomic forces have shaped the urban, suburban and rural landscapes we live in today. Facing those forces with a new, sustainable mentality is what will help us to build greener, healthier living spaces.

What makes a sustainable region? Reducing the collective carbon footprint of a city or town is done in multiple ways. Changing the way a city is laid out or planned can dramatically alter the dynamic of foot traffic as well as the number of internal combustion vehicles used throughout. Changing standards and regulations towards requiring a high level of energy efficiency in all new construction projects is also a way to greatly reduce an areas carbon footprint.

With so many buildings, homes and structures already existing which were built long before efficiency standards were considered, there is the question of whether it is better to retro-fit or to build anew. While both ideas have their benefits, some governments are looking



City bikers in San Francisco: Environmentally conscious bikers in traffic in San Francisco, California. Motion blur on the subjects - faces unrecognizable.

to model future cities after state of the art eco-colonies.

Masdar City, in Abu Dhabi is slated to be the world’s first zero-carbon, zero-waste city. Within this walled city, no cars will be allowed and all of the energy used will be in the form of electricity generated by renewable resources such as photovoltaic panels and wind turbines. The goal for Masdar City is to create as much energy as it uses. Current goal is to produce a 130 megawatts through a photovoltaic network and 20 megawatts with wind farms. In all, Masdar City will be host to about 45,000 residents with 60,500 people commuting there daily.

There are also examples of existing cities and towns that are called “transition towns.” The use of the word “transition” signifies a conscious, active and collective move towards building a more sustainable community.

This approach has varying aspects to it, including raising awareness of carbon and environmental issues, connecting with local governments and having community defined goals, projects and timelines which would ultimately seek to achieve a carbon neutral city, town or region.

Transition towns are varied in size and culture, with some examples in the United States being Montpelier, Vermont, Boulder, Colorado and Portland, Maine. The Obama-Biden platform was notably pro-environment and many Americans are looking

forward to an Obama Administration push towards sustainable economic development. A large part of the platform is a commitment to highly efficient Federal buildings and more stringent standards for all new construction projects. New building efficiency will be 50% more efficient and retro-fitted existing

“Masdar City will be carbon-neutral. It will produce 130 megawatts through a photovoltaic network and 20 megawatts with wind farms”. — Seth J. Itzkan

structures will aim to be 25% more efficient. These ambitious, large scale projects are going to require a well trained and motivated workforce, which will hopefully signal a new reassurance of new, green-collar jobs in the near future.

Speaking of his proposed Environmental Agenda, President Obama said, “We cannot afford more of the same timid politics when the future of our planet is at stake. Global warming is not a someday problem, it is now.”

Speaking to policy specifics, he said, “It will lay down three thousand miles of transmission lines to every corner of our country. It will save taxpayers \$2 billion dollars a year by making 75% of Federal buildings more efficient and it will save American families hundred of dollars by weatherizing 2 million homes.”

A city of any size uses massive amounts of power; that this may someday soon be achieved without any carbon output is remarkable.

Policies put fourth by the Obama administration promoting the greening of the built environment are a step in that direction and may provide useful incentives for The Merrimack Valley.

About the author: James Moreau writes on energy and the environment.

Please contact him at

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

John Michitson was a Haverhill city councilor for 10 years; the last 2 as president. He is a manager and electrical engineer at the MITRE Corporation in Bedford, Mass. John and his wife, Heidi, are enjoying the childhood of their 7-year-old daughter and 9 year-old son. email: john@michitson.com

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

NECC students help Lawrence improve carbon footprint

Students from Northern Essex Community College Professor Marcy Vozzella’s Environmental Issues class have been helping the city of Lawrence find ways to reduce its carbon footprint.

The students have been assessing energy usage in four sites identified by the city, including city hall, the Buckley Parking Garage, the public library and the senior center. In early December, they met with the city council to present their plan which focused on decreasing energy demands and increasing heating efficiency in select buildings and installing solar power in the Buckley Garage.

Most of the recommendations were relatively low cost, including installing motion sensors for the lighting, eliminating unnecessary lighting, putting in better insulation, and using thermal paint. The Buckley Garage project would require installation of a solar power unit which costs approximately \$22,000, money that the students say will be realized quickly in energy cost savings.

“We came up with little things that make a big difference,” said Kristina Pierce of Haverhill, a student involved in the project.

The students began this service learning project early in the semester, visiting Lawrence to tour the sites. They worked on the project throughout the fall, culminating with the PowerPoint presentation for the city council which included an explanation of the environmental impact of current actions, a proposed plan for change, and a savings payback statement introducing the financial benefits of long term investment in green design.

Service learning projects combine what students are learning in the classroom with community needs. Research shows that students who participate in service learning have an enhanced academic experience and develop life skills and a sense of civic responsibility.

Offered again this spring, the Environmental Issues course begins by covering the primary earth systems such



Shown left to right in photo are Mike Donovan of Bradford, Kristina Laing of Newburyport, Omar Khawatmi of Salem, NH, Jessica Flanders of West Newbury, Adam Malynn of Rowley, Kristina Pierce of Haverhill, and Professor Marcy Vozzella.

as the carbon cycle, hydrologic cycle, and nutrient cycling. Students then use these cycles as a base to delve in to how natural climate change and human’s influence is changing these natural processes. A large component of the class and lab work will be devoted to studying current data about environmental issues and then looking at proposed solutions as will as developing class solutions and a personal environmental philosophy.

For more information, contact Marcy Vozzella, chair of the Northern Essex Natural Science Department, at mvozzella@necc.mass.edu or 978 556-3326.

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

So, you want to go into business

Do you need a will?

Sheldon Fine

VALLEY PATRIOT LEGAL COLUMNIST

QUESTION: Before you go into business, what are the decisions that need to be made?

Often many people would like to go into business for an assortment of reasons (i.e. be there own boss) but have no idea as to what to ask or what decisions you must make before you go into business. This article is an overview of some of the decisions one should make or questions one must ask. We will be looking at said from the legal point of view with a discussion of other professionals who will have an impact on said questions and decisions.

As we enter into the decision of going into business we must look at the entity that will be chosen to run the business. When going into business there are many options such as those listed below but you should discuss each of the alternatives with your legal counsel with the aid of an accountant. Each of the alternatives has certain attributes that other options have or do not have. Also, you have to decide how much liability you want or how much you want to limit.

The options are (to name a few)

Limited Liability

a. Sole Proprietorship-as the name reads is one person and total liability.

b. General Partnership- are jointly and severally liable.

c. Limited Partnerships- The general partner of a limited partnership bears liability for the obligations of the partnership. A corporate general partner with limited capitalization may achieve the practical effect of limited liability for all partners so as long as the limited partners limit their participation in the business they do enjoy limited liability. A limited partner that actively participates in the business may be considered a general partner without limited liability.

d. S-Corporations and C Corporations- The owners of a corporation (both S and C) are generally not liable for the obligations of the corporation. However, where a owner is personally negligent the owner may be held personally liable. In limited situations, the court may “pierce the corporate veil” and impose liability in limited situations.

e. LLC’s: Owners and managers of an LLC have limited liability even though they participate in the business, however, professionals operating in an LLC cannot limit their personal liability for their own negligence. The protection of a member of an LLC is no more extensive then those of a member of a Professional Corporation. However, professionals operating in an LLC can not limit their personal liability

for their own negligence. The protection of a member of an LLC is no more extensive then that of a member of a professional corporation.

Availability of Pass-Through Tax Treatment

Pass-Through tax treatment means that the business entity itself is not taxed but its owners are taxed as if items of income, loss, deduction and credit were earned or incurred directly by them. The pass-through tax treatment is desirable when tax rates for individuals are lower then the corporation or the business may want the pass through treatment in a corporation to avoid the tax at the corporate level.

a. Partnerships and Sole Proprietorship: do not need pass through as they are taxed on everything

b. C Corporations: The pass through tax treatment is not available to the C Corporation. It is taxed on the income at the corporate level and the stockholders are taxed on the distributions as dividends or are treated as a return of capital if there are no earnings and profits.

c. LLC and Limited Partnerships: A limited partnership enjoys pass-through of times of income, loss, deduction and credit and income is subject to only one level of tax. Distributions of property or money from the partnership to the partner are generally tax-free unless the distribution exceeds the partner’s adjusted basis in the partnership interest. A distribution will reduce the partner’s adjusted basis.


An LLC which is structured as a partnership for tax purposes will be treated as a pass-through entity.

d. S-Corporations: A corporation becomes an S corporation when it elects to be treated as such. They must elect at the beginning of years to be treated as such and the election must be sent to the IRS once the election takes place the S Corporations officer’s pass-through treatment and tax-free distributions.

Hereinabove are some of the decisions one should make and discuss with an attorney and an accountant as a team before making the choice. This is an overview of some but not all of the factors in your decision.

Also an insurance person should be considered as part of the team when discussing worker’s compensation and other insurance benefits.

Again this is an overview of discussions to be made.



Sheldon Fine is an Attorney in Andover, if you have any questions please contact him by E-mail at S.Fine2@verizon.net or call for an interview for a more in depth discussion. When you plan ahead it will save you problems in the long run.

Greg Loosigian

VALLEY PATRIOT INSURANCE COLUMNIST

A will is one of the most important documents you can create in your lifetime. Think of a will as the financial blueprint of the distribution of your assets after your death. Your will can clearly state who will be guardian of your minor children, who will inherit your assets, when they will inherit your assets, and any conditions that must be met for them to receive your assets. If you die without a valid will, the court does not have your instructions to follow. Therefore, it has no way of knowing how you may have wanted to distribute your assets. The state where you lived steps in and makes the decisions for you, according to the distribution schedule set forth in its intestacy statutes. The state’s decisions may or may not conform to your wishes, or to what is best for the people closest to you. Also, your loved ones will likely have to hire an attorney and incur delays to determine who will receive your assets.

Common Misconceptions

Myth: “My assets are so small that a will is not necessary.”

Fact: Think again. You are generally worth more than you give yourself credit. Even if some possessions do not hold great monetary value, they could hold an enormous amount of sentimental value — and that’s something you can’t put a price on. Failing to indicate who receives these treasures in your will can cause friction between family members that lasts for decades.

Myth: “When I die, my spouse will get all of my assets.”

Fact: Maybe and maybe not. Any assets held jointly with right of survivorship automatically pass to the joint owner. And assets with a beneficiary designation, such as IRAs, life insurance and annuities, pass as stated on the beneficiary form. What happens when your surviving spouse dies? What happens if your beneficiary form is outdated? Will your children receive their share at too early of an age? Does your spouse have the financial skill to manage the family wealth?

Myth: “I can create a will on my own and save the legal costs.”

Fact: “Do-it-yourself” wills often do not contain all of the necessary components as required by state law. Anyone who might benefit from an invalidation of your will can contest it, and if the courts decide in his or her favor, your estate may have to pay for all legal costs. Remember, the

few dollars you save now can cost your loved ones thousands of dollars later.

Myth: “I don’t want my final wishes to be set in stone. I’ll create a will later in my life.”

Fact: The terms of a will can change as often as needed. Legal experts agree that you should reexamine your will periodically to make sure it is up-to-date. A will should receive a “checkup” whenever there is a substantial change in your life.

How Do You Create a Will?

Drafting a will is difficult and is not an endeavor you want to tackle single-handedly. It’s important that you call on the services of an estate-planning lawyer. A lawyer might help you:

- * Determine what type of will you need
- * Help you make the right decisions as to how your assets should pass
- * Change the terms of an existing will, if appropriate
- * Save on estate taxes
- * Take advantage of estate planning opportunities people often overlook

Life Insurance and Wills

How does life insurance fit into the picture? Life insurance is a vehicle you can use to help make sure your estate has the cash needed to pay expenses at your death, such as funeral costs, debts, and estate taxes. Without liquid assets, the estate may be “forced” to sell assets — securities may have to be sold in a down market and other assets may have to be sold at a discount. In most instances, life insurance proceeds are paid income tax-free to your beneficiaries. And if desired, life insurance can be owned by a trust or a third party and also not be subject to estate taxes.

Don’t Wait Until It’s Too Late

Despite the importance of an estate plan, which includes a will, 80% of Americans still do not have one.¹ Why? Creating a will forces each of us to come face-to-face with our own mortality — and dealing with death is difficult. But, it will be much more difficult for your loved ones if you don’t have a will. Remember, you should seek the services of a qualified attorney to draft your will.

For additional information on the topic(s) discussed, please contact **Gregory J. Loosigian** Financial Service Professional, New York Life at 978-273-8377. Neither New York Life, nor its agents, provides tax, legal or accounting advice. Please consult your own tax, legal or accounting professional before making any decisions. G05 00385412CV (Footnotes) ¹ www.abanet.org/genpractice/newsletter/lawtrends/0607/estate/willsandestates.html, July 2006.

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RAISE ‘EMRIGHT™

“Teen questions terms”

Barbara Peary, M.Ed.
VALLEY PATRIOT PARENTING SPECIALIST

As a teenager, working for the first time in a child care center, I am confused about the terms used when talking about infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. Just what ages do these groups refer to?

There is no universal defining of the ages of each of these particular stages in a child’s life. If you pursue an interest in the early childhood education field, you will find that reference books, textbooks, and also child care centers in different states differ on the how developmental stages are broken down. Very generally, an infant is considered to be a child from birth to eighteen months. From nineteen months to two and a half or until two years and nine months the term toddler is applied. At two and a half or two years nine months until age five the word preschooler is the accepted terminology. From age six to twelve a child is considered school age and this is the normal reference given. Ask your center’s director what the definitions are according to the day care regulations in your state.

I constantly worry about my son being an only child. He is four and a half and very happy. He loves being around other children and has no fear of walking up to a child he meets in the playground and asking if they would like to play. He never hints to my husband and me that he wishes he had a brother or sister and seems content just being with his mom and dad. We can have other children, but we are content with just one. My fear is that he will grow up to resent us for not giving him a brother or sister and think there something wrong with him when people say he is an only child. Wouldn't it be wrong if I had a second child only to give him a playmate and not because we wanted another? What can I do to put some of these feelings to rest?

If you have made your decision after weighing all the pluses and minuses of having only one child, you need to stand back and stop trying to justify your choice to others. Instead of looking at what your son might think or what others in your family might think or feel, realize that this is you and your husbands personal business and no one else’s. If you are still conflicted over the drawbacks of a child being an only child versus the positive benefits, do some reading on the subject. Two available books on the subject are Parenting an Only Child, The Joys and Challenges of Raising Your One and Only (Broadway Books, 2001) and The Only Child: Being One, Loving One, Understanding One, Raising One (Harper & Row). Another option would be to seek out the company and advice of parents who have made the same choice and have children who are older than your son.

Caught Raising ‘Em Right
I would like to share an idea that worked with my fourth graders. We did this as part of an English lesson on letter writing. As a group we sent letters to the troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. You would not believe the smiles on those children’s’ faces when they got some mail in return.

Good for you. You taught them how we value those who give service to our country, showed them how it feels to give to others, demonstrated the way in which giving to others allows people to receive back and instructed them in English. All in one lesson. You certainly are Raising ‘Em Right!



Please send questions to
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STAYATHOME DADS

At-home dads and isolation Part 2

Pete Baylies

VALLEY PATRIOT CONTRIBUTOR

We are hesitant because we are worried that the other at-home dads will be “wimps.” I remember a few years ago I attended the annual At-Home Dads Convention in Chicago and began talking to Esquire’s contributing editor, Ted Allen. We had a pleasant conversation about putting nearly naked women on the cover of publications in order to sell more issues to men. He then paused, looked around and noted, “Gee, you seem to be a strong, well put-together guy. I thought you and the other guys would be soft and wimpy.” I told him that he may find some of “those guys” at the office, but not at the convention.

The fact is, we all want to find each other, but we let our egos prevent us from reaching out. Here are three suggestions to make the first move with the other dads:
Tip 1) Start a Playgroup. When I decided to stay at home with my 6-month-old son, John, I felt isolated and missed hanging out with friends and co-workers. Unable to find dads right away, I started the At-Home Dad Network, an online community for at-home fathers. The At-Home Dad Network grew into dozens of playgroups which connected dads across the country. In Chapter Three we will discuss the details of how to get started with a dad’s playgroup.
Tip #2) Try Word of Mouth. Your child’s teachers or daycare providers know all the parents of the class and can let you know which other kids in the class are taken care of by at-home dads. Also if you get cloth diaper service ask the delivery driver if he has noticed other dads at home on a regular basis. You may find one living closer than you think.
Tip #3) Ask the Moms. While you may have a hard time finding local at-home dad groups, there are probably a ton of local mother resource groups and clubs in your area. They may know a few at-home dads who have been asking the same questions. And maybe while you’re asking, you can befriend some of the mothers.

Asking moms tips is definitely easier said than done. Often at-home dads do not feel comfortable hanging out with the at-home moms because they feel out of place. The reality is, while the number of at-home dads is increasing dramatically, at-home moms are still the norm so it still means that we need to find a way to fit in with them.

Some dads feel a real sense of terror at the thought of interacting, and being judged by moms, who they assume do a better job at being at-home parents. Greg Volker describes the dread he used to feel when approaching at-home moms:
“About thirty feet away were two mothers pushing youngsters in strollers, an ideal opportunity for parent and child to mix with same. But I wanted to run.”

Another dad describes that even though the moms were nice to him, they treated him differently. “Many of the moms were friendly enough, but I began to feel that many of them were not as comfortable talking to me as they were to other moms. It took me a long time to realize that women still aren’t used to seeing a man taking care of a small child. But instead of thinking, ‘Oh well, we’ll all get used to it soon,’ it began to get me down. I began to feel like a freak.” A new and the most serious problem I didn’t expect was the isolation; it was a total surprise to me as I always had plenty of people to talk with at every stage of my life.. I

longed to talk to another person that didn’t wear diapers. I missed my friends at work and one night I even dreamed of working again.

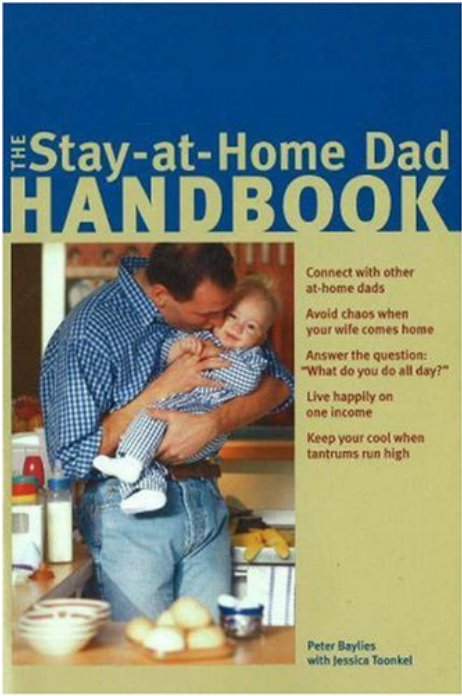
As the weather warmed up, I took my first trip to the local playground eager to meet some other dads like me. Instead, I found myself outnumbered by mothers 10-1. When I was at work, I was in the good-old-boys-network. This playground was a parallel universe, that is, the good-old-girls network. I might as well have been on another planet.

I am not going to tell you that your concerns are unfounded. Often mothers are, in fact, ill at ease with a man in their midst, but you need to keep pushing and make yourself familiar to them so they will become comfortable. David Boylan, of Chicago, decided to face the moms head-on by signing up for a “Mom & Tot” gym and swim class with his daughter Caitlin. David says it helped break the barrier because the mothers “saw me diaper my kid the way they diaper theirs. I looked for every opportunity to help out in a non-threatening way...with an extra diaper, some powder, and “No More Tangles” hair spray.

David notes, “After sticking my nose into the circle of moms having their daily conversations, they came to accept me.” Remember that these women are your “coworkers” so try not to feel intimidated by them.

While confidence and persistence are key, patience may be even more important. Moms, who are sometimes already suspicious of the one man in the playground, might misinterpret being overeager. Although I got some strange looks, I made it a point to start up a conversation with whoever was sitting next to me on the sandbox.

Once they saw my son was well cared for, they realized that I wasn’t some nut on parole and ended up being very helpful. It didn’t take long before we would quickly pass the small talk on how old our kids were and settle down for more talk on naps, blankies, bottles and diapers. David Boylan is the author of the At-Home Dad Handbook, provides free resources for stay-at-home dads at athomedad.com. E-mail: athomedad@aol.com for more information.






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Thomas Connors
VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

Love is Blind!

Boy, THAT saying is so true isn't it? Too often we are blind to being able to actually Love Ourselves. We find every Tom, Dick and Harry reason to deny ourselves the self esteem and confidence to let the WOW! into our lives. In fact, we actually work at convincing ourselves that we are not deserving.

Now's the time! Forget the Past! Forget the Excuses! Living the WOW! is for the here and now. It also guarantees a future loaded with all you want out of life.

Living in the past gets you nowhere. Using your negative past to rule your present and determine your future is downright stupid. And THAT is exactly what a whole lot of people out there do.

When you look at the world you live in, it is mind boggling to see the numbers of people who are simply not happy with themselves, their lives and the people with whom they associate. They tend to use their past failures or shortcomings as an excuse why their present is miserable and why their future will be worse.

For the past thirty years I have seen the following play out at American Training. Some Guests fight to get into our education programs. They work diligently to successfully complete their program. Then, once they graduate, they begin to sabotage their job prospects because they have an extremely low opinion of themselves. They have been told so often they cannot succeed and will never amount to anything that they wish it so.

STOP filling your life with excuses! STOP blaming your shortcomings on

your genes, the way you were raised or the current state of the economy.

All that stinkin' thinkin' stunts your ability to Live the WOW! right now and in the future.

Accept the fact that wherever you are in life right now is a direct result of your actions. Period. Also accept the fact that your future can be a WOW! if you learn to Love yourself and focus on all that is Great about you.

There is only ONE YOU! Love WHO you are. Celebrate your Uniqueness.

From the top of your head to the tips of your toes. From both the inside and outside of your body to the depths of your inner soul and the warmth of your heart. No one, no how, comes close to being the person YOU really are!

You are who you are. You are unique and you exist in all God's splendor. You are so important, there is no one else in this world quite like you. No one has your DNA or your personality. No one has been put on earth for the reasons you were. No one can contribute and have the impact you can. There IS a lot about you to Love!

Take stock of the huge difference between constantly improving and enhancing who you are and what you do and being so blinded by the slightest shortcoming that you cannot recognize the positive in any aspect of your life!

We live in a society that thrives on the negative. Is it any wonder we find it such a challenge to Live the WOW!?

God makes us perfect when we are born. So what do we do? We go and screw up our sense of that perfection as we become colored by the beliefs society convinces us we should consider important.

When you were born with those slightly bigger than average ears, God

made sure He made them perfect. Yet, as you grew up, you became convinced there was something wrong with them. So, instead of accepting them as part of who you are, your uniqueness, you found fault and focused more on getting a snip here and a tuck there. The reality is that you have tons of things going for you in which you should take pride. But, no matter what anyone tells you, you continue to focus on those darn ears as if they were the only thing that defined you.

Do an about-face and take INVENTORY of the wonderful things happening in your life as well as all the terrific characteristics that make YOU who you are.

Grab a pen and paper and make a list of all the things that make you a WOW! (WARNING: If you are so negative that you can't think of anything positive, ask someone to help you with this exercise.)

A pen and paper is all you need. Draw a line down the middle of a page. On one side put all the positive things about you and your life that you can think of. On the opposite side list the not so good stuff. I bet the positive far outweighs the negative.

Examples are everywhere. My family included. I bet my bottom dollar you can look at your own family and find the same.

My cousin Jack is an example of what can happen. His Dad and Mom were alcoholics and he was married to an extremely demanding wife. Not knowing any better, he allowed himself to be defined by them rather than WHO he really was. He adopted their shortcomings as his own. Instead of seeing him for whom he was, people saw him almost as three separate conflicting people. It wasn't until he *shed* their



PHOTO: COURTESY

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

negative influence that the world then got the chance to experience one of the finest human beings God put on earth.

The result of this transformation? Everyone he touched from there-on-in had the opportunity to fully experience his magnificence. All because he learned to Love himself. Just like you can, too!

Now, *that's* a **WOW!**

You can reach Tom at Tom@AmericanTrainingInc.com or by writing to him at Tom Connors, American Training, 102 Glenn Street, Lawrence, MA 01843} © 2008

SIMPLE WISDOM

Gail Van Kleeck
VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

The first time I remember admiring someone for their courage was when my sister Mary had her ears pierced. It wasn't the pain of the piercing that made her seem courageous in my eyes. It was that she'd flown in the face of our mother's life long belief that ear piercing was one of the first steps on the road to moral decay.

When I volunteered for hospice, I experienced the quiet, sometimes almost desperate kind of courage that comes from loosing someone we love and

Courage

continuing life without the comfort and sustenance of their physical presence. It was during that time that I met a young woman who I momentarily envied for her beauty, only to discover she had survived the fire that consumed her three children. The memory of that meeting helps me to set aside my tendency to judge. We can never know the kind of courage it may take for those we encounter on life's path to simply put one foot in front of the other as they begin another day.

Interestingly, I've discovered that the people who seem the most courageous to others rarely see themselves that way.


They say they are simply doing the best they can in the midst of life's challenging times. I find something helpful in that definition, because it means that each of us is in our own way courageous.

It takes courage to make some of the choices that are necessary in order to care for those we love. It takes courage to be honest and authentic when it would be easier to lie. It takes courage to remain hopeful and to hold fast to our faith in the midst of fearful times. It takes courage to move past our difficult memories of the past and to take responsibility for the kind of life we are creating in the present.

It takes courage to try and sometimes fail, then get up and try again.

Yet each of us is more courageous than we know, and in this challenging and sometimes troubled world, the more we look for that inner courage, the more of it we are likely to see.

WHAT WE FOCUS ON IS TRULY WHAT WE SEE



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



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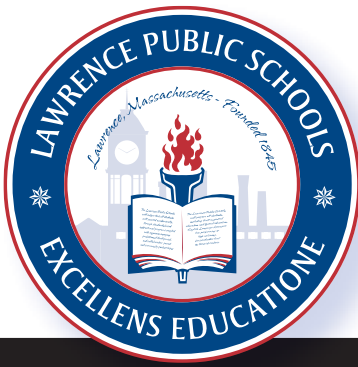


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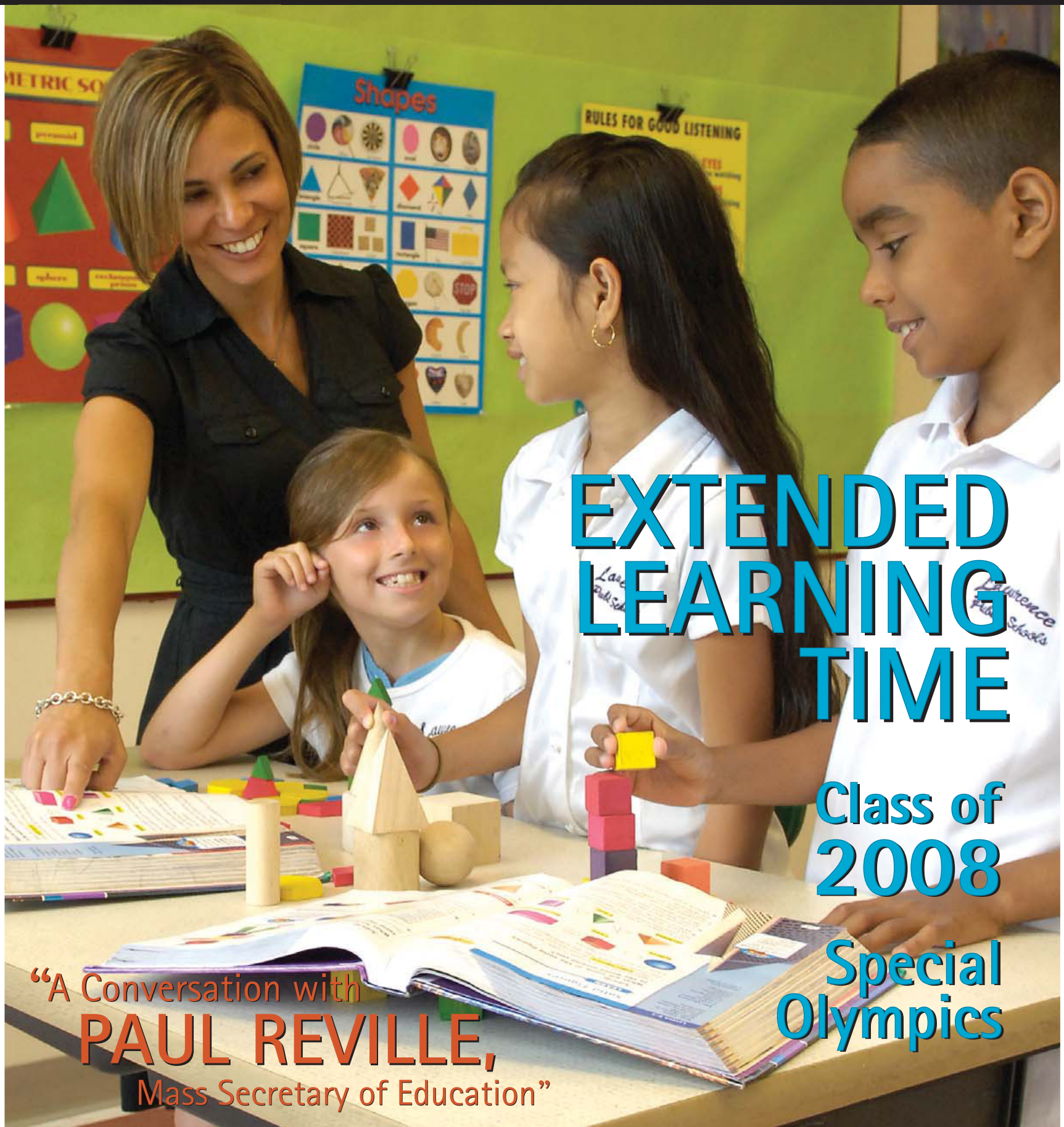
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PUPPY LOVE! with Kate Whitney

Dog lovers: adopt a shelter dog

Kate Whitney
VALLEY PATRIOT PUPPY COLUMNIST

“...when you adopt a dog, the whole experience is fraught with delightful unpredictability. Very little is certain — except, of course, that you will be giving him a better life. And he will be doing the same for you.” -Peter Mayle, *In Praise of Lost and Found Dogs*

Have you ever seen one of those MSPCA commercials with the sad music playing in the background? The faces of the dogs and cats are filled with so much desperation and pain that it just jabs at your heart? To be honest, I can't even watch those commercials. I have to turn them off. Because I volunteer for my rescue, One Tail at a Time, and I am a foster home for homeless dogs, the commercial is too real for me to watch. I see first hand what some of these dogs look like when they come to my rescue. They are covered in fleas, they are underweight, some are scared, patches of fur are missing due to sitting in urine...it's not a pretty sight. I think about how my two dogs, Dash and Honey, were once like those dogs in the commercial whose faces are filled with so much sadness.

Most of the dogs at a shelter were not born there. They were either owner surrendered, picked up as a stray, or seized from an abusive home. The reason they arrived at the shelter is different for each dog, but two things are for certain: the shelter is a loud, scary place and each day there is an uncertainty whether or not it will be the dog's last. Every time someone walks by their cage, their tail wags because they think it's someone to bring them home, to rescue them. But for so many dogs, those days of happy tail wagging go away. The days of sitting in the front of the cage to greet each passerby turn into sitting in the back of the crate, wondering if this is where they are going to spend the rest of their lives.

If I can't convince you to rescue a dog, please purchase your dog from a reputable breeder, NOT a pet store. Most pet stores get their dogs from puppy mills (along with thousands of other people, it's one of my life goals to get all puppy mills shut down and made illegal) which tend to be disgusting places with lots of in-breeding, disease, and severe health conditions. Puppies from a puppy mill are bred for one reason only, money. The puppy may look healthy as it stares back at you from it's crate in the pet store, but more than likely you will be faced with medical expenses in the future. So if you want to support this disgusting practice and help keep millions of dogs in filthy, tiny cages where they get no human contact and are treated like a commodity rather than

man's best friend, then go ahead and buy from a pet store.

If you really don't want to adopt a dog, then go to a breeder. Make sure you research who you are buying from. Make sure you meet the breeder and the dog before you purchase. Also, go to the location where the dog was raised and make sure it's clean and sanitary.

Okay..back to why you should adopt. If knowing you are saving a dog from a kill-shelter and potential death isn't enough for you, think about this: when you adopt, you are actually saving two dogs. You save the dog you adopt and at the same time, you are freeing up a cage in the shelter so another dog can be brought in off the street. Another reason why you should adopt is that the people who work at the shelter usually know the dogs well and can help you pick the perfect dog for your family. Sometimes the dogs have been living in foster homes (this is what I do for One Tail at a Time). If this is the case, the rescue has a good idea what the dog's personality and temperament are like. A potential adopter can then be told if the dog is the right fit for them or not. The last thing rescue workers want is to have a dog placed in the wrong home where it will not be cared for properly, which sometimes results in the dog being returned, so we make sure the fit is perfect before we send a dog home with its new family. Remember that most shelter dogs are kept up to date with vaccinations, are spayed or neutered, micro chipped, wormed, etc. Although you will most likely have to pay an adoption fee, what you would have to pay at your vet's office for all these things would almost always exceed the adoption fee.

I think that shelter dogs have a deeper love and compassion than any dog you will ever buy from a breeder. Shelter dogs have been uprooted from their prior life due to divorce, death, financial situations, etc. and then go through a mourning process. Once a dog is adopted into a new family, the dog wants to do its best to please, love, adore, and show its appreciation for them. I believe this bond you make with your new friend will be one of the deepest bonds you will ever have.

bl still have so many questions about why people insist on buying from a breeder; Why do you need a pure bred dog? Why does your dog have to come with papers? Does paying a few thousand dollars make you feel better about yourself? Does a more expensive dog mean it's better than a shelter dog?

A dog is a dog people. I don't care if it comes from laying on plush dog beds and eating the best food or off the street picking through trash cans. Once that dog enters your home you train it how you want it to behave.



Boxford resident Kate Whitney with Dash and Honey.

So why not pick a dog who really needs you. Adopt a shelter dog. I feel like true dog lovers would adopt. How could you not? If you really are a dog lover how could you sleep at night knowing you paid \$3,000 for your perfect puppy when so many homeless ones wait day after day for someone to come and take them home? Trust me when I say this... What makes a dog "perfect" for you is that it gets along with you and fits your lifestyle, not how much it cost and what its' breeding papers say.

Owning a shelter dog is pretty cool for many reasons. Shelter dogs are eager to please and only want one thing, to be loved. I also feel like there is some mystery to the dog. Not really knowing their background or what their life was like before is interesting. I think about this all the time when I look at my dogs. For instance, right now my dogs are laying next to me on my bed as I write this article. I wonder if they were ever allowed on a bed before they came to me? Dog toys are scattered around. Did they ever have dog toys before? I look at them as they sleep. They are so peaceful, so at ease.

I find happiness knowing that I can give them a life they have never had before. Honey's eyes flicker open and closed; she hears my fingers typing on my laptop. She looks at me with her beautiful golden eyes and I tell her, like I've done so many other times, "I love you Honey Bunny."



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Spay and neuter your pets NOW!

As we enter into late winter, many are not thinking about the upcoming “Kitten Season”, but now is the time to act! As the weather warms up, unsprayed female cats will begin to enter their estrus, also known as being “in heat”.

Unaltered females will endure almost constant heat cycles, causing them at times to spray urine to attract mates. In addition to your cat being in an uncomfortable state, spaying female cats will also prevent health issues. Spayed females have a decreased risk of Mammary, Uterine and Ovarian Cancers, as well as bacterial infections caused by Pyometra, which can attack the uterus of cats shortly after their heat cycle.

Unneutered males cause a slew of problems of their own!

They are more prone to roam, get into fights and are a general nuisance to the neighborhood when yowling in search for a mate! Neutered cats are less likely to roam and get into fights, lessening their chances of contracting serious illnesses such as FeLV, FIV and Rabies. Just as females have health risks when left unaltered, males have medical issues to fear as well.

Neutered males are less likely to spray strong smelling urine, are less likely to try to escape the home and will not develop Testicular Cancer.

As with cats, dogs can benefit from spay/neuter surgery. Females go through similar estrus cycles and attract nuisance males in the neighborhood. Neutering

males helps tame the desire to roam and can prevent a young dog from developing dominance issues over your family. Unneutered males are also prone to mark territory with urine, whether it be furniture or visitors in your home!

Another animal that some may not expect to find in shelters is Rabbits! It is very important to also spay and neuter your rabbits as they reproduce much faster than cats and dogs. Spaying and neutering your rabbit can also prevent aggressive behavior and serious health issues.

Every year millions of animals enter into shelters because of unwanted litters. Spay and neuter your pets at an early age to prevent the awful cycle of overpopulation. You can be part of the solution to this worldwide problem!

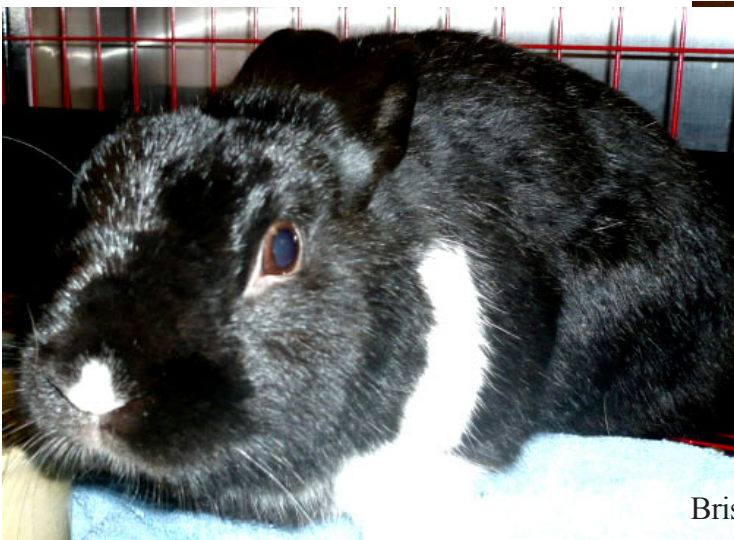
Trivia Time!
What is the normal gestation period of a cat?
a. 35-57 days
b. 57-79 days
c. 79-101 days

Visit www.lowellhumanesociety.org for the answer!

For low cost spay/neuter information, Contact The Lowell Humane Society at 978-452-7781 or call 1-888-495-SPAY.

We need volunteers! Contact Chris at chris@lowellhumanesociety.org to find out how just a few hours a week can make a world of difference to homeless animals!

Come to the Lowell Humane Society and take us HOME!



Babs is a playful bunny looking for an experienced rabbit home. She is very active and keeps a watchful eye on anyone near her cage. Are you Babs new family?



Bristol is a 1 year old Bull Terrier Mix. She is a young mother who is looking for a loving home so she can have the rest she deserves! She is very sweet and well behaved and walks great on a leash! Will you take Bristol home?



Thomas is about a year and a half old and was brought to the shelter because his owner took ill and could no longer care for him. He is looking for a quiet home with adults and possibly teenagers. He is an indoor cat only and looking for folks who would let him sit in their lap for long petting sessions. Are you Thomas’s new best friends?

For more information contact Chris Arnott at chris@lowellhumanesociety.org

The Plum Grove Notebook

Hello to All,

I am just catching up with myself from the holidays and realizing that half of January has already gone by!

I have been in a whirlwind over the past few months, planning and organizing the year ahead. I am adding some workshops, planning some meditation groups and continue to offer massage and energy balancing to help you along your pathway to healthy living.

Last November we purchased a 20+ acre parcel of land next to our current property. Already, I have cleared a trail that leads to Argilla Brook which runs through (or at the present time, overruns) the land.

Plum and I have ridden along the trail, crossed the narrow area of the brook and explored the other side.

What a joyful ride for both of us! Caleigh, Paris, Maisie, Zeus and CaraMel have all enjoyed a swim in the brook, taking in all the smells of the wildlife and romping through the underbrush.

My big finds were dozens of wild blueberry bushes and hundreds of ticks. Which reminds me, do you think that the stock for “Off!” will rise simultaneously with the taming of the Plum Grove Trail?

We are planning to clear an area to build an indoor riding arena and then create some trails and areas for horseback riding, walking and meditation. All of us here are very excited about the project.

This **February**, I am offering a **canine massage certification program**. This is a ten week program that includes massage techniques for dogs, anatomy and physiology as it applies to massage,

understanding dog behavior, ethics, and business strategies.

There are 30 hours of class time, 10 hours self study and 10 case studies required for 50 hours of certification.

The cost of this program is \$1100. I would like at least 3 participants to run the program, so if you could forward the information to others in your circle that you think would be interested, I would be very appreciative.

In **March**, I will be running a **one day canine massage workshop** for pet owners to learn massage for their dogs. This is a 3 hour workshop that will teach a relaxation routine for you and your pet. I am all for creating a deeper bond between you and your four legged friends! The cost of the workshop is \$100.

You are encouraged to bring your dog, but if you think it would be too stressful for them, I have five willing subjects who are eager to help you practice your techniques!

The day has not been chosen yet so we can still adjust it to what works for the majority of participants.

That seems to be enough to digest for now. I will be giving you updates as they occur. Regular massage appointments are available on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday afternoon and Saturday. Please call or email to schedule your appointment today!

Feel free to forward this information to those in your address book!

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180 Center St - Groveland, MA 01834 - (978) 857-7286 - PlumGroveTM@aol.com

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50 hour certification program includes:

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Anatomy and Physiology
Understanding Dog Behavior
Ethics and Business Strategies

Starting Saturday March 7, 2009

3 Weekends; Saturday and Sunday 10am -4pm

Cost is \$1100 per student

Register by February 14th

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HAVERHILL ON THE MOVE

Mayor Fiorentini’s notebook

Dear Haverhill taxpayer,

Last year, 2008, was a difficult year for many of our residents.

We saw a rise in foreclosures and a rise in unemployment. In 2008, many of our citizens lost a good deal of their life savings in the stock market.

But even in 2008, Haverhill continued to have its bright spots.

At a time when colleges nationwide are having financial difficulties, Zion Bible College took root in Bradford. The kind words of the college President, that they moved here in part because our administration pledged to work with them, cheered us.

At a time when real estate sales have slowed throughout the country, Forest City Development turned the abandoned Hamel Leather Factory into Hamel Mills Lofts. Every day, 200 people are working there in the midst of a recession. Downtown lofts have added very few children to the public schools, but have downtown residents with disposable income.

The new downtown residents brought with them new purchasing power, and four new restaurants opened downtown.

And, at a time when manufacturing jobs are leaving the country, Southwick Clothing brought 300 new manufacturing jobs to Haverhill.

I was grateful when the company's leaders said they considered locating in Thailand, but that Haverhill's economic development team made it clear that Haverhill was the better choice.

Despite these good things happening, we are ultimately not immune from State and national trends. In 2009, we are hoping for better but bracing for the worst. This newsletter outlines what proactive plans we are taking.

If I can be of service, please do not hesitate to contact me.

RECYCLING

I am pleased to announce that beginning on February 18, 2009 we will be offering single stream recycling at the Haverhill Recycling Center.

This means that you will no longer have to bring your recyclables (cans, bottles, plastics, etc.) in separate containers to the facility. You will now be able to empty all of your recyclables into one drop off container at the Recycling Center.

Please see information below as to what is accepted and what is not allowed at the Recycling Center. In the meantime, if you have specific questions related to this new program at the Recycling Center, please contact Mr. Steve Clifford of the Haverhill Health Department at (978) 374-2325. We hope this change will make it more convenient for you to dispose of your recyclables.

Improving recycling at the recycling yard is the start of our efforts to improve recycling here in Haverhill.

Our long term goal is to have single stream curbside recycling.

We are working on various grant proposals and other ideas to make this financially feasible in these very challenging economic times.

Thank you, again, for your interest in making our city and our environment better. Sincerely yours, James J. Fiorentini, Mayor

SINGLE-STREAM RECYCLING ON PRIMROSE STREET STARTS FEBRUARY 18

What’s accepted: Plastic containers #1 thru #7, clear and colored, Clean glass bottles and jars, clear and colored Metal cans, steel/tin Aluminum cans, pie plates, trays, and foil.

For all mixed paper and cardboard: **“If it tears, it’s recyclable”**

MAYOR CUTS AND FREEZES OVERTIME

Mayor James J. Fiorentini today ordered all non-contractual overtime, outside of public safety, frozen effective immediately. A budget freeze means that whatever overtime the department has not used, will be cut from the budget and they will be unable to use it throughout the remainder of the year.

Fiorentini estimated that the overtime freeze would save the City approximately \$27,000.

Fiorentini said that he would meet with Police and Fire Departments to talk about reducing overtime in their accounts and would have a further announcement on that later.

Fiorentini said that freezing overtime accounts was the next step to have the City prepared for what are expected to be mid-year cuts to state aid. Fiorentini has also closed City Hall on Monday and Fridays evenings, ordered all thermostats turned down in City buildings and cut his own travel account.

Fiorentini, noting that his budget last June cut seven positions and that he had to cut an additional \$1M in October, stated:

“Facing cuts in overtime will inhibit our ability to serve to public but are vitally necessary if we’re going to be prepared for the storm that we know is coming. However, the public should be aware that we are running out of easy cuts.

If the cuts are as large and as deep as the legislators have been warning us, we will be forced to make much more difficult and painful budget cuts.

“Making these cuts in advance, allows us to be in the strongest possible position when the expected state aid cuts hit in a few weeks.”

MAYOR MAKES FIRST CUT – TO HIS OWN TRAVEL EXPENSES

Mayor James J. Fiorentini will be attending the United States Conference of Mayors this weekend and paying for it himself rather than billing the taxpayers of the City.

In the past, the City has paid for mayors to go to conferences and meetings. Mayor Fiorentini is attending the United States Conference of Mayors Convention in Washington, DC and plans to meet with state and federal officials while he is there on the possible Obama economic stimulus package.

In the past, Fiorentini’s meetings have brought in millions of dollars in federal funds for items like the parking garage and to test the Merrimack River for dredging.

This time, Fiorentini said that in light of the upcoming budget cuts he is going to be required to make, he is cutting his own travel budget by \$2,500.

As a result, he will be attending and paying for the convention on his own. Fiorentini will also pay for his own meals and hotel at the Massachusetts Municipal Association Conference the following weekend.

Fiorentini said that the state mid-year budget cuts, combined with the cuts for next year, would put enormous pressure on the City budget.

“When asking other to sacrifice, a leader must always be first in line. It is for that reason that I have cut my own travel allowance,” stated the Mayor.



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

Georgetown’s Fire Chief: increase salary \$40K?

Lonnie Brennan
VALLEY PATRIOT GEORGETOWN COLUMNIST

Just as the ink dries on his newly signed 3-year contract, Georgetown Fire Chief Al Beardsley presented his “Vision” to the Georgetown community via a televised Selectman’s meeting 1/12/2009 to increase his own take-home pay by \$40K in two years, from \$48K to \$88K. In exchange, Chief Beardsley would work an additional 10 hours per week.

Currently, the Chief works 30-hrs/week for \$48K, but the Valley Patriot has learned that during final contract negotiations with the new chief, Georgetown selectmen granted a contract provision providing for \$20/hr for any work beyond his 30-hrs/week. At least one member of the selectmen has publicly commented that he wants to encourage the Chief to use as much of that overtime as practical.

In addition to virtually unlimited overtime pay, the Selectmen granted the new chief use of the department’s “command vehicle” to travel to and from his Boxford residence, and to and from his commute to his second job, training firefighters as part of the State’s firefighter training academy. Previously, use of the vehicle was predominantly restricted to in-town use, not commuting to or from a place of residence nor to a second job.

Chief Beardsley quickly came under scrutiny for his proposed public salary request, and for requesting a fire department increase of 10.4% for the next year, with an effective 37% increase over two years

“We can’t fund it without a proposition 2 1/2 override,” Selectman Evan O’Reilly pointed out, “and that’s irresponsible.”

Chief Beardsley and his finance advisor, firefighter Jeff Manning, explained that their “Vision” included new necessities in their budget, including a new “command car” for the Chief to replace his current vehicle. By sheer

example of the car’s advancing mileage of recent days, the command car was spotted by the Valley Patriot the day after the “Vision” presentation, at 12:57 in the afternoon headed back into Georgetown, passing through West Boxford center.

The department’s request includes the long-sought-after purchase of an ambulance. However, timing and funding for Advanced Life Support (ALS) certification has become an issue. More specifically, Mr. Manning came under a hailstorm of rapid-fire questions regarding certification from Mr. O’Reilly who questioned the statement that ALS certification could be achieved in short order. “It took Byfield five years to get certified. How can you say we’ll get certified in one year?” he asked. “Clearly this will cost even more than you have on paper here.”

Selectman Chair Matt Vincent was quick to point out that at this point, “it’s just a proposal.” He thanked the new chief for coming before the Town and then suggested that his colleagues move on to other matters. After the meeting, Mr. O’Reilly summarized the financial details of the fire department’s “Vision” statement and issued a letter to the weekly paper. In response, it appears that approximately a dozen members of the Central fire company have issued a signed petition against Mr. O’Reilly’s comments, and in support of the chief. Mr. O’Reilly has been quick to point out that all of his comments have been about spending, and not against the Chief who he has praised repeatedly, despite being the lone vote against the initial hiring. In addition, we have learned that Mr. O’Reilly and the selectmen were chastised in an e-mail from Finance Committee Chairwoman Robin O’Malley for sharing the contents of the fire department’s “Vision” presentation with the public. In addition to the letter, Mr. O’Reilly had posted the budget on his personal website where he shares other public government documents:

www.EvanOReilly.com.

As we go to press, the Valley Patriot has learned that at least one member of the fire department has come under scrutiny for posting what have been deemed hateful messages online and blogging in a manner that has been seen as unbecoming of an officer. We will share details as we receive them.

Without an override to fund the new requests, the funding of the fire department will compete with school department budget requests.

POLICE CHIEF GETS 3% RAISE

In related news, an hour prior to the meeting with the fire chief, selectmen Phil Trapani heralded a 3% raise for Georgetown Police Chief James Mulligan. This raise was reportedly agreed to just minutes before the town’s State Senator, Bruce Tarr, and Representatives, Barbara L’Italien and Harriet Stanley, met with the Democratic Town Committee and other residents at the Georgetown Middle/High School in a forum to discuss upcoming State budget cuts.

The bigger questions are: Will the Georgetown Financial Advisory Committee support such lavish expenditures in this time of budget cuts? Will they recommend a salary freeze? Will they recommend layoffs or reductions in work hours? And, as all contracts are reportedly ‘subject to funding’ by the voters, will the FinCom recommend payment of these increases in their budget at Town Meeting?

If the Selectmen continue to spend, and fail to wake up and smell the economy, it could make for an interesting budget season.



Lonnie Brennan is a former selectman in Georgetown, the owner of the Chocolate Cellar and the Republican candidate for state representative in 2008. You can email him at lonnie@thechocolatecellar.com.

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OUR SPECIALTY SUBS

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COLD EGGPLANT with fresh mozzarella, roasted red peppers, basil, oregano, olive oil	\$ 7.25
CAPRESE sliced tomato, fresh mozzarella, basil, oregano, balsamic vinegar, olive oil	\$ 7.00
ITALIAN HAM & CHEESE imported ham, prosciutto, sweet coppa, fresh mozzarella, basil, olive oil	\$ 7.50
PAPA'S sweet coppa, prosciutto, salami grande, sweet sopressata, fresh mozzarella, lite red peppers, basil, oregano, olive oil	\$ 7.75
JULIUS CAESAR imported ham, salami, sweet capicola, mortadella, fresh mozzarella, mixed hot peppers, basil, olive oil	\$ 7.25
HOUSE SPECIAL prosciutto, fresh mozzarella, roasted red peppers, basil, oil	\$ 7.50
BALBOA BOMB fresh butcher shaved steak, salami, pepperoni, peppers, onions provolone and mozzarella cheese	\$ 7.50
BUFFALO CHICKEN Our famous cutlets soaked in hot sauce, blue cheese, romaine lettuce, tomato	\$ 7.25
POPEYE marinated grilled chicken, spinach, cheese	\$ 7.25
GRILLED CHICKEN CAESAR WRAP Caesar covered grilled chicken, romaine lettuce, Romano cheese	\$ 7.00
EGGPLANT & CHICKEN PARMESAN COMBO a delicious blend!	\$ 7.95
DIJON CHICKEN marinated grilled chicken, romaine lettuce, tomato, basil, Dijon dressing	\$ 7.00
CRANBERRY WALNUT CHICKEN SALAD one of our best sellers!	\$ 7.00
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SPECIALTY SUBS (continued)

TURKEY CLUB (sub or wrap) Turkey, bacon, lettuce, tomato, mayo	\$ 7.50
PROSCIUTTO COTTO Imported Italian ham with sharp provolone, tomato, olive oil	\$ 7.50

OUR CLASSIC HOT SUBS

choose between fresh Italian bread or a wrap	
MEATBALL	\$ 7.00
HOMEMADE SAUSAGE with peppers & onions	\$ 7.00
CHICKEN CUTLET	\$ 7.25
VEAL CUTLET real, milk-fed	\$ 8.25
EGGPLANT PARMESAN	\$ 7.00
STEAK & CHEESE (or teriyaki steak & cheese)	\$ 7.00
STUFFED PORK ROAST	\$ 7.50

OUR CLASSIC COLD SUBS

choose between fresh Italian bread or a wrap. Extra cheese... \$.25	
ITALIAN	\$ 7.00
DIETZ & WATSON ROAST BEEF	\$ 7.00
DIETZ & WATSON ROAST TURKEY	\$ 7.00
DIETZ & WATSON PEPPERED TURKEY	\$ 7.00
VEGETARIAN	\$ 5.50
POLISH HAM	\$ 6.75

OUR GREAT SALADS

GARDEN SALAD iceberg lettuce, tomato, cucumber, red onion, radicchio, carrots, black olives	\$ 5.95
ITALIAN GARDEN SALAD romaine & iceberg lettuce, tomato, cucumber, red onion, radicchio, carrots, fresh mozzarella, hard boiled egg, peperoncini, black olives, and chick peas	\$ 6.95
GREEK SALAD romaine & iceberg lettuce, tomato, red onion, radicchio, feta cheese, capers, black olives	\$ 6.75
CAESAR SALAD romaine lettuce, tomato, red onion, radicchio, imported provolone, seasoned Sicilian olives	\$ 6.95
COBB SALAD romaine and iceberg lettuce, tomato, bacon, cucumber, red onion, hard boiled egg, avocado, Gorgonzola cheese, black olives	\$ 7.50
ORANGE WALNUT SALAD romaine & iceberg lettuce, tomato, cucumber, oranges, walnuts, red onion, radicchio, Gorgonzola cheese, black olives	\$ 7.50
BUFFALO CHICKEN SALAD our famous spicy chicken, romaine lettuce, tomato, carrots, celery, radicchio, Gorgonzola cheese, black olives	\$ 8.95

*add marinated grilled chicken OR cold cuts to any salad \$ 2.00

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Lowell political roundup

Richard P. Howe, Jr.
LOWELL COLUMNIST

Since the last issue of the Valley Patriot, a host of issues and controversies have bubbled to the surface in the cauldron of Lowell politics. Here's a brief survey of each:

As the Arena Turns

The future of the Tsongas Arena is murkier than ever. Nominally "owned" by a legislatively created Arena Commission, because it pays the costs of operation, the city of Lowell is the de facto owner of the facility.

With the Arena running a \$1 million plus annual deficit, a majority of the Lowell City Council seems determined to rid the city of this asset under almost any circumstances.

While UML Chancellor Marty Meehan seems quite interested in obtaining the arena, he has set out a number of conditions that would have to be met prior to his acceptance of the facility.

City Manager Bernie Lynch who is negotiating with Meehan on behalf of the city, implied at a recent council meeting that the city council's obvious enthusiasm for transferring the Arena to the University has repeatedly undercut his ability to negotiate the best possible deal for the city in a proposed transfer.

A major obstacle to any deal is the lease held by the Lowell Devils, the American Hockey League affiliate of the New Jersey Devils, which runs through the end of next hockey season.

One factor working in favor of a transfer of the arena, however, is that State Senator Steve Panagiotakos who, as chair of the Senate Ways and Means Committee wields enormous influence over state

expenditures, appears to be supportive of transferring the arena to the University.

The Future of Baseball in Lowell

The city's most popular professional sports franchise is the Lowell Spinners, the Class A affiliate of the Boston Red Sox. While the players are supplied by the Red Sox, the team, which plays its home games at LeLacheur Park, is owned by Drew Weber. With the current lease expiring, the city published a Request for Proposals for a new lease. Although Weber's proposal was the lone response to the RFP, the consummation of a new lease is by no means a certainty. City Manager Lynch and the Arena Commission have apparently reached a tentative agreement with Weber, however, the proposed agreement must be ratified by a City Council that has long been skeptical that the city is receiving full value for the use of this facility.

"The Demise of a City Manager"

A seemingly innocuous motion by Councilor Rita Mercier that "the City Manager improve communications with the City Council" ignited a wave of criticism directed at Lynch from several councilors, most notably Mercier, Alan Kazanjian and Michael Lenzi, that Lynch failed to inform them in a timely manner of major city developments.

These councilors seemed especially peeved that they had learned of several recent developments by reading about them in the local newspaper and not by personal phone calls from Lynch.

While promising to try to improve communications, Lynch also expressed some frustration at the expectation that he personally telephone all nine city councilors on a routine basis with information that might be more efficiently conveyed via email or text message. (The council's "digital divide" was readily



PHOTO: RICHARD HOWE

apparent in this discussion when councilors supportive of Lynch expressed a preference for electronic communications while the manager's critics insisted that email and text did not reach their threshold for the proper delivery of information). Lynch added a major twist to the debate when he observed that "complaints about communications are often the first step in the demise of a city manager." The coming months will prove whether his suspicions were unfounded.

Hamilton Canal District

Some positive news emerged from a public "vision session" on the Hamilton Canal District redevelopment. Fortunately, the downturn in the economy has yet to derail this 13-acre project which is adjacent to downtown. The public phase, the construction of a new Trial Court complex on 3.3 acres, has funding in place with groundbreaking commencing this May.

The remainder of the site will be developed privately with the first project being the rehabilitation of the decaying but historic Appleton Mills into 135 units of artist live/work space.

A state transportation bond bill has allocated \$10 million to infrastructure upgrades for this project and the National Park will assist by extending its existing

trolley service through the District and on to the Gallagher Transportation Complex.

"The City of Lowell: Alive. Unique. Inspiring."


A recent marketing study suggested that the city do more to define its "brand identity" with the above "positioning statement."

The initial reaction has been predictably negative, or at least doubtful, although none of the critics has offered an alternative. Advocates of this new phraseology have tried mightily but with limited success to distinguish between the purpose of a branding statement and a motto (such as "There's a lot to like about Lowell").

Transit Strike on Horizon?

The Lowell Regional Transit Authority and its bus drivers are in the midst of difficult negotiations on a new contract. While they may not yet have reached a stalemate, drivers have established "informational pickets" outside the Gallagher terminal.


Hopefully, a strike will be avoided.



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

LOWELL HUMANE SOCIETY BENEFIT

with the Lowell Devils



Friday
February 20, 2009

7:00 PM
vs. Hartford Wolf Pack
Tsongas Arena, Lowell, MA

SUPPORT THE LOWELL HUMANE SOCIETY

- A portion of each ticket sold will help support the Lowell Humane Society
- The LHS is a nonprofit charitable organization totally supported by voluntary donations and dedicated to the promotion of animal welfare throughout the Merrimack Valley
- Come watch as the Devils fight for a playoff spot while supporting a great cause! WEAR **RED** TO SHOW YOUR SUPPORT!

TICKETS ARE JUST \$13

Tickets available to purchase at the shelter.

To Order Tickets:
By Mail: Return order forms to the Lowell Humane Society at 951 Broadway Street – Lowell, MA 01854
By Phone: For questions, contact Chris Arnott at 978-452-7781 or chris@lowellhumanesociety.org
Online: www.lowelldevilshockey.com (at the bottom of the home page) and enter the special code: LHS022009

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The Farmtown lowdown: The Dracut news minute

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

George Papoulias
VALLEY PATRIOT DRACUT REPORTER

Super Souvenirs
If you’re looking to eternally carry the magical 2008 Dracut Middies football season with you, here’s how: Now available at all Dracut High Varsity Basketball games is a “Dracut 2008 Super Bowl Champs” long-sleeve shirt. On the back it commemorates the Division 1A Super Bowl game and win against Marshfield at Gillette Stadium. Cost of the shirt is \$20.

Next, how about a hat to match the shirt? You can purchase a 2008 Dracut Middies Super Bowl hat by calling Dracut High Athletic Director Tim Woods at (978) 957-1500 ext 1805: You can also email him at twoods@dracutpublicschools.net

Finally, how about something to read while sporting your middies pride? Copies of the 2008 M.I.A.A. Super Bowl program are now available for \$3.50 plus shipping. To order a copy contact Paul Halloran at (781) 598-8200 or email him at phalloran@grantgroup.com

Special Night
Speaking of the Middies, there will be a ring ceremony for the Super Bowl champions.

The ceremony takes place on March 29th at the Lakeview Junior High. Doors open at 4:00pm and the dinner is at 5:00pm. The night will consist of a five-course dinner with approximately 500-600 guests expected. The Dracut High cheerleading team and band are also expected.

Broken Records
As of press time, the Dracut High girls’ indoor track team posts a 3-1 record in the Merrimack Valley Conference, Division II. According to Tim Woods, the girls indoor track team has broken four records: Senior

Kristen Brunelle throwing the shot put for 35 ft. & 3 ¼ inches. Junior Lindsay Ross performing the high jump at 4 ft and 11 inches. Freshman Laura Karsch completed the long jump at 15 ft. and 2 ¼ inches. Freshman Katherine Gaudette finished the 600 meter dash in 1 minute and 46.6 seconds.

Wrestling to the Top Three
The glory continues with the Dracut High Wrestling team has they placed 3rd in a recent mid-season wrestling tournament in Griswold, Connecticut.

Important Upcoming Middies Dates
Registration for all spring sports is Tuesday, March 3rd in the Dracut High cafeteria from 5:00pm to 7:00pm. The spring season begins Monday, March 16th. Awards for winter sports participants will be Tuesday, March 10th at the Dracut High School gymnasium at 7:00pm.

Telethon Time
That time of the year is fast approaching. Tuesday, March 17th will mark the beginning of the 26th Annual Dracut Scholarship Foundation (DSF) Telethon. The telethon takes place from March 17th thru the 20th. It commences at 6:30pm at the Dracut High School.

The telethon began in 1984. The concept was conceived by former Dracut High principal and current member of the DSF board of directors, Bruce Hutchins and former Dracut superintendent of schools, the late Dr. Christos Daoulas. Its four nights of local entertainment while raising money for the DSF.

The purpose of the foundation is to provide college scholarships to deserving Dracut High seniors, based on strong academic performance and co-curricular activities.

In past telethons, the money was raised from a multitude of items. These included restaurant gift certificates to autographed sports memorabilia to tickets for New England sporting events including the Red Sox, Bruins, Patriots and Celtics.

The entertainment includes bands performing from Dracut elementary schools, the Lakeview Junior High and Dracut High School. Also in attendance will be jazz choruses, Suzuki violin band, and performances by local dance studios.

The foundation’s financial goal this year is to raise \$100,000. This year’s telethon will air on Dracut Access Television (DATV) Channel 8 and possibly other local stations.

However, what transpires in front of the camera doesn’t depict the entire story. Gary Meuse, producer and director of all 25 prior telethons and this year’s, emphasizes the importance volunteers play in making the telethon a success.


“Whether it’s selling t-shirts, hours of technical work or answering phones, volunteers are a big part of the event’s success. Current and former students spend as many and more hours volunteering than the duration of the actual telethons itself,” says Meuse.



Finally, this year’s telethon will provide a different type of entertainment. According to DSF President Michael Sancartier, this is in the form of a headlock. Chaotic Wrestling, based out of North Andover will be performing at the Dracut High School gymnasium on Wednesday, March 18th at 7:00pm. Tickets will be \$10 and \$5 of every ticket sold will benefit the foundation.

For more information on the Dracut Telethon, log onto www.dracutscholarship.org

For more information on Chaotic Wrestling, log onto www.chaoticwrestling.com



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

Tsongas reintroduces legislation to improve the quality of veterans’ health care

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman Niki Tsongas today reintroduced two bills to address and improve the quality and continuum of mental health care available to veterans. Recognizing the sharp increase in post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other mental health wounds among veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, Tsongas' legislation would help to improve diagnosis of these conditions by training counselors on college campuses to recognize their initial signs.

“I am pleased to reintroduce legislation today designed to improve the mental health care of veterans, especially those returning from Iraq and Afghanistan,” said Tsongas. "Recent studies have shown that nearly 300,000 veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have exhibited signs of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or other serious forms of depression. The fact that only about half of these veterans have sought care for their conditions exposes a glaring need to reach those additional veterans who may be affected."

“The legislation will aid the detection of PTSD among our newest generation of veterans by creating a pilot program to train counselors at higher education facilities on how to effectively identify and address service related stressors unique to our veterans that may manifest after separation from the military," explained Tsongas.

“The new GI Bill that was signed into law will allow thousands of returning Iraq and Afghanistan veterans to access a college education," Tsongas continued. "It is therefore highly appropriate that counselors on college campuses be trained to recognize the signs of PTSD or other mental wounds.

These counselors may be the most easily accessible mental health professionals for veterans taking advantage of their GI Bill benefit and they should be trained and ready to provide appropriate assistance."

Becky Arevalo of Billerica, an engineering student at Middlesex Community College who also served in Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2004 and 2005 as part of her deployment with the Army National Guard, talked about the hardships associated with PTSD.

"When many of our soldiers come home, they don't even realize how difficult it can be transitioning back into civilian life. We sometimes segregate ourselves from the world and only connect with other soldiers. When I first realized I was struggling, I was fortunate enough to be able to get immediate care at the VA. If those positions are eliminated or overloaded, it will create a serious void for soldiers in crisis. The VA therapists play a vital role in helping soldiers regain their confidence. I know mine helped me succeed in the world again."

In addition to her classes at MCC, Arevalo also serves as a member of the newly-formed MCC Veterans Advisory Board, which was created last semester to help returning veterans deal with a myriad of issues on campus. The board consists of more than half a dozen veterans who are both current and past MCC students, as well as several MCC administrators.

"I'm extremely appreciative to see Congressman Tsongas taking the lead on filing these important pieces of legislation on behalf of veterans everywhere," Arevalo said.

"Both of the pieces will go a long way toward helping our returning forces acclimate more efficiently into both society and in particular, into the places of higher education where we are trying to further our education and get established back on our feet."

“When PTSD is appropriately recognized and diagnosed, veterans can be effectively treated through therapy, medication and expert care, Tsongas explained.

"The key is that those involved in the lives of our veterans are able to recognize these seemingly invisible scars.”

Accompanying legislation also introduced by Tsongas today would require the Department of Veterans Affairs to deliver quarterly reports to Congress on the amount of mental health provider vacancies in the VA system in an effort to

ensure that appropriate numbers of providers are available to veterans.

“It is also the job of Congress to ensure that there are appropriate numbers of mental health care professionals for veterans to access," Tsongas continued. "The second bill I am reintroducing requires the VA to provide quarterly reports to Congress on the number of vacancies for mental health professionals at VA facilities, so that we can effectively evaluate and address any shortages of these critically important providers," Tsongas concluded.

Tsongas is joined by Congressman Michael Michaud (D-ME), Chairman of the Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Health in introducing the legislation.

"I believe that we owe all our veterans the opportunity to achieve the American dream that they fought to protect," said Michaud.

"This means ensuring they have the quality, consistent, accessible and affordable physical and mental health care they need and have earned.

Our newest generation of veterans coming home from Iraq and Afghanistan have some of the highest rates of PTSD we’ve ever seen.

This legislation will go a long way toward ensuring our veterans can pursue healthy and active lives for many years to come.”

RONNIE'S RANTS

Ranting about the Valley

Ronnie Ford
VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

Jerry Callagy, arguably the best all around athlete to come out of Lawrence High School, has passed on.

The body that performed so brilliantly before thousands of spectators lies still; but remembered as the tabernacle of a heart and soul that spelled true athlete. The baby of a brood of student athletes, Jerry was the most outstanding.

His personality was attractive and he was easy to talk to. I knew Jerry all my life, from St Augustine's when I was five years old, till his last days. I will miss Jerry; I thought a lot of him. Our prayers are with him and his family.

Again we are at the hands of the female fusilier take over. METHUEN HAS ELECTED A FELINE LEADERSHIP OF THE CITY COUNCIL. Mayor Manzi had better set up some protection. (They have claws Mayor), although they are a lot easier to look at than Councilor Lahey. Lahey by the way did not do a bad job holding the gavel. Debbie and Jennifer will have to prove their prowess at leadership. We will watch. I think things will be ok.

Congratulations to Officer Christine Nicolose. Christine made a nice pinch on an alleged robbery suspect. At roll call at the Methuen Police Department, they showed a picture of the suspect. The alert cop recognized the suspect from the photo, which ended up with his arrest. Congratulations to Mayor Bill Manzi for bringing Christine back to active duty from ILD.

Most people work, a company pays us. We pay our taxes, and the government distributes our taxes as it sees fit. In order to earn that paycheck, we work as truck, bus, MBTA, ambulance drivers, postal employees, police and firefighters, EMTs, teachers, nurses, doctors, and a myriad of other occupations. At any given time, some of us are required to pass a random urine test for illegal drugs. Which for the most part, we do not have a problem with.

However, what the problem is, the distribution of our taxes to people who do not have to pass a urine test, yet are the recipients of welfare benefits. Should there be some requirements to getting assistance? Not just name, address, proof of residency, social security ect. I have no problem helping people get back on their feet for a short period of time. I do have a problem with helping someone who sits on their behind, drinking beer and smoking, or snorting, or shooting illegal drugs. Now before you get your nose in a twist, I know most of the welfare recipients are worthy candidates who do not do the above. But, some do and puts everyone in a bad light. Past political administrations have given everything away.

Now we are in a bind economy wise. Can you imagine how much money we would save if people had to pass a urine test to get assistance? Urine tests do not cost that much and it would be cost effective to require one. We need stricter rules for getting public assistance. What do you say?

St. Valentine's Day will soon be here. Although the history of St. Valentine is somewhat of a mystery, it is thought he was a priest who was martyred for marrying young couples against the Roman Emperor's wishes. The Emperor thought young males made better warriors if they did not marry. So St. Valentine married them in secret. Wishing you all a Happy Valentine's Day.

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

Ronnie can be contacted at radiotalk@comcast.net



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

YOU DON'T SAY



(l) Methuen's West End City Councilor, Debbie Quinn was elected Council President last month by her colleagues. In the background is former town manager Bob LeBlanc.

Quinn elected council president, Kannan chosen to be Vice President

Traci Michele Byrne
VALLEY PATRIOT REPORTER

The Methuen City Council voted to elect West End Councilor Deborah Quinn as the new City Council President last month. Councilor Quinn replaces Central District Councilor Phil Leahy who served one year in that position.

The council also elected At-Large Councilor Jennifer Kannan as Vice President. Kannan was selected by her colleagues in a 5-4 vote over Central Councilor John Cronin, and Larry Giordano.

President Quinn has served two years on the city council, most recently as vice chair to Philip Lahey Jr in 2008.

President Quinn says she looks to tackle the fiscal dilemmas of 2009 with strident spending given the tough economic times facing Methuen and other municipalities across the state.

"We want to be fiscally responsible, yet we want to be able to continue the good service Methuen residents are used to," Quinn said.

Along with Methuen's eight other City Councilors' first priority will be to address the city's budget, which was reduced by \$659,419 during Deval Patrick's 9-C budget cuts.

Quinn says her agenda for 2009 aims to consolidate city positions with the public

school system to save the city money. While more budget cuts are imminent, Quinn maintains that within the City Council, "we all have the same mindset as far as trying to keep jobs and raises. I wouldn't want to see people hit the streets and lose jobs."

Going forward, the Council looks to improve the city by implementing new sidewalks throughout Methuen, as well as ushering in new businesses to commercial zones to help with the tax base.

The Methuen City Council will be addressing construction plans for a new high school, paid for with state dollars in an initiative to take the burden of construction off of local contributors. Of the project, Quinn said, "With the cooperation of the mayor, City Council members, and school committee, we need to bring this high school project to fruition."

The Methuen City Council will meet on February 17, 2009 in the Great Hall of the Searles Building, 41 Pleasant St. at 7pm.



Traci Byrne is a Tyngsboro resident and currently serving as the Vice President of the National Women's Forum based out of New Hampshire. Traci is an intern at WCAP and is a former reporter for the Dispatch News. She can be reached for comments at tracibyrd@gmail.com

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Jeanne Pappalardo
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Methuen Village assisted living on schedule to open in March

Slated for a March 1st opening, Methuen Village, the new assisted living community in downtown Methuen is leasing up quickly!

The community houses 91 apartments and a variety of lovely community rooms, including a fitness center, library, media room, and indoor greenhouse. The building will also feature a 14-apartment Memory Support Neighborhood, specially designed for those with Alzheimer's and related dementias.

Seth Dudley, Executive Director of the new community, said,

“The exterior of the building is complete, landscaping is in, and the interior finish work is progressing rapidly. By early February the building will be turned over to the project’s interior designer, Currier and Associates of Newburyport, who will add the furnishings that will make Methuen Village feel like home.”

The new community is being developed by DS Development, LLC of Newton. David Spada, Principal of DS Development, has assembled a professional team with vast experience in the assisted living industry to design, construct, and manage Methuen Village.

The new senior living community was designed to foster social interaction and maximize the health and independence of its senior residents. Community rooms are located on all four floors of the building, with plenty of space for residents to



mingle and participate in a wide range of social offerings.

Mr. Dudley stated, “Methuen Village will offer our residents extensive amenities and services from personal care assistance to gracious dining to an on-site beauty/barber salon. Residents will be able to maintain their independence, while having assistance available to them how and when they want it.”

Methuen Village is quickly leasing up, as future residents are coming in to choose their apartments.

Open houses will be held every weekend in January and the first three weekends in February, Saturdays and Sundays, from 11am to 2pm. The public is invited to tour the building at 4 Gleason Street and meet the management team. For more information, visit www.MethuenVillage.com or call 978-685-2220 to schedule a private tour.



Mayor Manzi names Joshua Letourneau as January’s Artist of the Month

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

Mayor William M. Manzi has named Joshua Letourneau as January’s Artist of the Month. Joshua is a Methuen resident and graduated from Westfield State College in 2001 where he majored in Art with a concentration in Graphic Design.

“While at Westfield State I took several different paths towards becoming a painter. I was exposed to not only painting but also sculpture, clay, and much more. But the medium that appealed to me most was painting. I found that I had a natural talent that I never knew existed,” Letourneau said.

Mayor Manzi stated, “Joshua is one of the talented young artists living and

painting in Methuen. It is my pleasure to display his paintings in my office. I encourage the public to come by City Hall and view his colorful paintings.”

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

Officials secure Federal Assistance for Essex and Middlesex counties from Ice storm

Washington, DC---Senators Edward M. Kennedy and John F. Kerry and Congresswoman Niki Tsongas announced this evening that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has approved Governor Deval Patrick's request for federal disaster assistance for communities in Middlesex and Essex counties which were impacted by the December 12th ice storm. Communities within Middlesex and Essex Counties will now be eligible to receive up to 75% in reimbursement for costs associated with storm clean-up. Earlier this week Senators Kennedy and Kerry and Representatives Tsongas, Tierney, McGovern, and Markey sent a letter to President Bush asking that the federal assistance be granted.

"Senator Kennedy is pleased that the communities in Middlesex and Essex Counties that were so hard hit by the December ice storm will receive this federal assistance to help them get back on their feet and ease the strain of over-burdened budgets," said Kennedy spokesman Keith Maley.

"This paves the way for welcome relief for those in Middlesex and Essex Counties who were hit hard by last month’s devastating ice storm. I'm glad FEMA realized the urgency and is taking

the appropriate steps to begin providing help to those who need it most,” said John Kerry.

"I am pleased that FEMA has agreed to this entirely appropriate request for federal assistance for our local communities that were hit hard by the ice storm,” said Congresswoman Niki Tsongas. "Cities and towns were forced to deal with the after effects of the storm which included ensuring the immediate safety of their citizens, clean-up efforts, and assisting with the restoration of power. These types of unexpected expenditures by local communities are precisely why we have federal disaster assistance. I also want to recognize Art Cleeves, FEMA's regional director, for the instrumental role that he played in securing this assistance for our communities.”

Many communities in Essex and Middlesex suffered damages estimated in the hundreds of thousands of dollars from the December ice storm. FEMA will conduct public assistance briefings in the coming weeks to provide more information on the next steps that cities and towns should take in order to receive federal assistance.

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SEAN MCLAUGHLIN, HERO IN OUR MIDST : From Page 1

other since their high school days at Manchester Central High School; they began dating while in college. Now, they have two beautiful children, Jack (9) and Emily (6) and it is Cynthia that has had to sacrifice for her husband's service, as has many countless spouses throughout the years.

She was a teacher and track coach at Haverhill HS at one time, but since Major McLaughlin's mobilizations have taken him away so much over last few years, she has become a stay at home mother in an effort to maintain a sense of stability in Jack and Emily's lives. We commend you Cynthia!

Major McLaughlin has served honorably with the Army Reserves since when he earned his commission from UNH in 1990. His service has taken him from his home in Haverhill, Massachusetts to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, to Iraq as well as other locations abroad to defend the United States on the Global War on Terror.

"Being mobilized to perform duty here in the states has obviously been less stressful on my family than my previous deployment to a war zone. But the family separation is still difficult and seeing dad only on infrequent visits can be hard on my children", says the Major.

"I was deployed to Baghdad, Iraq where I served as the military liaison to the Governor of Baghdad. From that experience, I have gained a great deal of respect for the Iraqi's that believe in the democratic process and are willing to hold elected office."

"During my time in Baghdad, Governor Ali al Haidri, the first Baghdad Governor I worked with, was assassinated by insurgents. He was a good man and his loss is deeply felt."

"The man who replaced him, Governor Ali Fadel, also faced multiple and frequent attempts on his life. Despite that, he

worked tirelessly for Baghdad citizens without fear for his personal safety. I found the bravery of the Iraqi's who stand against the insurgents and try to make their country a better place truly inspiring."

He's currently at Fort Bragg, NC and serves as the Course Manager for the Civil Affairs mobilized officer qualification course. He says that almost all the officer-students in the course are reservists on a battle roster for either Iraq or Afghanistan. All of the students will work in Civil Affairs once they get in theater.

The Major comments on how his employers have helped, he says, "my employers at Salem High School in Salem, MA, have been very supportive and accommodating. I really couldn't ask for a more supportive employer". This is also an additional concern on a Guardsmen or Reservist and one that Major McLaughlin can rest easy with.

Well, this is a little break from the norm, friends. Major Sean McLaughlin wanted The Valley Patriot to give him a forum to express his gratitude to those in Haverhill that have been supportive and helpful to his family during his deployments. He also warns that there are those in the community that aren't so patriotic. The following words are from the heart of a Patriot, whose duties dictate that he stay almost permanently geographically separated from his family. Words of endearment for Haverhill's "True Patriots", also words of concern, as told by Major Sean McLaughlin:

Haverhill's True Patriots

"Americans are a patriotic people. As a soldier, I see this almost every day when I wear the uniform. Strangers will come up to me and thank me for my service. People will sometimes offer to buy my coffee when I'm in line at the donut shop or just wave and give a thumbs up as they

drive by me when I'm walking down the street.

I'm always grateful when people show these small acts of appreciation, but I feel a bit guilty as well. Guilty because I know the people who are making some of the greatest sacrifices of this war don't get any acknowledgement at all. Soldiers receive all the awards, ribbons and applause from the crowd while our spouses take on the burden of raising a family alone and our children get an absentee parent.

"Since the global war terror began, I've been mobilized twice. First, I was sent to Baghdad Iraq and now I'm winding down a second tour at Ft Bragg North Carolina training my fellow reservist for deployment. All added up, it's been twenty five months so far that I've been back on active duty. Over two years of my wife running a house alone and trying her best to raise a son and daughter. Over two years of dad missing holidays, kids baseball practices, dance recitals, and soccer games.

The experience would have been much harder for my family and I to bear if it weren't for the support and understanding of the Haverhill community.

We've been lucky to have good friends, in the area and neighbors up the street who understand the strains that the military puts on a family. My children's teachers at both Pentucket Lake School where my son is in fourth grade and Walnut Square where my daughter is in kindergarten have been extremely helpful. They have gone out of their way to be accommodating and sympathetic to children whose Dad is away in the service.

Sure, not everyone is thoughtful or considerate of what a military family goes through. Like everyone we've got our share of petty neighbors and had more than one dishonest tradesman has tried to exploit the fact that my wife isn't an expert on home construction. Some folks will never really appreciate the fact that the freedoms they enjoy as Americans are paid for with the sacrifices of military families.

But thankfully, those people are the minority. In general, the Haverhill community has been terrific to my family and I during both my army mobilizations.

For a soldier, knowing that your family is being supported by the people back home is a great relief. A pat on the back in the airport or thumbs up from a stranger is great, but treating our families with kindness and empathy while we are away



PHOTO: COURTESY

Haverhill resident Sean McLaughlin stationed in Iraq

means much more. It is an act of true patriotism that every soldier appreciates.

When asked why he decided to serve, he replied, "Honestly, it's tough to recall. It was always something I intended to do".

A verbal salutation or greeting and a "thank you for your service", or "thanks for what you do" is welcome and appreciated. Displaying an American flag on a vehicle or on a window is too, and a yellow magnetic ribbon, is an excellent show of support. Better yet, a centerpiece in the front yard of a random home in the Merrimack Valley, landscaped with pristine freshly cut grass, with fresh mulching in a circle and cobblestone border, with a 25 foot-tall flagpole that hoists up and proudly displays our Flag, as the sound that Old Glory makes as the wind moves her about, whipping and clacking and when the sun reveals the crimson, white, and blue; it is a symbol of strength, honor and valor.

All of these are great examples of support and patriotism that is uncommonly shown throughout the community.

Folks, what hits home the most for the Soldier, Marine, Airman, or Seaman, is how their loved ones are faring while we serve, whether, near or far.

Thank you!



Tech. Sergeant James Moore is a recruiter for the United States Air Force and our Valley Patriot Hero Columnist. You can e-mail Sgt. Moore at James.Moore.73@us.af.mil or

you can call him at 978-686-1464

Major Sean McLaughlin is a Haverhill resident and an Army Reserve Officer. He is current assigned as the Course Manager of the Civil Affairs Qualification Course – Mobilized (CAQC-M) at Ft Bragg North Carolina. The course is required for all army officers that are scheduled for deployment to Iraq and Afghanistan that will be performing Civil Affairs duties and are not previously branched Civil Affairs. Major McLaughlin's previous assignments include a tour a tour in Baghdad Iraq where he served as the Military Liaison to the Governor of Baghdad and the Baghdad Provincial Council. His civilian occupation is a history teacher at Salem High School in Salem MA.



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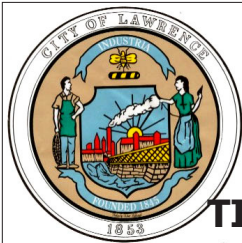
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TITLE: Community Development Manager
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PAY GRADE: Exempt, \$60,000 - \$70,000
UNION: SEIU

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Application and Full Job Description Available in the Personnel
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Posting Date: January 14, 2009 **Deadline:** February 14, 2009

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