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THE VALLEY PATRIOT

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"Congress shall make no law..."

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

An exclusive interview with Superintendent Wilfredo Laboy

Tom Duggan

VALLEY PATRIOT REPORTER

Lawrence School Superintendent Wilfredo Laboy granted an exclusive interview with The Valley Patriot where he discussed the details of recent media scandals involving his office, teachers and principals under his command and the spate of bad publicity in the daily newspaper concerning the Lawrence Public Schools.

Laboy has been under fire most recently because Mark Rivera (Special Assistant to the Superintendent) and private consultant Harry Maldonado were misusing school department computer software to run background record checks. Maldonado was subsequently dismissed and Mark Rivera resigned when it was learned that background checks were being conducted on political candidates, police officers, elected and appointed officials, members of the media and even celebrities.

But Laboy says that even though he was unaware of the activities of Maldonado and Rivera he is "very saddened and embarrassed" that the

incident happened and says he is sorry to everyone whose privacy was violated.

Laboy also addressed for the first time what he called "media generated scandals filled with half truths" including: a teacher who was reportedly fired for letting her students bring pasta to class, a principal who reportedly tried to sell her novel in her school, and Lawrence High students who were drinking in the school.

"It's been nine years and as you know, when I arrived here this school district was chronically under-performing. We had lost accreditation and were facing the possibility of a state takeover. The Lawrence Public Schools were not in good shape. In the year 2001, when our kids took MCAS competency determination the 10th grade class had a 23% passing rate. It was terrible. I was horrified by those results," Laboy explained.

We had a school district that had no student achievement at any level, and what we have seen in the nine years since I have been here is, consistent achievement in grades across the district. In the year 2004, we got accreditation

LABOY, page 8

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VALLEY PATRIOT OF THE MONTH

WILLIAM GALLAGHER

US Navy SeaBees, WWII

Kathleen Corey Rahme

VALLEY PATRIOT HERO REPORTER

Service is no stranger to Bill Gallagher. He served as the Town Manager and as a City Councilor of Methuen for many years. Prior to that, Bill served in the US Navy Sea Bees in WWII. Bill answered the 'call to serve' in 1943 and again in 1946 when he was in the reserves. Gallagher served in both theatres of operation and we are grateful for his service.

Gallagher did his boot camp in the USNTC Camp Peary, Williamsburg, VA and joined the 114th Battalion which was commanded

by Commander Earl G. Katlenback, CEC, USNR. He was then given orders to report to USNCTC, Camp Endicott in Davisville, RI. He received his advanced training in heavy equipment operation and simulated jungle fighting.

As part of that experience, he was involved in going into the woods where wooden figures would pop up out of nowhere and represent the enemy. There was an Ensign who would give the trainees a hard time. He would stay behind a mound of dirt and observe the trainees as they shot at the targets. The young trainees would

HERO, page 27

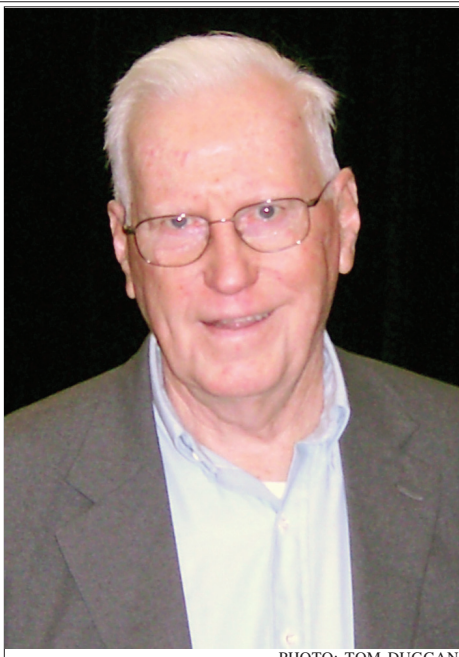


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EDITORIAL



Mass sales tax to skyrocket to 6.25%

Look up in the sky! It's a bird ... It's a plane ...

No ... it's Representative David Torrisi (D-North Andover) coming to rescue the beleaguered taxpayers and business owners of the Merrimack Valley. Joining Rep. Torrisi, in voting against an increase in the state sales tax from 5% to 6.25% was Representative Linda Dean Campbell (D-Methuen).

Unfortunately, our superheroes were roundly defeated by the thieves from the dark side. The thieves prevailed by a vote of 108 to 51.

Amazingly, all of the other (so-called) "representatives" from the Merrimack Valley joined the thieves in piling on. Despite the obvious, gut-wrenching blow this represents to the economy of the Merrimack Valley, five local scoundrels voted in favor of this 25% increase in the sales tax.

Sometimes economic projections are tricky, but not in this case. The only economic benefit that will come from this travesty will be road construction for the 8-lane highway needed to support shoppers going to and from New Hampshire.

New Hampshire will boom: new businesses, more jobs, and greater prosperity.

The Merrimack Valley will suffer immensely: very few new businesses, existing businesses closing, fewer and fewer job opportunities, and our most productive citizens (and new graduates) fleeing the area for economic opportunities in other states.

What's next? State Police inspections of our vehicles when we return to Massachusetts? A federal imposition of state taxes on Internet sales? Will a "federal surcharge" on Internet sales be far behind? Do you feel cornered?

It is time to fight back. Below is the list of your local turncoat politicians. Call them and tell them exactly what you think of their short-sighted vote that will decimate our economic future.

Barbara L'Italien, D-Andover (617-722-2380)

Barry Finegold, D-Andover (617-722-2263)

William Lantigua, D-Lawrence (617-722-2810)

Brian Dempsey, D-Haverhill (617-722-2370)

Harriett Stanley, D-West Newbury (617-722-2430)

Calls to state Senators Baddour (617-722-1604) and Tarr (617-722-1600) demanding their opposition to this tax hike are also critical.

You might also thank Rep. Torrisi (617-722-2013) and Rep. Campbell (617-722-2877) for their no votes while telling them you expect them to wage a serious fight against this looming man-caused disaster – not just bask in the glory of a vote that they knew would not impact the outcome.

Finally, don't buy the excuse that additional revenues are needed for the children, public safety, bridge repairs, clean water, or motherhood. Massachusetts government is awash in tax revenue with more and more pigs (Oink! Oink!) lining up at the trough every day.

Don't be fooled again. It is time to put the special interest swine on a strict diet ... maybe even getting their stomachs stapled!



LETTERS

Haverhill's priorities are not on the children

To the editor:

Why do some high schools in The Valley fund their athletic department properly and other school systems, like Haverhill, charge students up to \$300 for each sport? Are we to believe that the state reimburses each school system differently? Do those schools without fees realize that athletics and other after school activities round out the education of their students while schools like Haverhill feel that playing team sports is a privilege for those who can afford to pay the fees?

Does the background and makeup of the school committee determine Haverhill's priorities? Does the fact that two of the members are women and three of the men on the board, including the mayor, have never so much as put on a jockstrap? Do the decision makers in Haverhill and some other school systems in the state simply not care that participation is down 40% at schools that have a pay to play policy? Who are the 40% that do not participate?

Let's use Haverhill's football program as an example. Before the school began charging user fees, the football team would have 90 to 100 students in the 10th, 11th and 12th grades. This past year, participation was at about 55 players.

The freshman team should field 45 students or better, but this year had approximately 18 players. I ask the school committee this question: Where do you think those 60 or so boys go after school, and do you care? Do you think that they are volunteering at the homeless shelter or food pantry?

I can tell you where many of them end up - in the court system, on the corner or maybe even in rehab. Maybe they are selling weed to your children or grandchildren, or tagging public and personal property. Are you folks this shortsighted? Are you aware that your pay to play policy discriminates against minorities, children who come from low-income families or students that lack parental support? Do you care that you have driven the last two athletic directors into early retirement?

Because of your reckless decisions, they spent most of their time holding bake sales and car washes. How many times have we heard testimony from judges, lawyers, police officers and other professionals that if it were not for school athletics they would not be where they are today? They may have dropped out of school or had poor grades

that would have kept them from attending college.

Save the excuses and change your discriminatory policies. If you are so spineless that not one of you can step up and find a solution, then I suggest to you that your priorities are wrong and it is time for you to step down. Allow a group of activists who truly care about the kids have a crack at your budget.

I know that I could find some sacred cows to cut, so stop your speeches about how bad you feel for the kids and take care of our young people the same way Methuen, Lawrence and Lowell do. Those communities realize how important athletics, arts and other school activities are to the complete high school experience. But, you have placed the burden on parent groups and businesses to raise funds for these user fees. We already pay once through taxes.

The Tribune recently wrote an editorial in response to the creation of a foundation that will advocate for student athletes and at risk youth. One of the goals of the foundation is to lobby the state and possibly congress to make it mandatory that schools provide equal access to athletics. This would not mean more taxes. The Tribune's view was that by the foundation and other groups putting up funds for these pay to play fees, the school committee would have no incentive to correct this unfair policy. How can you look at yourselves in the mirror knowing that your decision of penny pinching is dictating the future of some students?

May I suggest to parents that it might be time to opt for school choice?

Let's see how Haverhill's leaders adjust their budget if ten students decide to go to a school that values their students and realize the importance of athletics believe that will cost a school system around fifteen thousand dollars per student. Since the state reimburses school systems equally, if a student was to leave Haverhill for Pentucket, Haverhill would receive fifteen thousand dollars less and that amount would go to Pentucket.

To families that cannot afford the user fees or those who want to be part of a sports program that has a chance at winning a few games, I would think that a transfer would be an attractive option.

Mike Seaman, Haverhill

The Valley Patriot is published monthly on the first Wednesday of each month by the Valley Patriot, Inc., POB 453, North Andover, MA 01845. Copyright (c) 2009, Valley Patriot, Inc. All rights reserved. Subscriptions are \$40 per year and sent via U.S. Mail.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Valley Patriot, Inc., POB 453, North Andover, MA 01845.

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The Valley Patriot is printed by Graphic Development in West Hanover Mass.

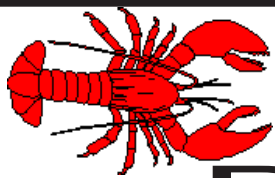
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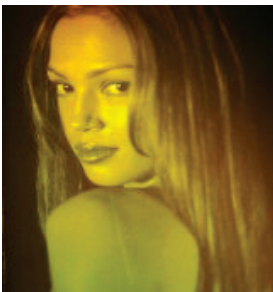
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THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

Welcome to the latest government SNAFU

The Cause, The Cure, and The Obstacles to Recovery, Part I

Dr. Charles Ormsby
VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST AND EX-MEMBER
OF THE N. ANDOVER SCHOOL COMMITTEE

TANSTAAFL: “There Ain’t No Such Thing As A Free Lunch!” - Anonymous

When economic decisions are based on political considerations and not on rational economic calculations, wealth is squandered and the economic piper must be paid. It is as predictable as addition and subtraction.

There is no escaping the result.

TANSTAAFL.

We’ve been there before. Or maybe I should say our ancestors have been there before.

The Great Depression was caused and then prolonged by government interference in the free market economy. In 1913 the Federal Reserve was born. For the first time in U.S. history a central authority set the prevailing interest rates and regulated the volume of credit that private banks would extend to their customers.

Instead of individuals carefully examining the risks and deciding whether or not to put their hard-earned dollars at risk, the government set the tune.

Instead of the judgments of millions of investors melding into a consensus, a handful of government bureaucrats called the shots.

Instead of judgments being tempered by the potential losses of an investor’s own assets ... judgments that could constantly be adjusted based on the observations, analyses, and intuitions of those intimately familiar with different market segments ... a handful of government appointees, ever mindful of political pressures and with little of their own at stake, were anointed to set interest rates.

The result? The Federal Reserve, bowing to political pressures, set interest rates below what the market would have set and excessive credit was extended to borrowers who would not have been able to gain access to credit had the decision been made by lenders putting their own

money at risk. Loans and investments were made that were not economically justifiable.

This situation, and the flow of capital into risky loans/investment, persisted during most of the 1920s.

Then TANSTAAFL set in ...

You can blame the Democrat, Woodrow Wilson, for the establishment of the Federal Reserve. Or, you can blame the Republicans, Harding, Coolidge and Hoover, for the low interest rate policies of the Federal Reserve during the 1920s.

I blame all members of the political class, regardless of their political party, who harbor socialist tendencies. Why? Because, when politicians make decisions about OPM (Other People’s Money), they are driven by considerations that have no respect for the preservation of that money’s value.

Flash forward to the last two decades. In 1992 the Boston Federal Reserve issued a study that minorities were less successful in obtaining home mortgages than whites and when they did obtain mortgages, they were at higher interest rates.

Amazing! Those who, *on average*, had lower incomes, lower available down payments, and a poorer credit history, would receive, *on average*, offers for less credit and at higher rates! Can you imagine the free market yielding such a racist result?

Our federal government had a cure for this outrage. In 1992 Congress started to “pressure” Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae to purchase bank mortgages made to low and moderate income borrowers. Then this pressure was converted into explicit goals: 42% of their loan volume in 1995, 50% in 2000, and 52% in 2005.

Housing and Urban Development (HUD) set similar targets for “special affordable loans,” i.e., those made to borrowers having incomes of 60% or less than the prevailing median incomes in their geographical areas. First, 12% of all mortgages purchased by Freddie and Fannie in 1996 would have to meet this

requirement. This target was raised to 20% in 2000 and then to 22% in 2002. Unbelievably, HUD’s target was set at 28% for 2008.

In 1995, Congress completely replaced the regulations governing the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) to ensure that banks make “investments” benefiting low- and moderate-income individuals. The Federal Reserve then enforced this dictum by “evaluating” and “rating” banks based on this goal. The Fed’s message: Do it or else.

On May 31, 1999 the LA Times, long a proponent of such government interference in the market, ran an article stating, “Most importantly, Fannie Mae has agreed to buy more loans with *very low* down payments – or with mortgage payments that represent an *unusually high* percentage of a buyer’s income. That’s made banks willing to lend to lower-income families they *once might have rejected*.”

Yes, “very low,” “unusually high,” and “once might have rejected.” Well said.

A few paragraphs later the article acknowledged that even Fannie Mae resisted increasing its target above 42% since “a higher target would only produce more loan defaults by pressuring banks to accept unsafe borrowers.” I wonder how many Harvard PhDs it took to figure that out.

Between 2000 and 2002 Fannie Mae securitized and guaranteed \$394 billion in CRA loans, thus providing a ready market for bad loans and seemingly reducing the apparent risk of those loans to the lending banks.

Now government apologists blame the banks for making bad loan decisions.

In the current housing market meltdown, I’m ready to tar and feather just about anyone within spitting distance of the crime scene, including the bankers that played along with the scam. But the scam was conceived by, encouraged by, forged into policy by, baked into law by, reduced to regulations by, and executed

by ... the GOVERNMENT. The bankers just did what they were told and, yes, sought to profit by it as much as possible. No surprise there.

But the public sector bureaucrats weren’t content to just screw up the multi-trillion dollar housing market.

No, they had to add fuel to the housing market fire by having the Federal Reserve repeat the error made in the 1920s of forcing interest rates below market levels. The discount rate, which has typically been at 5% or above, was kept below 4% from early 2001 to mid 2005; hitting a low of less than 1% during the first six months of 2002. The result was predictable: excess borrowing, especially on homes. Why on homes? Because the excess demand for housing from unqualified borrowers spurred by the Freddie/Fannie debacle drove housing prices higher. The higher they went, the more people speculated.

Why not? With interest rates so low you could buy high and then reap profits by re-financing when the market went ever higher. Everyone wanted to join in the bonanza.

The classic bubble emerged like in the Roaring Twenties and the predictable collapse ensued.

Then TANSTAAFL set in ... and the economic piper had to be paid.

Unfortunately, our political leaders are largely the same unscrupulous and clueless lot that led us to this disaster in the first place.

Can this motley crew save the day? Can they right the wrongs of the last century? Can they gather-up some courage, defy the special interests, learn from history, and change their lying ways?

Don’t miss the surprising answer next month in Part Deux, [The Cure and the Obstacles to Recovery!](#)



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

A COUCH WITH A VIEW

How Jay Leno will destroy television as we know it

Ray Shackett
VALLEY PATRIOT ENTERTAINMENT REPORTER

I’m sure Jay Leno is a wonderful person. He has certainly proved himself to be a comedic talent worthy of succeeding Johnny Carson in 1992 as host of The Tonight Show and going on to carve a name for himself in late night television at the coveted 11:30pm time slot. A success he may be, a prince among broadcasting princes, but he’s destroying TV as we know it! Let’s take a trip back in time and get ourselves caught up to date.

James Douglas Muir Leno was born to Scottish filmmaker Catherine nee Muir in April 28th 1950. Grew up in Andover, MA... yadda, yadda, yadda. Successful stand up comedian... yadda, yadda, yadda. Unsuccessful actor (see 1989s Collision Course starring opposite the late great Pat Morita with the tag line that sold me... “The only thing stopping these two cops from solving the crime of the century... is each other!” Zing!)... yadda, yadda, yadda. Let’s skip ahead a bit.

After a stint as a regular substitute host for Johnny Carson , (prior to Carson’s retirement announcement.) Jay seemed like a perfect fit to take over Johnny’s spot, except that David Letterman, in the 12:30 Late Show slot following Carson on NBC, looked like the natural successor. And the passive-aggressive war between the two immersed. The fight for Carson’s attention produced a book and ultimately a movie based on that book chronicled the process which ultimately saw Leno in the top spot and Dave, feeling betrayed by his bosses as NBC, extinguishing his relationship with the network and defecting to CBS to compete with his late night nemesis as host of Late Night With David Letterman.

Flash forward to the future of our television demise. Starting this Fall NBC makes a bold and perhaps beautiful move. But I’m personally not to sure about the latter. Jay Leno abandons his 11:30PM Tonight Show post for a new show to be broadcasted 5 nights a week in the 10PM time slot. So many things worry me here. First is the betrayal of Conan O’Brien - the unknown replacement for the Late Show when Letterman left for CBS. As with any

successor, it is tradition, although not in 1987’s Letterman vs. Leno case. Meaning, the host of the show following yours drops down an hour for the honors. So when Leno announced his retirement a few years back, O’Brien got the call to helm “The Show”. Enjoying the moment for just a few moments, it seemed to be just that. Until the announcement that Jay would not be retiring but making television history by hosting a one hour talk show in prime time. Here’s the catch. Conan gets The Tonight Show...a dream come true.

But Jay keeps the audience. With a bigger budget and an earlier time-slot Leno will tuck that late night audience into bed a bit earlier than normal leaving Conan a bit short on the numbers. With the honors of hosting The Tonight Show comes a responsibility to the tradition of the show. O’Brien’s sophomoric comedy will be tempered for his new duties. The Tonight Show is traditionally crisper while the 12:30 slot allows some more liberties in the blue comedy department. Exit the teetering Conan fans. The die hards will follow but will they be enough? And will they be satisfied in the end?

Conan O’Brien aside, there is a whole other issue that worries me much more since I struggle to stay up past 10pm these days as it is. Where will the late night dramas go?

NBC finished off ER this season and canceled whatever was left over to make room. 10PM traditionally is a time where a series can get a bit edgier (note NYPD Blue and Dennis Franz’s backside). Make room for networks like TNT, USA and FX to prosper but these are networks that have already spread their budgets thin with the few outstanding shows they have. FX only airs one series at a time throughout the year. Don’t think for one minute that CBS and ABC won’t follow suit if this works out for NBC. That wipes out one third of episodic entertainment throughout the week.

It will put unneeded pressure on the 8PM to 10PM hours to perform and soon that will crumble. We’re talking Level 5 panic here folks! How about this... more reality programming! The playing field will be even if not tipped in this mindless medium’s favor. Now, premium cable will

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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!

Blogging your Business to Profitability

Find out how blogging can promote your business through Northern Essex Community College’s non-credit, one-night seminar “To the Blogosphere and Beyond” offered on Tuesday, May 19, from 6 to 9 p.m. on the North Andover campus, in the Corporate and Community Education Center, 1600 Osgood St. The cost is \$51.

Blogging can be a great marketing tool when used correctly. F. Deborah Della Piana, multi-national marketing, advertising, and public relations expert will demonstrate how individuals can promote and grow their businesses by using a combination of traditional public relations methods, blogging, social networking, and more. Real world examples will be used to exhibit the success of these techniques.

For more information please contact Diane Zold-Gross, assistant dean, Workforce Development and Community Education at 978-659-1221 or dzoldgross@necc.mass.edu.

NECC’s Corporate and Community Education Center, located at 1600 Osgood Street, North Andover (on Route 125) in the former Lucent training facility, offers noncredit professional development courses, certificate programs and computer training as well as personal enrichment courses for individuals and companies that are looking for cutting edge skills by providing the training that is most needed in today’s workforce. For more information call 978-659-1200 or visit us online at www.necc.mass.edu/noncredit.

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

Rolling Ridge Retreat to Host Open House Celebrating Art, Artists and the Natural World

A Glimpse of Europe

*June 7, 2009 * 10 am -3 pm*
Rolling Ridge Retreat and Conference Center will host its first “Glimpse of Europe” Open House for artists and the public to explore and enjoy its 38-acre European-styled estate among the rolling hills on the shores of Lake Cochichewick on Sunday, June 7 from 10 am to 3 pm. (Rain Date - Sunday, June 14, 10 am - 3 pm).

Artists can find inspiration in Rolling Ridge, a grand estate built for Ethan Allen in the 1920s featuring spectacular lake views, an Italian bowling green, cascading fountains, rolling hills and wooded trails. Artists are free to take photographs, paint *plein-air*, and enjoy the serenity and splendor of the surroundings. Families are also welcome to participate in children’s art activities presented by the North Andover Cultural Council and Andover Artists Guild.

The public is also welcome to walk the grounds, take pictures, watch artists at work, and share in the natural beauty of the estate. Artists will also present talks and demonstrations during the event.

“Rolling Ridge is a tranquil oasis in a busy world. Just being here can restore one’s sense of harmony,” said Rev. Larry Peacock, executive director of Rolling Ridge. “By welcoming artists, with their wonderful sense of sight, we hope to share with our community a day to see with fresh eyes and experience peace and delight.”

“A Glimpse of Europe is a feast for our senses, the beauty of the surrounding coupled with the peace and light make a wonderful inspiration for both the artists and the visiting public,” said Nella Lush, co-president of the Andover Artists Guild.

“It is amazing how you feel like you’ve found a European landscape when you arrive at Rolling Ridge,” added June Munro, co-president of the Andover Artists Guild. “We are very fortunate that right in our own back yard, there exists such an inspirational respite so welcoming for all visitors and artists.”

From 2 to 3 pm, artists are invited to a reception to converse and to present and discuss their work. The public is welcome. Light refreshments will be served. A selection of box lunches including a vegetarian meal for artists and visitors may be reserved by calling Rolling Ridge at 978-682-8815. Lunches cost \$20. Rolling Ridge’s European-trained Chef Tobias Marx will also prepare a selection of ala carte lunch items, European culinary delights, cappuccinos and organic teas.

The event is co-sponsored by the Andover Artists Guild and the North Andover Cultural Council.

Rolling Ridge Retreat is located at 660 Great Pond Road in North Andover next to the North Andover Country Club. Visit <http://www.rollingridge.org> for directions and event information. For lunch reservations or more information, call 978-682-8815.

About the Event Partners: Rolling Ridge Retreat and Conference Center is a sacred and beautiful space set apart for individuals and groups to find rest and renewal. The 38 acres of woods, rolling hills and lakefront, and the 40 room European-Georgian estate provide the setting for retreats and conferences, day meetings and overnight accommodations.

Rolling Ridge Retreat and Conference Center also offers programs and renewal days for individuals and groups. Rolling Ridge Retreat and Conference Center is a ministry of hospitality and spirituality of the

New England Conference, United Methodist Church, and open to not-for-profit, public and corporate groups.

Rolling Ridge was constructed as a private summer residence for Ethan Allan of New York City. Allan had purchased the 38-acre, 40-room “Rolling Ridge”, by which name it was already known, in 1899, and began work on his estate in 1916. The entire estate is in the Georgian Revival Style heavily infused with classical Italian proportions and detailing. The landscape was designed by internationally-known architect Fletcher Steele.

Andover Artists Guild: The Andover Artists Guild was incorporated as a nonprofit organization in 1970 with an initial membership of 9 members. Since then, it has grown to more than 90 active members. The membership includes artists and arts patrons from Andover and North Andover as well as surrounding towns and New Hampshire.

North Andover Cultural Council:
The North Andover Cultural Council is a group of interested residents whose purpose is to support community-based projects and activities in the arts, humanities and interpretive sciences to benefit the residents of North Andover and to dispense public funding allocated by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.

North Andover Senior Activities

Don’t miss the bus! Take a ride up the coast to Wells, Maine. Special catered lunch serving Baked Stuffed Sole, green beans, mashed potatoes and dessert. Monday, June 1, bus leaves the Senior Center at 10:00am. \$10.00 includes transportation and lunch.

Outreach Blood Pressure Clinics are back! Debbie Rillahan, the public health nurse for the Town of North Andover, will be joining Donna Delaney, the Outreach Coordinator, in providing clinics on the following dates and times:

June 11 Fountains Drive 10:00am
June 11 Foulds Terrace 11:00am
More dates will be published in the next newsletter.

HELP US SUPPORT OUR SENIOR CENTER

Donations of clean yarn are needed for our knitting group in order for them to continue their fund raising efforts on behalf of the Senior Center. Especially needed are worsted weight yarn and baby yarn. Our group knits and crochets a wide variety of items including layettes, afghans, hats, mittens and gloves. Work is now underway for our Holiday Fair which will be held on November 28, 2009.

Thanks go out to our dedicated knitters for raising over \$1,000. at our 2007 Fair. Yarn donations may be dropped off at the Center during our business hours.

2nd Annual High Tea & Fashion Show
Spring is here and it’s time for the 2nd annual High Tea fund raiser at the Wyndham Hotel, Andover, MA on Sunday, June 7, 2009 from 12:30 – 3:00pm This year’s Tea will feature a Fashion Show by Appleseed’s Retail Store. Tickets are on sale now at the Senior Center and cost \$20.00 per person. Please call Barbara @ 978-688-9560 or e-mail Bchampigny@townofnorthandover.com if you want to purchase a block of tickets. This event is open to the public; bring your grand daughter, or your favorite niece!

Dr. Stupnytskyi, MD is now accepting new patients for his Internal Medicine Practice- Please see our ad on page 15

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Laboy Speaks out: From Page 1

back. An attendance rate that was abysmal at the high school level when I arrived, now, not only exceeded attendance rates in the elementary schools, in the middle school and high school we went from 83% average daily attendance to 92%,” he said. “This year we will celebrate what I believe is the 1st ever Stanford acceptance by a Lawrence High Student. Her name is Natasha Diaz. You don’t hear those stories you don’t read about those stories. We are getting results in the classroom where it counts and more kids are going to better colleges and more kids are getting a better education than when I arrived. The burden is trying to get that message out over the loud cries by the teachers union about how awful our schools are.”

“We’ve built over 12 educational buildings in Lawrence since I arrived. Three major complexes, 9 buildings on the highs school campus. We have been able to give Lawrence children a school system that went from 251st in the state as far as providing an education to English language, to being ranked third in the state. We moved up 248 places in a matter of eight years,” he continued.

We are making sure our kids are learning English and succeeding. I think there are some real milestones we have been able to accomplish and when people evaluate Wilfredo Laboy as a superintendent, I would hope they put all the outrageous headlines in perspective with what we have been able to accomplish here in a little more than 8 years,” concluded Laboy.

Lexis Nexis: Criminal, Credit and Background Checks done with school software

Laboy said that he had no knowledge that Harry Maldonado and Mark Rivera

were using school software to run criminal, credit and background checks on people outside the scope of their work for the Lawrence Public Schools. He added that he believes the Eagle Tribune has “an agenda” to force him out of his job by creating such negative misperceptions about him and his role in various incidences to whip up public sentiment against him.

“I took full responsibility for what happened. I can’t defend their actions, they were horrible. But people need to remember my name was checked, members of my family’s privacy were violated. My father’s name was run and he passed away 15years ago. People tend to forget that. But remember it wasn’t just Mark Rivera, it was Harry Maldonado who owns his own private investigation business and he was using it for that purpose with school department software. There were many instances where he ran the software off school site for his private business.”

“What most people don’t know is that Mark Rivera recommended that I hire Harry Maldonado, and I did. Now he (Maldonado) is claiming he warned me about what he and Mark were up to. Now just imagine what he wants people to believe here. He wants people to believe he came to me and ratted on himself to get Mark Rivera in trouble and by doing so put himself and his own job in jeopardy. Seriously, does anyone really believe that Harry Maldonado, who was using this for his business, was going to tell on himself so that he couldn’t do these background checks anymore? Please! Harry never told me prior to all this coming out and I think if people really analyze his version of the story they will see how little sense it really makes.”

Laboy said that despite the fact that he has apologized and taken full responsibility for what happened, some in the community are purposely trying to take advantage of the situation to settle



Lawrence School Superintendent Wilfredo Laboy at the announcement of Lawrence High School regaining it’s accreditation.

old scores and distort the truth about what happened.

“I am sorry to everyone on that list who had their privacy violated. I am sorry it happened. I share the burden of leadership and I understand that as superintendent I am the face of the Lawrence public schools. I also understand that with that burden of responsibility I get the blame or the credit for whatever happens under me. But we have 2,200 employees. It is impossible for me to be able to look over the shoulder of every employee, and know what they are all doing at all times. Even the ones who work close to me in my office. It’s just not possible.

“But I am also sorry that Mr. Maldonado didn’t come to me privately and do what he now claims he did; tell me about what was going on and give me the chance to get to the bottom of it internally,” he said. “What happened instead is, he learned about an investigating into the Lexus Nexus background checks and to save himself went behind my back and started telling stories to the police department.”

“I first found out about Lexis Nexis when I got a call from the police that they were looking into this, not before that. But what is really interesting, talking about the agenda of the media, The Valley Patriot has been the only newspaper to have the integrity to come right out and ask me if I knew about the background checks. Nobody else in the media has even bothered to ask me that question. The rest of them just speculate and leave the question out there hanging in the mind of the public.”

“I think naturally, the take some people will have on this is that Mark Rivera was my assistant and I did hire Harry Maldonado so obviously some are going to try and make the connection that I knew or I was part of it. But, since the onset, I have been very clear that I was as surprised as anyone else when I found out. I was saddened by it. I think it was a lack of judgement on both of heir parts.”

Laboy has previously refused to comment on the issue to the media but said that his silence on the issue was first out of embarrassment that it happened on his watch, but secondly out of frustration with the media whom he said is only interested in twisting his own words to make him look bad.

“The lack of comment from me previously has been from a sense of embarrassment on my part,” Laboy continued. “Obviously anytime I try to explain things to the daily newspaper they take my words out of context and paint a very different picture than the reality of what is going on. So, I now have to be

very selective about what media outlets I talk to. I know that The Valley Patriot is going to print what I say in context for good or bad, and won’t twist my words to fill some agenda. It’s my hope that people don’t misinterpret my silence prior to now as any kind of an admission of wrong doing on my part. It has simply been embarrassing for me and the school system and if I thought for a minute I could get a fair shake from the rest of the media I would probably have spoken out a little more and a little sooner. But, when you can’t win with certain people, why talk to them. It only makes things worse.”

Special Assistant Mark Rivera

“Mark Rivera left us without anything in his hands. There were no sick days or vacation days or buybacks given to him as some people have publicly stated. It is painful to see someone who served me well and having such an error in judgement that cost him to lose his job. He was a friend and of course it is painful but I honestly don’t think there was any malice on the part of Mark Rivera. He paid a heavy price and prior to an investigation being concluded he opted to resign on his own to hopefully spare us more damaging headlines. I am disappointed that he did this and saddened that it has cast a negative light on the Lawrence Public Schools. But, I don’t know what more people want. Some people wouldn’t be happy if he was tarred and feathered and run out of town on a rail. Those people will never be happy. Trying to address their concerns and make them happy is a total waste of time. All I can do is keep coming to work every day and focus on the job of educating kids.

“Look, after all the headlines about illegality, allegations claiming that laws were broken and public assertions that people were going to be dragged off in handcuffs, the District Attorney himself has said that nothing criminal occurred here. It just didn’t rise to the level of criminal activity. These are the characterizations in the newspaper that feed the haters and the nay-sayers and drive a public debate, not about what we are accomplishing for our kids but, how to score political points in the community and how to demonize me and the Lawrence schools. I say it’s just not fair. It’s not right. It’s not fair to me, but more importantly, it’s not fair to the rest of the hard working school employees who get tarnished as well by these bogus assertions and sometimes outright lies.”

“With all the mudslinging that has been thrown at us, and at me particularly, none of it has been able to stick. But it does shape public perception and it turns people off. That often ties our hands when we are trying to trumpet the

LAWRENCE PUBLIC SCHOOLS ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND MILESTONES

Leadership:

- * Management demonstrated by nine consecutive years of a balanced LPS budget
- * Reorganized central office into 7 offices, eliminating duplication and fragmentation
- * Need for State Partnership Team presence eliminated by
- * Department of Education in 2005—District was reverted to the City of Lawrence
- * Restored NEASC Accreditation to Lawrence High School by 2004
- * Redistricted to establish neighborhood schools
- * Opened state of the art, 25 acre campus of 6 small thematic high schools, providing grade 8 students with application and selection process
- * New construction and renovation at 3 elementary and middle school sites in 3 quadrants of the city
- * Added 3,000 student seating capacity and over 1 million square feet of instructional space in seven years
- * Opened in-district therapeutic day school (one of only 2 in state), keeping students with special needs in the district for a cost savings of over 3 million dollars
- * Increased teacher retention rate from 49.7% to 93.7%, as featured on National Public Radio “Morning Edition Program” radio report in 2007
- * Provided stability of leadership, resulting in differential achievement results for stable versus non-stable students (“stable”students defined as having 3+ consecutive years in the school system)
- * Implementation of full-day Kindergartens; opening of Early Childhood Centers

accomplishments of our students and our faculty because all people want to talk about is the latest headline and the latest accusation.”

Eagle Tribune Agenda
“We know the Tribune has a clear agenda to dispose of me as superintendent. They make it quite obvious with their biased coverage and their attacks on me and the Lawrence Schools. They want to drive me out of my job but I am not leaving. I will leave when my time is up. I will say that when I leave the city of Lawrence I will leave with my head held high and my shoulders square because of all that we’ve accomplished. I have a contract that needs to be honored and I’m not going to leave because a daily newspaper wants me out. I don’t work for them.”

“I think there is an element where some people perceive my boldness and my strong personality as arrogance. I understand that. But I think the people have to ask themselves, are the Lawrence public schools better off now than when I arrived here eight years ago? The Eagle Tribune never asks that question and they certainly never answer it. And if they look at the numbers, if they look at our achievement and they weigh those out, they will have to say yes.”

“Obviously, if people only read about or hear about the personality issues, the politics, or public opinion which is driven by the political agenda of the Eagle Tribune and ignore the rest of the picture, they will draw a different conclusion. All I have ever asked is for people to judge me fairly. Judge me on my mistakes and my failings but put into perspective with my accomplishments and judge the whole picture not the distorted image the Eagle Tribune and some of the other newspapers portray.

DISPELLING THE MYTHS
The Lasagna incident:
“The daily paper printed a story recently about how a teacher was fired simply for letting her students bring lasagna to school. That’s just not the case. Here is a teacher that was told if she was going to have cooking with her class to do it in the cafeteria and not in her classroom. She agreed to do this in the

cafeteria but then decided on her own to move the activity to her classroom without permission. When it was over her classroom was a mess, it was in really bad shape. There was sauce stuck on the walls and on top of it all, when we tried to address the issue with her, she was very confrontational. You didn’t read that in the story printed in the daily paper. All you read was that Wilfredo Laboy and the principal were picking on her.”

Laboy said he was also distressed at how isolated incidents in the schools tend to find their way into the pages of the newspaper but communities like Andover and North Andover never seem to have that kind of “chronic publicity problem.”

Tribune calls it a “drinking party”
“We had kids doing what kids all over America are unfortunately doing, sneaking alcohol into school. This was four kids who snuck alcohol into the school and the daily paper called it a ‘drinking party.’ How do they call four kids sneaking drinks into school a drinking party? They convey a mental image in the mind of their readers that Lawrence High is out of control and there are ‘drinking parties’ going on. Now, the principal certainly had a lapse in judgement in not informing the police, I agree with that. But, now there were three school safety officers who were asked about the cameras and because they didn’t answer the question exactly the way the police wanted them to, they are being criminally charged.”

School principal writes a racy novel
“Principal Gagnon has been an honorable principal who has served with distinction. She came to us in 2005. She had written a romance mystery nove, and she was excited about that. Unfortunately for her, she shared that information with her staff and people at the school and some who have it out for her turned the story into one where she was trying to sell the book at the school or profit in the schools. And that is what the paper printed. But it’s just not the case. It was blown way out of proportion. I haven’t read the novel, but this is America and people are entitled to their own opinions. They are entitled to publish what they want to publish. My evaluation of the

Progressive and continued growth in student achievement results, English Language Arts, Mathematics on MCAS from 2000 to 2008.

*** Grade 4 ELA**
2000 Passing Rate 60%; 3% proficient
2008 Passing Rate 71%; 24% proficient

*** Grade 4 Mathematics**
2000 Passing Rate 45%; 11% proficient
2008 Passing Rate 74%; 33% proficient

*** Grade 8 ELA**
2000 Passing Rate 64%; 24% proficient
2008 Passing Rate 82%; 47% proficient

*** Grade 8 Mathematics**
2000 Passing Rate 18%; 5% proficient
2008 Passing Rate 45%; 19% proficient

*** Grade 10 ELA**
2000 Passing Rate 63%; 28% proficient
2008 Passing Rate 81%; 37% proficient

*** Grade 10 Mathematics**
2000 Passing Rate 24%; 6% proficient
2008 Passing Rate 61%; 30% proficient

principal is based on what she did in that school every single day. Her performance was more than satisfactory and she was a wonderful principal. Why would I fire a principal because she wrote a novel? Does she lose her free speech rights because she is s teacher? I don’t think that is right. She has now gone out on medical leave and she is emotionally distraught by this story. I just hope she gets well, but having her name muddled in the paper like that certainly didn’t help.

Last month mayoral candidate Israel Reyes called for the superintendent to be

fired, but Mayor Sullivan says there are no legal grounds to terminate his contract. and he will not support removing the Laboy.

“Unless someone can show me that Wilfredo Laboy himself has done something worth being fired over, I think it’s a big mistake to put the city in jeopardy of another lawsuit by another superintendent where we have to pay out millions of dollars for violating a contract,” Sullivan said.

All Things Sicilian expanding internet business; closes Lawrence store

All Things Sicilian, an importer of specialty goods from Sicily and Italy, announced last month that it is expanding its internet business and has closed its retain outlet on Merrimack Street in Lawrence. It also announced that it has started a home delivery service in the Merrimack Valley area and will offer imported gourmet food products to them at grocery store prices.

“It makes the most sense” said All Things Sicilian President Alfred M. Zappala. “The internet continues to grow..we receive over 100,000 hits online every month..while the current economic condition makes the brick and mortar business very hard to sustain.” he said. “Greater Lawrence is really feeling the effects of the downturn, so we decided to

make the move in order to survive and fight another day.” Zappala said.

“We ship our excellent products all over America an we have a loyal cadre of on-line customers who continue to buy our products regularly as they are not available where they live.” he continued. “We now have over 5,500 people who read our monthly newsletter and buy our products, so we made the decision to cater to them until the economic crisis passes.”

“We have started ‘value pricing’ online, which means that we are discounting prices depending on the quantity of each unit the customer purchases. This will help us tremendously as we continue to order products from Sicily.. especially our oils, vegetable preserves, jams and marmalades...the whole gamut... and by

shutting the retail store roughly 75% of our overhead goes away.” said Zappala.

The company will continue to ship products nationally from its warehouse in Lawrence, and has started a home delivery service as well.

“We will offer a limited warehouse cash and carry program once a week and we also plan to do home deliveries to our local customers. In this environment, the important thing is to survive. We found ourselves diverting funds to keep the under-performing store open .” said Zappala. “This way, we can continue internet operations plus limited wholesale operations to our customers, and when the economic crisis passes, we will consider re-opening a retail store somewhere.” he continued.

“Last year we received nearly 2 million hits on our website www.allthingssicilian.com. We will add a lot more content in the next several months and continue to write about Sicily and Italy on our blog www.allthingsicilian.blog.com, which really is our primary mission. said Zappala.

“Our products are the best in America.” he exclaimed. “This will give us an opportunity to continue offering these wonderful and original items at extremely competitive prices. In many cases, our products are now priced at or below what you find in the grocery store, except they come from Sicily or Italy.” he said.

For home delivery, residents of the Merrimack Valley can call 978-204-0729 or place their order on-line.



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Next steps for the Lawrence School Department

Peter Larocque

LAWRENCE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

As an elected official in the Lawrence School Department, I would like to say to the citizens of Lawrence, especially District E, I hear your concerns and understand your feelings of frustration and disappointment. I too share your frustration and disappointment.

But, I would like to remind you that I took an oath raising my right hand stating that I would uphold the Constitution of the United States, along with the Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the Lawrence City Charter. These are the laws of the land, therefore I don't have the option to make decisions and take actions based upon emotion (or the amount of newspaper articles) that would be in opposition of these wonderful official documents.

The talk of suspending or taking a vote of no confidence towards the Superintendent without real documented evidence and facts would amount to good cause, which, in my opinion, would be in direct violation of due process which every citizen of the United States of America is guaranteed. All that this talk accomplishes is placing the School Department at risk of facing a huge law suit.

The City of Lawrence hasn't done well in these types of situations, especially recently. Please don't take this as an excuse, but it is what it is. I don't believe that, at the level of Superintendent you suspend or reprimand in this fashion. If and when all the investigations are

completed and the D.A. along with LPD finds that the Superintendent acted in a criminal manner, then I would vote to dismiss the Superintendent immediately, without question. I also realize that this opinion has enabled many of the potential candidates in the next election to attach themselves to this issue and yell and scream at meetings demanding action. But in the end, I believe that the good people of Lawrence especially in District E, which I am apart of will see through all of this grandstanding and make the right decision in the coming election.

Also, I will not be intimidated or deterred by statements made by Mayoral Candidate Mr. Israel Reyes who threatens to financially support and or by other means support my opponents for School Committee because I refuse to vote the way he wants me to.

Playing with children's education to build one's Mayoral campaign is pretty pathetic. The wonderful people of District E know full well the grandstanding political tactics of Mr. Reyes. Not only that, just a few months ago he was attached at the hips and inseparable with the Superintendent and Mr. Rivera. So all this talk now is a little foolish.

Now having said all this, what I can do as a responsible leader is ask myself what steps, what actions, what policies I can put in place that would not allow us as a School District to ever be put into this situation again. First and foremost, remove the title and position of Special Assistant to the Superintendent from the Superintendent's Office budget. Secondly add language to the LPS policy of the proper use of computers by LPS staff,

stating that any staff member accessing the internet and engaging in illegal activity or any activity that is not for legitimate school purposes using LPS computers will be immediately terminated.

The next steps that I believe need to be taking, I have spelled out in detail in last month's Valley Patriot concerning City Charter changes.

Would we be in this situation had the Lawrence City Council took me seriously back in 2005 and 2007? Maybe now they will at least take notes, because in 2010 there will be another chance to put right what was made wrong years ago.

There are other changes that I would like to make, especially when it comes to Superintendent's contracts. No contract should be awarded more than 3 years at a time. No Superintendent should be able to exceed 6 years. I understand that due to the acquiring of State funds and following all the way through the design conception to the construction of the New Lawrence High School Campus, our current Superintendent was needed for more years.

But going forward I see no need for a future Superintendents to have more than 6 years. Having new and fresh ideas is good for a School District. Change is good and I believe with change comes progress. Progress will not happen without change.

There are many more changes that I would recommend when it comes to the actual contract of the next Superintendent of Schools for the City of Lawrence. I have been studying the current contract and I look forward to having the privilege to implement these changes. This and the



PHOTO: TOM DUGGAN

Lawrence School Committee member Peter Larocque

fact that my 5 year old granddaughter will begin kindergarten next fall are part of my reasons why I am running for re-election to the Lawrence School Committee for District E.

The next School Committee will have the most important duty and responsibility; to hire a new Superintendent of Schools. I am ready willing and able to take on this privilege. The parents, children and all the rest of the citizens of Lawrence deserve nothing but the best and I want the opportunity to get them what they so rightly deserve.

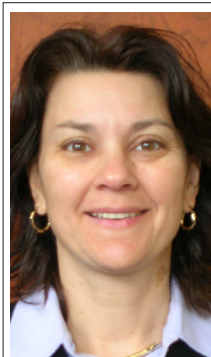
Thank you and God Bless you all.



Peter Larocque is a member of the Lawrence School Committee. He was elected by the City Council to fill the unexpired term of Amy McGovern in 2006 and then elected in his own right in 2007. You can call him at 978-682-0900, email him at peterlarocque@hotmail.com

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The Merrimack Valley Irish Connection

Jack’s Irish Craic

Jack Doyle, County Sligo
VALLEY PATRIOT GUEST COLUMNIST

While walking around Ballymote, County Sligo, I ran across three outstanding memorials. Michael Corcoran, born in Carrowkeel, near Ballymote, has an impressive history in the United States during the Civil War. He was the only son of Thomas Corcoran, an officer in the British Army, and Mary McDonagh. At the age of 18, he took an appointment with the Revenue Police, enforcing the laws and searching for illicit stills and distilling activities in Cresslough, Donegal. It was there that he got his military training and aspirations to fulfill his dream of becoming a military man.

Michael Corcoran (1827-1863), was an Irish American in the Union Army and a close confidante to President Abraham Lincoln. He led the New York 69th Regiment, The Irish Brigade, into the first Battle of Bull Run. Corcoran also led the regiment into Washington, DC, and served in the Washington defense building, Fort Corcoran.

On August 30, 1849, Corcoran emigrated from Sligo Bay for the United States and settled in New York City. He found work as a clerk in the Hibernian House Tavern and married the owner’s daughter. He enlisted as a private in the New York 69th Militia, and by 1859, was appointed Colonel of the regiment.

The outfit consisted of civilians and non-military men, and was responsible for the maintenance of public order. On October 11, 1861, Colonel Corcoran refused to march the regiment on parade for the 19-year-old Prince of Wales, who was visiting New York City at that time, in reaction to the ineffective British response to the Irish Famine. He lost his command and was up for court martial when the Civil War broke out.

When the war broke out, he reestablished his command because of his ability to recruit Irish immigrants for the

Union Cause. He led his regiment into battle at the First Battle of Bull Run. During the battle, he was wounded and taken prisoner. During this time, the United States made threats to execute Confederate privateers.

Corcoran and other Union soldiers were selected by lot to be executed if this was carried out. The event was known as the Enchantress Affair, but no executions were carried out by either side. Corcoran was then offered a parole if he did not engage in any more fighting against the South, but he refused the parole. He returned to his regiment and was assigned to recruiting more Irish immigrants. After some time, he was assigned to the 1st Division, VII Corps, where he was engaged in the Battle of Deserted House and took part of the Siege of Suffolk. On December 22, 1863, while riding alone, his horse fell on him and he died from a fractured skull at the age of 36.

Corcoran was largely idolized by his Irish-American troops. His name, and that of the New York 69th, figures prominently in many of the Irish Union ballads of the day.

The Mayor of New York City unveiled the memorial to the Fighting 69th and General Corcoran in Ballymote on August 21, 2001. The inscription around the top of the monument reads “Michael Corcoran 1827 - 1863” Around the base is inscribed New York - Ballymote - Cresslough - Bull Run. Underneath the monument is a piece of steel from the World Trade

Center donated by the family of Michael Lynch, who died in the tower on September 11, 2001. Mr Lynch’s family is from County Sligo.



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

Jack5772@comcast.net



RONNIE’S RANTS

Ranting around The Valley

Ronnie Ford
VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

Sporadically, we unearth a deep hidden secret or information that shakes our faith in our nationwide protectors.

Officers of the federal government who risk their lives and well being, only to be slapped in the face for doing their job, which is keeping us safe. They are often times the target of “the talking heads” of TV, both pro and con.

To release sensitive information of the doings of the FBI, DEA, ATF, CIA, ICE, and all federal agencies to the public and our enemies, is ludicrous. Moreover, books, newspapers, TV newscasters, connote these men and women as the enemy and not our protectors. Wake up Mr. President and leave these people alone for a while. We are still at war!!!

Spring and summer have arrived almost simultaneously.

What a horrible winter we had. Now, we will be able to shut the heat off and open our windows and let the fresh air permeate the houses. Hopefully, those who have fire pits, or other out door fireplaces will be considerate of people who like to open their windows at night. The smoke from these out door pits et cetera, is low so the smoke goes into the windows and doors. Then the whole house reeks of smoke! This is not like chimney smoke, which is up high, and dissipates higher. What really gets the neighbors going is when you have laundry on the line, and they start up the fires. These fireplaces are legal as long as you get a permit from the fire department and burn what is legal; but along with the permits should be consideration for your neighbors. Whoever lifted the ban on out door fires or fireplaces or pits, did not really think it through. For every rule there is abuse or exception to it.

On to the ridiculous section: The Boston College students and professors, who protested the crucifixes in the classroom, should have their heads examined.

As potential student at BC, you had to apply to gain entrance. If you met their

standards, you were admitted. As a teacher, you too had to apply and if you met the college’s criteria, you were hired. No one forced your rumpy-dump to go there. You knew full well that Boston College is a catholic institution run by the Society of Jesus, the Jesuits. Being a catholic school of learning, you would expect to see Crucifixes and pictures of the Blessed Mother and some saints on the walls. If you object, leave; go to a secular place of learning. We are sick and tired of the PC attitude. Use some common sense. We don’t hear you whining when scholarships are given out. The professors are not complaining when they stretch out their hands for their \$100,000.00 salary. Go protest something useful! Grow up!

Things to look forward to now that the good weather is here: Walks along the beach, fishing, craft-fairs, yard-sales, whale watching, blueberry picking, antiques sales, Old Home Days, picnics, bicycling, boating on the lakes and ocean, motorcycles, hot dogs and hamburgers on the grill, catching fireflies and butterflies, chowder festivals, carnivals, Canobie lake, amusements at Salisbury beach, sour dough, pizza, concerts at Hampton beach, and a myriad of other activities to keep us out in the sunshine! Great time to be in New England!

Don’t forget to circle your calendar on Monday June 15, 2009. That is when the sixth annual reunion of the Assumption, Tarbox, Hood, Lawlor, St. Rita’s schools, the Downey Flake, and Lawlor’s drug store and the neighborhood will be. It will be held at Jackson’s restaurant on 110 in Methuen. A fantastic buffet will be served, all for \$5.00. How can you beat that? So save the date and join us for a night of fun!

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





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TOM DUGGAN'S NOTEBOOK

LAWRENCE - Propaganda on stipends

At almost any city council meeting in Lawrence (and even at most sub-committee meetings) you will hear Council President Patrick Blanchette giving long speeches about how “some employees” get paid a stipend for extra work and how evil and horrible it is for the taxpayers. (his version of “for the children”. Of course, he is not upset about all employees getting stipends just the ones he has a personal vendetta against, like Michael Sweeney. Blanchette’s grandstanding is often followed by the insane rantings of Councilor Grisel Silva who echoes everything Blanchette says except taking 20 more minutes to do so. Last month, both Blanchette and Silva went on and on for what seemed like forever about how irresponsible it is to pay city employees a stipend for (what they called) “supposed extra work that they do.” OH the humanity! City workers on salary who work 80 hours a week for no extra pay, actually get a stipend for performing job duties that are not part of their job descriptions! MY GOD how do people like Mike Sweeney, Patty Cook and Frank McCann live with themselves knowing that they are being paid a miniscule stipend instead of hiring more workers to perform those job functions? Here’s an idea; let’s listen to Blanchette and Silva, get rid of ALL the stipends (including theirs, by the way) and instead of paying current employees to pick up those extra duties, the city can hire new employees, pay them benefits, retirement, health insurance and step raises to do those jobs. Of course, then Blanchette and Silva will be giving speeches about an even bigger budget deficit as they will end up laying off more people from the additional expense. Talk about not being able to see the forest for the trees. Wouldn’t you rather pay an existing employee a little extra to do additional duties that are not in their job descriptions instead of going out and hiring new people when there’s no money in the budget? Well, Blanchette and Silva might disagree with you, but then again, they are on a mission to get “some city employees.” The taxpayers and the city workers are the least of their concern.

LAWRENCE - Speaking of Stipends

The pay that Lawrence city councilors receive is, by definition, a stipend. But they certainly don’t want to cut that stipend to save you money. With all their calls to take away stipends from “some city employees” it seems the city council doesn’t want to lead by example. At least, some city councilors anyway. Councilor Frank Moran proposed that members of the city council take a pay furlough as most workers in the city are being asked to do the same. Moran came up with the

idea and pitched it to the rest of the council last month saying he believes leadership starts at the top. He added that, if councilors are going to be asking city employees to forego ten days of pay they ought to lead by example. “We are asking our employees to take ten days off and ... if we can stop one family from going through the tough situation of losing their job, to me it will be worth it.” City Council president Patrick Blanchette referred the issue to the Budget sub-committee where Councilor Dave Abdoo made a motion to accept the pay furlough. Yet, not one of the other councilors would second his motion. (Frank Moran does not sit on that committee) City Councilor Grisel Silva said she couldn’t afford to take the pay cut and then as chairman of the committee she “tabled” the matter (effectively killing it). Just remember that the next time councilors fake outrage over city employees losing their jobs or having to take a furlough. It’s a do as I say not as I do city council and in an election year the voters should be asking each of them why they cut pay for other people but refuse to do it for themselves. Oh, and for the record; in 2004 city councilors were paid \$5,200 a year. You know how much they are paid now? How about \$15,000! In the last five years their pay has increased more than 300% under President Blanchette’s leadership. And, that doesn’t include the expense of the councilors’ city cell phones, blackberries, their out of state travel budget or health insurance. Stay tuned! Budget season is just beginning!

METHUEN - Mingya Valley

Mingya! Every time I hear that while visiting the east end of Methuen I laugh. Of course the East End has long been (unofficially) called Mingya Valley after the large Italian population in Lawrence moved, lock stock and barrel to the Merrimack Street area of Methuen. So, when I signed onto Facebook one day last month to see that a group had formed on line called “Mingya Valley” it was just too funny not to include them in the pages of The Valley Patriot. So, this month Andy Kelley of Mingya Valley, USA has begun what we know will be a highly successful column in our Methuen section called “Mingya Valley” and I couldn’t be more thrilled. It is a fun and light-hearted look at life in The Valley and mingya, I have given Andy carte blanche to write about whatever he wants. Give it a read and you will laugh as hard I did when I first saw it. It’s on page 31 of this edition!

MERRIMAC - The Merrimac Old Home Days Committee invites you to save the date...Saturday, May 16th. High tea will be served for girls, dolls and chaperones from 1:00pm -2:30 pm at Winnekenni Castle in Haverhill, MA. Reservations are

\$10 per person and space will be limited. Invitations will be distributed throughout Merrimac. Inquiries may be directed to: Ellen-978-346-9887 or emailed to: oldhomedays@gmail.com.

HAVERHILL - Summer Walk

Take a summer walk in Haverhill on Tuesday, May 12th. A walk route has been set up which explores Lake Kenosha and Winnekenni Park, and a city owned conservation area of over 700 acres. A choice of either a 5 or 10 km (3.1-6.2 mile) walk route is available. The 10 km route continues into the city to visit famous and historical sites. The start point is Yankee Clipper Council, 36 Amesbury Road, Haverhill. 3:00-6:00 p.m. Both walk routes are rated suitable for strollers but not for wheelchairs. Leashed pets are welcome but clean-up laws apply. A flashlight is recommended for late arrivals. The Haverhill walk is the first in a series of Second Tuesday Walks for the May-August 2009 summer season sponsored by the Walk ‘n Mass Volkssport Club.

MERRIMAC - Puppy Girl is sad!

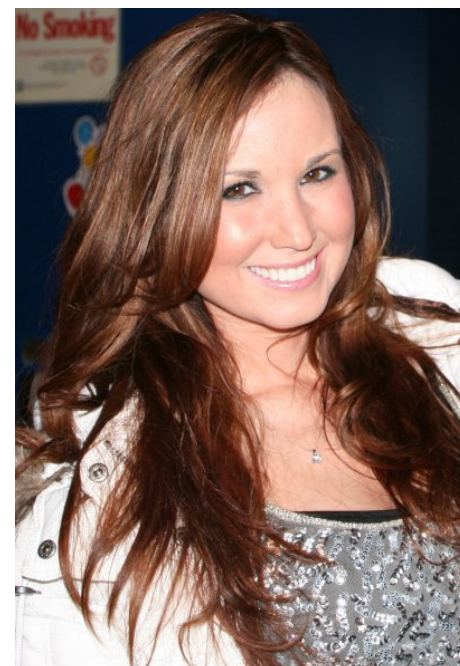
This month, The Valley Patriot’s own Puppy Girl, Kate Whitney is sad. Very, very sad. And if you don’t help she may even cry. Do you want that to happen? I know I don’t. You see, last month the dog shelter where Kate volunteers (“One Tail At A Time”) in Merrimac had a catastrophic fire that destroyed all of the donated items they had collected to help poor abused and neglected puppies in The Valley. And while no animals were hurt in the fire, the shelter is now in desperate need of replacement donations and supplies. Take a minute this week to donate old newspapers (or today’s Eagle Tribune), dog collars, food bowls, boxes, leashes, flea and tick medication, chew toys, etc. It just wouldn’t be right to abandon these puppies in a serious time of need. To make a donation or get more information you can email onetail@comcast.net.

LOWELL - Home Buyers

The Merrimack Valley Housing Partnership is offering the *Project Genesis* Home Buyer Training Seminars in Lowell in Spanish. Classes will be held at 10 Kirk St., Lowell. The next series will be held on Saturday mornings, June 20 and 27, 2009 from 8:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Participants must attend all sessions to receive a certificate of completion. \$60.00 per household. Topics include: Overview of the Home Buying Process, Bank mortgage Guidelines, Legal Aspects Home Inspections, Down Payment Assistance Programs, Information on Credit. Please call the office at 978-459-8490 to register. www.mvhp.org.

HAVERHILL – Marine Corps League seeks members

The Captain William D. Glynn Detachment # 128 of the Marine Corps League is seeking new members. The Marine Corps League was one of the earliest established Veterans Organizations, (est. June 1923 and Chartered by an Act of Congress in August 1937). The membership of the League, is composed of active duty, reserve, honorably discharged and retired Marines and FMF Corpsmen. There are 26 detachments in Massachusetts representing more than 2,000 Marines and FMF Corpsmen. The League Detachment supports the Marine Corps League Auxiliary, Veterans Administration



Valley Patriot Puppy Girl, Kate Whitney

Voluntary Services, Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots, Young Marines of the Marine Corps League, Marine Corps Junior ROTC, and the Boy Scouts of America, Eagle Scouts. The detachment membership is active with veterans programs, color guards, honor guards, youth scholarship programs, Troop events, educating the public and local politicians on veterans issues, as well as social events such as Marine Corps Birthday Ball. Those interested in learning more about the detachment can visit its Web site at <http://CaptGlynnMCLDet128.org> or calling 978-361-5871. Meetings are on the first Thursday of each month at 7:00pm in Haverhill City Hall, 4 Summer Street Haverhill Massachusetts. Contact Thomas Rudden, 978-361-5871 [HTTP://CAPTGLYNNMCLDET128.ORG](http://CAPTGLYNNMCLDET128.ORG)

METHUEN - N. ANDOVER- RiverBank is holding Shred Days as a service to our community and you ought to take advantage of it. You can protect yourself from identity theft by disposing of your sensitive documents the fast, easy and secure way. Bring them to RiverBank’s mobile shredding truck at one of their Shred Day events. Refreshments will be served. (WHOO HOO!) And, you can enter to win a personal shredder in their raffle. For more information, please visit us at www.riverbk.com the next two shred day events will be held from 9am to noon on May 9th at 20 Jackson Street, Methuen and May 16th at 30 Massachusetts Avenue, North Andover, MA.

Martina Cruz – Do as I say

Last month, Lawrence School Committeeman Martina Cruz complained at a school committee meeting that “someone” has to do something to punish Superintendent Wilfredo Laboy after the Lexis Nexis scandal broke. She also complained that the superintendent has refused to answer questions about the issue and refused to take responsibility. So, I asked Cruz what she thought “should be done about Wilfredo Laboy” by which, she said she didn’t know. If you think “someone” should do something to punish Laboy, why don’t you step up to the plate and do something yourself, I asked her. She said she was “going to” call for Laboy to be fired or suspended at the next school committee meeting and would place the issue on the next agenda. But it seems Martina Cruz likes to talk the talk (and not

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very well) but simply refuses to walk the walk because the next meeting came and went with no agenda item from Cruz. Finally, I asked Cruz why she hadn't proposed any action herself if she was so upset about the superintendent of schools. After all, she is an elected official and the superintendent's boss. Again, she didn't have an answer. Martina Cruz likes to whine and complain, and throw bombs, but at the end of the day she hasn't done one thing to solve any of the issues she complains about. Aren't you glad our school committee is elected by district?

LAWRENCE - CHILI COOKOFF!
Ok, last year I was a judge for the Chili Cookoff and Paula and I had a blast despite the 100+ degree temperatures. And while we are not sure if we are judging again this year, I wanted you all to know that the "B Street Bombers" will be headlining at the 2nd Annual "Heroes of Lawrence Chili Cookoff and Music Festival" to benefit the Lawrence Rotary Club. Also appearing will be Wicked Automatic of Hampton, NH plus other musical and dance entertainment along with children's events and a car show. The event takes place on June 7 from noon to 5pm at Pemberton Park on the Merrimack River. Chili cooks from up and down the east coast will compete with local "chiliheads" for top prizes and my favorite part.... All the chili you can eat is included in the \$5.00 admission (kids 6 and under are free). Last year's first-time event drew almost 1,000 people and raised \$10,000 all of which went towards scholarships for Lawrence schoolchildren. For more information about the work of the Lawrence Rotary Club, go to the web site at www.LawrenceRotary.org or the event web site at www.LawrenceChiliCookoff.org.

LAWRENCE, N. ANDOVER - Young Eagles
The Experimental Aircraft Association, Greater Boston Area Chapter 106 will be holding a free Young Eagles event at the Lawrence Municipal Airport located at 492 Sutton Street, North Andover on Saturday, May 23 (Sunday May 24, rain day). The EAA Young Eagles program offers youngsters, aged 8 through 17, a short ground school followed by a short ride in a small airplane. A licensed and, experienced pilot will share with the youngster the thrill of flight along with some knowledge of how an airplane flies. Be at the main terminal of the airport at 09:00 AM for registration or contact Tom Walsh at (978) 462-4782 with any questions. Memories of the flight will be preserved in a Logbook, filled out by the pilot and given to the Young Eagle. To

NOTEBOOK, page 16



News Item: Harry Maldonado says he told Laboy about background checks
The Valley Patriot is always interested in reader suggestions for local, political cartoons (valleypatriot@aol.com) You can email Dave at Sull93@aol.com.

EVENTS AT **SAL'S RIVERWALK**

Salvatore's Larry Lee Lewis Comedy Night
Host: Salvatore's Restaurant Fan Club
Start Time: Saturday, June 6 at 7:30pm
End Time: Saturday, June 6 at 10:00pm
"Boys" Mob Film Dance Party!
"This is an Offer You can't refuse"
Host: The Silva Screen
Start Time: Friday, May 15 at 7:00pm
End Time: Friday, May 15 at 11:00pm
Where: Salvatore's

354 Merrimack St. Lawrence

Taste of Methuen

Methuen businesses came out in force this month as part of the Annual Taste of Methuen event. Pictured below are Edible Arrangements, Borelli's Deli, Shadi's Restaurant Tom Grella from Mann Orchards (our very favorite place on earth!) Shadi's and Chef's of the Old World Catering. The event was sponsored by the Methuen Exchange Club.



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BOXFORD

All politics is local

John McCormack

VALLEY PATRIOT BOXFORD COLUMNIST

It’s Annual Town Meeting and Election time in Boxford. The Town Meeting articles are a mix of old and new issues.

Government regulations threatening a defined group able to defend itself can result in epic political battles. Such is the case with the current battle in Boxford over new stable regulations. The Board of Health Chairman has stated that regulation can be based on potential health hazards, making these new regulations a Sword of Damocles over horse owners’ heads.

The stable owners have responded by fielding candidates for the Board of Health and by placing two articles on the Town Meeting warrant. Article 19 would adopt a common procedure for recalling elected officials and Article 20 would make many Board of Health regulations subject to Town Meeting approval.

The proposed recall process specifies allowed reasons for recall, which seems a recipe for judicial involvement and ineffectiveness. It also allows a recalled official to stand for reelection, raising the possibility that someone removed by two-thirds of the voters could then be reelected on the same day against three other candidates. Recall elections are healthy for democracy and should only require the will of the voters.

Last fall’s Special Town Meeting saw another aggrieved group, residents of the Round Top Park neighborhood, band together to dedicate Round Top Park to conservation purposes after Town Meeting in 2005 voted to preserve this land, but the Selectmen neglected and then refused to grant the conservation restriction.

Charles Costello, Chairman of the Board of Selectmen during both episodes of this debacle, gave a feckless defense of the Board’s inaction at the Special Town Meeting, during which another Selectman was famously booed. Costello is one of three candidates contending for two seats on the Board of Selectmen. We’ll see if voters forgive Costello, thus reinforcing an imperial Board, or replace him with longtime Finance Committee Chair, Preston Galarneau.

One smoldering issue, which may ignite soon, is employee post-retirement benefits, which may be conveniently thought of as pensions and health care. One of the largest percentage increases in the Fiscal Year 2010 budget of the Town of Boxford is the 18.2% increase (from \$570,057 to \$673,892) paid to the Essex Regional Retirement Board. The Board invests a fund of employer and employee payments, which pays pension benefits to retirees.

Impossible pension and health promises were made by public and private employers over the past half-century because employees would settle for smaller current wage increases in exchange for future promises, which would be paid by a future generation. That future is here, and regulations have come to require actuarial soundness in most pension plans, though not Social Security or Medicare. This is one of the problems killing General Motors, which is said to pay more for Blue Cross than for steel.

Massachusetts generally requires public pension plans to be “fully funded” by 2028. This means a plan has sufficient assets to pay all of its future obligations. Essex Regional had 69.6% of the assets needed at the end of 2007. This is not a good number. Essex Regional’s plan to achieve 100% funding is the most aggressive allowed by the regulations, and has terms not unlike a sub prime mortgage: low initial annual payment increasing by 4.5% annually and an assumption that the fund will return 8.5% yearly, the largest prospective assumption allowed. This schedule will double the Town’s contribution by 2028, assuming current employee contributions are sufficient to fund their pensions going forward.

Of course, it gets worse. Performance calculations for 2008 aren’t in yet, but a 30% decline in value would reduce Essex Regional’s funded ratio to around 50%. Retirement systems are required to update full funding valuations every three years, but PERAC, the system regulator, knowing the severity of the 2008 decline, wants each system to update their valuations as soon as possible. Systems that use aggressive “full funding” assumptions have no room to maneuver, and “the full impact of the 2008 losses will be felt in the next year’s appropriation.” Boxford’s payments could skyrocket.

Buried in Article 7 of the warrant is “\$9,000 to fund an actuarial study for compliance with GASB 45” which may lead to “full funding” for retiree health care, just like pensions. I don’t know what the Town’s situation will prove to be, but in the future Boxford could be writing mandatory checks for millions each year for future pension and health care obligations.

Articles 9 and 10 will, if approved, send Boxford on the road to spend \$6,000,000 or more for a library and a senior

Amesbury resident and NECC Professor Authors Law Book



Mary E. Wilson of Amesbury, a longtime professor and administrator at Northern Essex Community College, has written a textbook titled “Family Law for the Paralegal, Concepts and Applications” published at the invitation of Pearson Prentice Hall.

Wilson retired from the college in 1997 but continues to teach there part time. She joined the college’s faculty in 1972 and served in a number of roles including faculty member in the Behavioral Sciences Department, Behavioral Science Department chair, assistant to the president, and dean of development. In 2003, she was named dean emerita.

Wilson, who received her juris doctorate with honors from Suffolk University Law School in Boston, also earned a Master’s in Education from Boston University. Her undergraduate degrees in English and psychology were from Middlebury College.

Wilson is a member of the American Bar Association Family Law Section.

She was admitted to the practice of law in Massachusetts and New Hampshire. During her 20 years of teaching at both public and private institutions she designed and taught a variety of behavioral science, paralegal, and criminal justice, and education courses. She also directed a statewide training program for foster parents and social workers through the Massachusetts Community College system. In addition, she has authored training manuals on child discipline and working with abused and neglected children.

Wilson’s family law book is a comprehensive, contemporary text designed to engage and prepare the student for effective job performance in a family law practice. She has also designed a companion website for the book ad has written the lessons for an on-line course to complement the book.

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

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center. Will the sales tax increase, local aid decrease, possible confiscatory taxation and energy regulation from Washington and economic uncertainty derail these projects?

Article 17 creates a special permit process for the green flavor of the month, residential wind turbines. This may be an effort to get points on the “Commonwealth Capital Application”, which pits towns against each other in competition for State grant money.

Otherwise, this Town Meeting takes a welcome, if temporary, break from the steady drumbeat of articles supported by Town boards advancing State goals for town governments, generally using the “affordable housing” stalking horse or matching grants for State approved activities. These measures tend to reduce Town Meeting’s authority, increase the authority of appointed committees and central planners, and reduce the prohibitions on towns providing private goods with a corresponding increase in corruption possibilities.

The 2009 Boxford Annual Town Meeting is on Tuesday, May 12, 2009 at Masconomet Regional High School with the Town Election following on May 19.

GEORGETOWN

Obama Arming Americans, “Taxes”, L’Italien, and Georgetown Musings

Lonnie Brennan

VALLEY PATRIOT GEORGETOWN COLUMNIST

Thanking Obama for Arming Americans

Let me be the first to thank Barack Hussein Obama for arming America. I know he didn’t mean to, but that’s what’s happening. He’s scaring the hell out of America. Gun sales are up. Ammo is difficult to find.

Let me give a local illustration: Last summer, I was juggling a decision between two pistols (it’s a lot like trying to decide between two hammers—if you have a favorite hammer, you’ll know what I mean.)

I ventured into North Shore Firearms in Middleton and explained what I sought. Reflexively, the father/son team walked me through various features and helped me through my many questions. They were amazing. An hour flew by before I knew it.

Before I knew it, Mr. Obama was in office and as I fast forward to trips in mid-winter, each time, the place seemed busier and busier (always great service). Jump again to a recent visit and there now stood a gaggle of gentlemen behind the counter, a busy place. Think supermarket before a snowstorm.

I want to thank Mr. Obama for his history-setting actions: encouraging Americans to arm themselves. I might have to wait a bit for certain calibers, as ammo manufacturers struggle keep up with demand, but it’s a happy wait. If you have a pulse, you should believe in the 2nd Amendment and support it with a donation to the Gun Owners Action League of Massachusetts (www.GOAL.com), and our local Georgetown Fish and Game (www.GeorgetownToday.com) always welcomes new members.

Sticking it to the Taxpayers, Again

At 11:00 p.m. on Monday April 27, a mere 12 days after the nation-wide tax-revolt “Tea Parties,” State Rep. Barbara L’Italien and the royal state legislature tossed up the middle finger to the average Joe/Jane citizen. They ignored calls for reforms and voted to raise the state sales tax to 6.25%.

The independent Beacon Hill Institute’s estimated loss of 10,000 jobs and millions of dollars in investment underlines what I said in my campaign against her last fall (and sorry, my campaign was limited and I was only able to garner 41% of the vote): “Taxes” L’Italien is completely out of touch with the average taxpayer in this district.

They always have a reason, always a tale, always a hack, a pet project, or some pork to support (the list is enormous—we’ll find space to post it all online). Her latest move just spreads her nicknames across more villages, and perhaps someday back to her hamlet of Andover. Yet, “Taxes”, like all the royals, remains insulated and protected by the fawning letters to the editor from those who support her, and attack anyone who speaks up in opposition. (I can envision their keyboards burning up with rage against me right now).

As typical, the Republicans who rose in opposition to this latest tax increase proposal cited hundreds of pork projects and areas for reform. Their words fell on deaf ears. Expect more of the same from your local “Taxes” Democrats. Our Governor, Mr. Deval Patrick said he would lower taxes. Many believed him. How’s that working out for you?

Selectman Election

We have a tremendous selection of dedicated passionate candidates. If you can’t pick out those who have and will vote for tax increases from those who have a primary goal of delivering cost-effective solutions and protecting homeowners, you haven’t been paying attention. One note: it’s typically frowned on to place election signs in certain locations (schools, alongside the cemetery, the transfer station, etc.). At least one candidate’s signs highly adorn these public areas.

Erie 4 Ambulance, Erie 4 Bills, Delaney’s Revelations, Life without Matt

As mentioned in an earlier column, Georgetown’s Erie 4 Fire Company has negotiated a contract with Action Ambulance to site an Advanced Life Support ambulance at Erie’s fire station on North Street. With regret, as Erie 4 takes one giant leap forward, a few pebbles were tossed in their path. Long-time Town Administrator Stephen Delaney announced that he had stopped payment of various bills, as a wrinkle had occurred making their payments illegal. Erie, the oldest active fire company in

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INNOVATION VALLEY (ivalley.org)

The Haverhill Youth Mentoring Network (HYMN)

Education is a Community Goal in Haverhill!

John Michitson

INNOVATION VALLEY/PATRIOT COLUMNIST
ON BEHALF OF THE HYMN TEAM

I am proud to be an organizer for The Haverhill Youth Mentor Network, which is a collaboration of city service agencies, the schools and private citizens committed to helping Haverhill children achieve academic and life success through mentoring. Participating organizations are the Haverhill YMCA, YWCA, Boys and Girls Club of Haverhill, Girls, Inc., Team Haverhill and Haverhill's public and private K-12 schools. Encouraged to build strong and productive relationships between Haverhill's youth and adult population, citizens in Haverhill have bonded together to coordinate and provide professional and volunteer experience to children in need.

Research has shown that when youth have a mentor, they are more likely to get along better with their families and have strengthened self and social confidence, feel more supported by peers, have more confidence in their schoolwork, and are less likely to begin using alcohol and illegal drugs, skip school, or feel disconnected from others. But many children have circumstances that jeopardize their potential for success and to become contributing members of their community due to limited positive adult

involvement and support. A mentor can make an enormous difference in the life of a child.

According to the National Mentoring Partnership mentoring is "a structured and trusting relationship that brings young people together with caring individuals who offer guidance, support and encouragement aimed at developing the competence and character of the mentee." A mentor provides a child with "support, counsel, friendship, reinforcement and constructive example. Mentors are good listeners, people who care, people who want to help young people bring out strengths that are already there. A mentor is not a foster parent, therapist, parole officer, or cool peer." A mentor is a caring, supportive and trained adult who plays an active role in a child's life by becoming a positive role model, a trusted friend and a resource for a child who could benefit from increased adult presence in his or her life.

The goal of the Haverhill Youth Mentor Network is to recruit caring adults that are willing to donate their time and skills to help Haverhill children. The Haverhill Youth Mentoring Network will recruit, screen, train and supervise the mentors. Candidates for the mentor program must undergo a CORI (Criminal Offender Record Information) and a SORI (Sex

Offender Registry Information) check.

The screening process also includes an interview with a program staff member and two personal references.

Once accepted as a mentor in the program, the mentor will receive orientation and training appropriate for the mentoring setting. Mentoring opportunities will take place at the facility of one of the previously mentioned organizations or at one of the city's schools under the supervision of staff members of those organizations.

The Haverhill Youth Mentor Network's foremost purpose is to build and foster positive relationships for children. Through mentoring, a mentor can help a young person define individual goals and find ways to achieve them. Since the expectations of each child will vary, the mentor's job is to encourage the development of a flexible relationship that responds to both the mentor's and the young person's needs. Mentors can help children in a variety of ways: to support a child's school and academic needs, to help further a child's career plans and goals, and to bolster a child's social and emotional well-being.

Team Haverhill's newest initiative, The Haverhill Youth Mentor Network is designed to bring about positive change for the youth of Haverhill. The mentor

initiative is a call to action to support children and young adults in need of assistance, support, and guidance. Mentoring and supporting Haverhill's children is a step in the right direction toward building and fostering a true sense of community. If you would like to be a volunteer mentor, please contact me at john@michitson.com or (978)373-2231.



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



John Michitson was a Haverhill city councilor for 10 years; the last 2 as president. He is a manager and electrical engineer at the MITRE

Corporation in Bedford, Mass. John and his wife, Heidi, are enjoying the childhood of their 7-year-old daughter and 9 year-old son. email: john@michitson.com

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

NOTEBOOK: Continued from page 13

learn more about this great program, www.young eagles.org/parents/faq.asp

LAWRENCE - DiMarca Announces for Mayor on Spanish Language Radio

On two separate occasions DiMarca was elected city - wide to the council and both times the voters said "one term is enough." Now DiMarca has declared himself a candidate for mayor saying he believes the voters are ready to put him in the corner office and make him chief executive of the city. But DiMarca, like City Councilor Nilka Alvarez-Rodriguez made his announcement for mayor on Spanish Language radio and did not notify the English speaking press. As of this moment The Valley Patriot has not received a press release from DiMarca declaring his candidacy. And for the record, none of the English language newspapers have reported his entering the race. DiMarca, who endeavors to be a populist in the "Latino" community may not think that he needs white voters to get elected but by snubbing the voters

who don't speak Spanish he has already put his campaign at a serious disadvantage. Personally, I am thrilled DiMarca is in the mayors race because, (if for no other reason), DiMarca will stir things up and raise issues that will expose some of the other candidates on their attitudes about race, racism, and police corruption.

LAWRENCE - Designer Jewelry by Mr. G to Debut at Brissonte' in Lawrence Peter Giannini, formerly a Lawrence resident, has chosen the wonderfully elegant Brissonte' of Canal Street to debut his unique, one-of-a-kind, custom jewelry. Peter chose Brissonte' for its beauty, charm, and unique vintage and antique items. "I want my jewelry to be surrounded be Objects of Art, and there is no other in the Valley as special as this shop. My jewelry is made of antique buttons. Yes, buttons. One-of-a-kind buttons of mother of pearl, porcelain, Bakelite, Lucite, Jet, Jade, and carved bone. Most People do not realize the beauty and workmanship that went into

buttons. Buttons were made to rival the finest jewelry of the day. The buttons I have chosen for my jewelry are authentic and will never be seen again. I have embellished each piece with semi-precious stones and vintage jewelry accents. Each necklace has been given a name and has a theme, from Victorian to Gothic to Romance and, of course, Funk." Mr. G's Jewelry gives antique buttons a new life as wearable art.

LAWRENCE - Governor Patrick visits Salvatore's for a Slice of Pizza

Governor Deval Patrick visited Lawrence last month to announce more state grants poverty pimp organizations (like Lawrence Community Works) in the city pledging money for 160 "affordable housing units" (like Lawrence needs more of that) and what he claims will create 500 new jobs for The Valley. Governor Patrick came by Salvatore's in Lawrence for a slice of pizza before the press conference and spoke with WCAP's Ray Shackett who does a broadcast every Thursday from

Salvatore's. WCAP is a talk radio news station located in Lowell and can be heard on 980AM on the radio dial. Governor Patrick also toured the Southwick clothing plant in Haverhill. As always, Patrick talked about "hope" ... and of course "change" but didn't really have anything of substance to say. He does love Sal's Pizza and he is a fan of WCAP but I would give my left arm if someone had let ME ask the tough questions. Like: who are you going to endorse in the mayor's race Marcos Devers or Willie Lantigua? He still won't answer that one.



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



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Mayor William M. Manzi recently attended a Bean Supper at the Methuen VFW to benefit Cystic Fibrosis. Pictured with the mayor in photo above are Steven and Stephanie Campagnone. Pictured right are the mayor, Stephanie and Joyce Campagnone



What you need to know about Fibromyalgia....

Rami Rustum, M.D.

VALLEY PATRIOT MEDICAL COLUMNIST

"I hurt all over and feel tired the whole day!"

This is the usual statement heard from any patient suffering from fibromyalgia.

Fibromyalgia is a chronic condition characterized by widespread pain in the muscles, ligaments and tendons, as well as fatigue and multiple tender points.

The disease affects about 3% of the population in the United States. Women are much more likely to develop the disorder than are men, and the risk of fibromyalgia increases with age. Fibromyalgia symptoms often begin after a physical or emotional trauma, but in many cases there appears to be no triggering event.

* Symptoms

Signs and symptoms of fibromyalgia can vary, depending on the weather, stress, physical activity or even the time of day. The whole mark of the disease is: **Widespread pain and tender points.**

The pain associated with fibromyalgia is described as a constant dull ache, typically arising from muscles. To be considered widespread, the pain must occur on both sides of your body and above and below your waist.

Fibromyalgia is characterized by additional pain when firm pressure is applied to specific areas of your body, called tender points. Tender point locations include:

* Back of the head * Between shoulder blades * Top of shoulders * Front sides of neck * Upper chest * Outer elbows * Upper hips * Sides of hips * Inner knees

* Fatigue and sleep disturbances

People with fibromyalgia often awaken tired, even though they seem to get plenty of sleep. Experts believe that these people rarely reach the deep restorative stage of sleep. Sleep disorders that have been linked to fibromyalgia include restless legs syndrome and sleep apnea.

Co-existing conditions

Many people who have fibromyalgia also may have:

- * Chronic fatigue syndrome
- * Depression
- * Endometriosis
- * Headaches
- * Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)
- * Lupus
- * Osteoarthritis
- * Post-traumatic stress disorder
- * Restless legs syndrome
- * Rheumatoid arthritis

Tender Points as frequently identified in Fibromyalgia

* Causes of Fibromyalgia

There is no known or proven reason in fibromyalgia, but it most likely involves a variety of factors working together. These may include:

* **Genetics.** Because fibromyalgia tends to run in families, there may be certain genetic mutations that may make you more susceptible to developing the disorder.

* **Infections.** Some illnesses appear to trigger or aggravate fibromyalgia.

* **Physical or emotional trauma.** Post-traumatic stress disorder has been linked to fibromyalgia.

* Risk Factors

Risk factors for fibromyalgia include:

* **Your sex.** Fibromyalgia occurs more often in women than in men.

* **Age.** Fibromyalgia tends to develop during early and middle adulthood. But it can also occur in children and older adults.

* **Disturbed sleep patterns.** It's unclear whether sleeping difficulties are a cause or a result of fibromyalgia. But people with sleep disorders — such as nighttime muscle spasms in the legs, restless legs syndrome or sleep apnea — often have fibromyalgia.

* **Family history.** You may be more likely to develop fibromyalgia if a relative also has the condition.

* **Rheumatic disease.** If you have a rheumatic disease, such as rheumatoid

arthritis or lupus, you may be more likely to develop fibromyalgia.

* Tests and diagnosis

The diagnosis of Fibromyalgia is usually made from the history of the pain in addition to performing detailed clinical exam. No lab work or x-rays imaging is needed.

* Treatment

In general, treatments for fibromyalgia include both medication and self-care. The emphasis is on minimizing symptoms and improving general health.

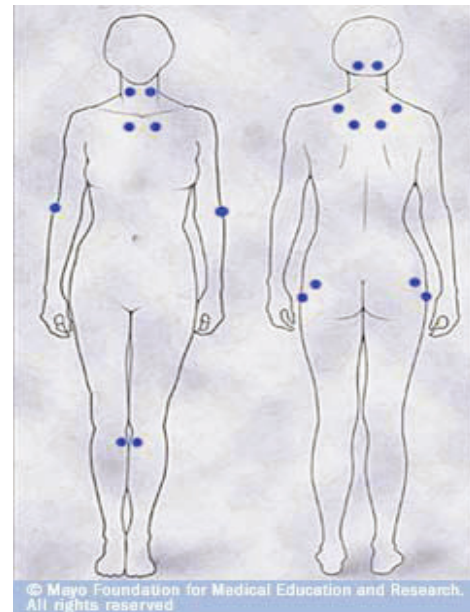
Since the symptoms of fibromyalgia are diverse and vary among patients, treatment programs must be individualized for each patient. Treatment programs are most effective when they combine patient education, stress reduction, regular exercise, and medications. Recent studies have verified that the best outcome for each patient results from a combination of approaches that involves the patient in customization of the treatment plan.

Patient education

Patient education is an important first step in helping patients understand and cope with the diverse symptoms. Unfortunately, not all physicians are intimately acquainted with the vagaries of this illness. Therefore, community hospital support groups and the local chapters of the Arthritis Foundation have become important educational resources for patients and their doctors. Arthritis Foundation is a national voluntary health organization that provides community education through their many local chapters. Community hospital support groups also provide an arena for patients to share their experiences and treatment successes and failures.

Stress reduction

It is extremely difficult to measure stress levels in different patients. For some people, spilling milk on the table can represent a significant tragedy! Stress reduction might include simple stress modification at home or work, biofeedback, relaxation tapes, psychological counseling, and/or support



among family members, friends, and doctors. Sometimes, changes in environmental factors (such as noise, temperature, and weather exposure) can exacerbate the symptoms of fibromyalgia, and these factors need to be modified.

Exercise

Low-impact aerobic exercises, such as swimming, cycling, walking and stationary cross-country ski machines can be effective treatments for fibromyalgia. Exercise regimens are most beneficial when performed on an every-other-day basis, in the morning. How exercise benefits fibromyalgia is unknown. Exercise may exert its beneficial effect by promoting a deep level of sleep (non-REM sleep). Similarly, avoiding alcohol and caffeine before bedtime can also help promote a more restful sleep. While these diet changes may not apply to everyone, they can be very helpful for some. There is no specific fibromyalgia diet or food supplements that are recommended for all patients.

NEXT MONTH: MORE ON FIBROMYALGOIA - Rami R. Rustum, M.D. is the Director of Merrimack Pain Associates at 50 Prospect St. in Lawrence. For any questions or concerns, please email Dr. Rustum at: ramirustum@comcast.net

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Next to: T Bones / Pearls Candy

A fine mix of historic events

1. The famed poet who authored the masterpiece "Trees" was killed in World War I. Who was it?
2. A U.S. lieutenant barely missed winning a gold medal in the 1912 Olympic decathlon and advanced to become a U.S. general. Name him.
3. Who was the only U.S. president to enter and complete his term as a bachelor?
4. Under what name did the area that includes present-day Utah file its application for statehood?
5. Who was the first U.S. president to be awarded a Nobel Peace Prize?
6. What U.S. general retired at the age of 58 but was recalled to active duty four years later to serve in World War II?
7. One of the longest-running radio shows ever began in 1925 titled as "WSM Barn Dance." Under what name has it been broadcasting since its name change in 1926?
8. A noted North Carolina school bore the title of Trinity College until 1925. What is its current name?
9. Packy West was the name adopted for this star's short term as a boxer. He became a famed stage and screen star. What was his stage name?
10. Name the oldest U.S. military academy.

Answers - 1. The poet-warrior was Joyce Kilmer (1886-1918). 2. The Olympic close-comer was George S. Patton (1885-1945). 3. Our only full-term bachelor was James Buchanan, our 15th president. 4. The application was filed by the State of Deseret. 5. Theodore Roosevelt, our 26th president, was awarded the prize in 1906 for mediating in the Russo-Japanese War. 6. It was Gen. Douglas MacArthur, who stayed on into the 1970s. 7. It's the famed Nashville broadcast known as "The Grand Ole Opry." 8. Trinity College is now Duke University. 9. He was adored as Bob Hope. 10. The U.S. Military Academy at West Point was established by an act of Congress in 1802.

Take "The Answer Man" to work or to school. Challenge your friends for "Bragging Rights." Send your questions and answers to: The Answer Man, Andy Seamans, Horizon House #603, 1300 Army Navy Dr., Arlington, VA 22202. COPYRIGHT 2009 CREATORS SYNDICATE INC.

Newsday Crossword

SAY CHEESE by Shirley Soloway
Edited by Stanley Newman
www.stanxwords.com

ACROSS

1 Abrade
6 Distinctive quality
10 Performs impromptu
14 More uncommon
15 Shoe seller's query
16 Problematic comment
17 Strong emotion
18 Goodies
19 Unconventional poet
20 Cheesy greeting?
23 Time out
24 Time
25 Former flier
28 Storylines
31 Ritzy residence
33 Persian potentate
37 Cheesy babbler?
39 Ancient moralizer
41 End of Horner's boast
42 Federico García —
43 Cheesy alliance?
46 Himalayan bovines
47 Pick-me-up
48 Fly in the ointment
50 Georgia, once
51 Globe
53 Wiser, perhaps
58 Cheesily early?
61 Mediterranean bistro freebie
64 Flask relative
65 Turn
66 Feeling blue

67 Indian tourist city
68 Online party announcement
69 College area
70 "Why not?"
71 Inhibit

DOWN

1 Maine coastline features
2 Red River city
3 Discuss in court
4 Flows into
5 Slip-ups
6 Christiania, today
7 Christian of fame
8 Stratospheric gas
9 Hit the sack
10 Freud contemporary
11 "Yes!"
12 Yearly doz.
13 "Pipe down!"
21 Shakespearean hero
22 Twangy
25 Beersheba native
26 Shelf contents
27 Chihuahua neighbor
29 Jaw
30 Round of four
32 Paris' home
33 Hotel-room amenities
34 No gentlemen
35 Moving
36 Deceptive act
38 Singer who got the Legion of Honor in 2008
40 Monastic officer
44 It's here
45 Democratic-donkey creator
49 Evaluated
52 Sandy color
54 Compelled
55 Account subtraction
56 Buoy
57 Golf-cup donator
58 Posse, for instance
59 Emporium
60 "Too bad!"
61 As fast as possible
62 Marker
63 Co. once owned by Howard Hughes

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64 Lawmakers Sign onto Amendment to Restore \$18 Million to Home Care

April 24, 2009 Lawrence, MA—A number of state representatives have signed onto a budget amendment that would restore \$18 million that has been cut from the home care budget for fiscal year 2010. The amendment, filed by House Elder Affairs Chairwoman Alice Wolf of Cambridge, would prevent 4,400 elders a month from losing their home care services as of July 1st. As of noon on April 23rd 64 State Representatives signed onto the amendment, which home care advocates have made their top priority for next week’s budget debate. According to Rosanne DiStefano, Executive Director of Elder Services of the Merrimack Valley there is the potential of 850 elders in the Merrimack Valley losing their home care services if funding is not restored.

“If this amendment fails, we will be cutting thousands of seniors off home care,” said Al Norman, Executive Director of Mass Home Care. “This will be the largest cut in services since home care was created in 1973. Norman said that average monthly caseloads will fall from 32,124 to 27,750 if \$17.9 million is not restored. The lost funds were part of the House Ways and Means budget, which will be debated in the week of April 27th. Norman said that the state is receiving more than \$1.4 billion in new federal

Medicaid funding for 2010—yet home care will be closed to new applicants. Nursing homes are slated to receive \$45 million in rate hikes, while home care agencies will lose 17% of their funding. “In a state that calls itself a ‘community first’ state, none of this makes sense,” Norman stated.

“Seniors overwhelmingly want to be cared for at home, yet the budget continues to favor institutions, while rationing home care.”

“We need to listen to what our families are telling us,” Norman added, “and give them care where they want it—at home. We fought a civil rights battle for years in this state to protect the consumer’s right to be cared for in the ‘least restrictive setting’ possible—but this budget does not reflect that intent.”

Norman said that 565 seniors were waiting to get into home care as of March 31, 2009, and more than 200 additional consumers waiting to get into enhanced home care programs. The cutbacks this year were caused by so-called ‘9c’ reductions in funding last October.

According to Mass Home Care, the caseload drop will lower the program to levels not seen since 1980, when an average of 30,000 elders were receiving home care each month.

M.V. Hospice welcomes Stephanie Green, MD, MPH, as Associate Hospice Medical Director

Lawrence, Mass. – Merrimack Valley Hospice is pleased to announce the addition of Stephanie Green, MD, MPH, to its team of hospice professionals. Dr. Green will be serving as Associate Medical Director to Dr. Jennifer Reidy.

In addition to her medical degree from Harvard Medical School, Dr. Green holds a Masters in Public Health from Boston University. She transitioned her medical practice from cardiology to hospice and palliative care in 2001 after participating in the end of life care for the husband of a good friend. “Caring for the whole patient and whole families really resonated with me.

Helping our patients to be free of pain and other bothersome symptoms is important for good quality of life at the end of life. And, when our patients are comfortable we facilitate the opportunity for psychospiritual healing to take place as well.” Dr. Green is board certified in Hospice and Palliative Care Medicine.

Prior to joining Merrimack Valley Hospice, Dr. Green served as Medical

Director for two other regional hospices.



In addition to her medical skills, she brings her experience as a hospice administrator to the agency.

“Dr. Green brings a tremendous amount of knowledge to our organization,” said Joan Stygles Hull, RN, MBA, President / CEO of Home Health Foundation, the parent organization for Merrimack

Valley Hospice, Home Health VNA and HomeCare, Inc. “Her expertise will enhance the comprehensive services we provide our patients and their families. The combination of her medical skills and policy background will serve as a true asset to our agency and the community as a whole.”

Dr. Stephanie Green resides in Marblehead with her husband and family.

M.V. Hospice is a not-for-profit agency dedicated to serving the needs of terminally ill patients and their families. They are affiliated with Home Health VNA and HomeCare, Inc. Together, they serve more than 80 communities throughout Northeastern Mass., The Valley and Southern New Hampshire. Visit www.merrimackvalleyhospice.org.

The students at KC Godin’s Premier Martial Arts in Haverhill hosted a Kick-A-Thon last month where they raised \$4,088.15 for the Merrimack Valley Hospice House. Pictured right: Owner KC Godin holding one of his students, Cierra Townshend, 4, of Haverhill.



Kick-A-Thon in Haverhill raises money for Merrimack Valley Hospice House

HAVERHILL – A kick can make a difference. KC Godin, owner of the KC Godin Premier Martial Arts studio in Haverhill, challenged his students to a Kick-A-Thon, which raised funds for the new Merrimack Valley Hospice House.

And these kids sure kicked! More than 40 students participated raising \$4,088.15 for the Merrimack Valley Hospice House in Haverhill. Each kid collected pledges from family and friends starting at the beginning of March. Throughout the month they practiced their kicks and during their testing week of March 23-27 they were grilled on what they had learned during this phase of testing, including the kicks for the kick-a-thon.

“I challenged them to do better than before, to increase their number of kicks each time,” said K.C. Godin, owner of the KC Godin Premier Martial Arts. “They had to raise the bar and strive for the next level.” The Merrimack Valley Hospice House being built in Haverhill will be the first of its kind in the Merrimack Valley. Set on 39 acres of lush woodlands, the Hospice House will be a 14 room home for terminally ill patients. The Merrimack Valley Hospice House is slated to open in late spring.

Kim Eubanks, Volunteer and Events Coordinator for Merrimack Valley

Hospice, witnessed the kid’s effort first hand.

“These students were determined to make a difference,” said Eubanks. “They practiced those kicks diligently and their ability to raise more than \$4,000 for the Merrimack Valley Hospice House is a tribute to their commitment.”

Godin made sure the kids knew exactly the kind of difference they would be making.

“We talked a great deal about the importance of health,” said Godin. “These students realize there are people out there who are not as healthy as they are – people who need their support. The students were excited to be helping others, while improving their martial arts skills at the same time.”

The students efforts will be cast in ‘stone’ in a sense. The top three fundraisers will have their names inscribed on a brick in the Remembrance Walkway of the Merrimack Valley Hospice House.

Merrimack Valley Hospice is a not-for-profit agency dedicated to providing the highest quality medical, social and spiritual care to terminally ill patients and their families. MVH is affiliated with Home Health VNA and HomeCare, Inc. Together they serve more than 80 communities throughout the Merrimack Valley, Northeastern Massachusetts and Southern New Hampshire. Visit www.merrimackvalleyhospice.org

Anna Jaques Hospital in Newburyport announces new urology practice

NEWBURYPORT, MA – Anna Jaques Hospital has announced the opening of a new urology practice, Urology Consultants of the North Shore, Inc., in the medical office building adjacent to the hospital. Paul Freedberg, MD, formerly of Urology Associates of Essex North, has joined the practice, ensuring a continuum of care for his patients and an expansion of urology services. He will be joined by Susan Pursell, MD, a urologist with special interests in female urology.

Dr. Freedberg and Dr. Pursell offer comprehensive urology and surgical services for the full spectrum of adult and pediatric urologic conditions. The Urology Consultants’ practice includes seven board-certified urologists and a physician's assistant.

The physicians use advanced diagnostic equipment such as digital ultrasound and high-tech urodynamics to accurately diagnose and treat patients with a wide range of conditions including:

- Benign prostate disease
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- Urinary Tract Infections
- All urologic cancers

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Dr. Freedberg offers advanced procedures for vasectomies that reduce the pain and discomfort of the procedure. The “No Scalpel, No Suture” vasectomy is performed with special instruments, in the office, under local anesthesia. The procedure does not require scalpels or stitches and is proven to be effective.

The practice includes sub-specialists that offer prostatectomies tailored to the nature of prostatic disease (benign or malignant), including minimally invasive techniques, when appropriate. Several of the physicians are experienced in laparoscopic urologic surgery for other conditions.

Radiation therapy, including brachytherapy (implantation of radiotherapeutic seeds for prostate cancer) is being planed in conjunction with the Commonwealth Newburyport Cancer Center, so that patients will not have to travel for these treatments.

The practice will move to new offices in the Newburyport Medical Office building at 1 Wallace Bashaw Jr. Way this spring.

To schedule an appointment with Urology Consultants of the North Shore, Inc., call 978-463-1269.

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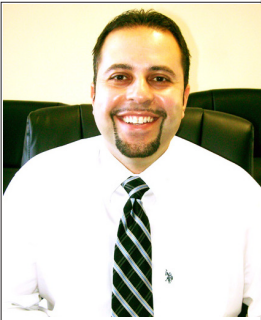
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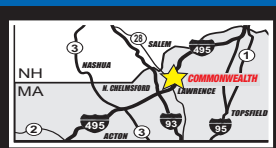
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Central Catholic High School senior, Quianna Roy sings National Anthem at Red Sox/Yankees game at Fenway



PHOTOS: TOM DUGGAN

Quianna Roy, a senior at Central Catholic High School, who was a participant and Top 12 Finalist in “Lowell Spinner Idol” last year, was selected to sing at the Red Sox/Yankee Game on Saturday April 25th at Fenway Park. Roy received a thunderous ovation after singing for the crowd at Fenway. “Spinners Idol” has featured some of the very best talent in the Merrimack Valley in finding anthem singers for the 38 Spinners home games. Sponsored by MusicWorks Studio and MusicBall Entertainment, the two-night contest has been the only way to place yourself in a coveted anthem date for the Boston Red Sox. Quianna Roy is the daughter of Frank and Dotti Incropera of Mt. Vernon St. in Lawrence. Quianna also performed at the second game of one of last year’s double headers for the Lowell Spinners.


Methuen Woman scores part as extra on Law & Order SVU



Methuen resident Luran Tarshi was hired as an extra on the popular hit TV show, Law & Order SVU. The episode entitled “Zebras” will air on NBC on June 2nd. Luran Tarshi is the sister-in-law of Andover’s Michael Tarshi from Donald Trump’s “The Apprentice” (season 3) Luran’s cousin, Gail Barringer is the producer of Law and Order SVU.

Above (l) Luran Tarshi of Methuen gets a hug from Law and Order SVU star Chris Meloni, (mid) Luran’s friend Karen Conte of Methuen, Mariska Hargitay, Jacquie Levasseur of Methuen, Dan Florek and Luran Tarshi, (r) Mariska Hargitay.

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What is a Reverse Mortgage and how does it differ from a Home Equity Loan?

Sheldon Fine

VALLEY PATRIOT LEGAL COLUMNIST

As we all grow older and wonder how we will be able to support ourselves in retirement, we start looking for alternatives. First, if you have worked all your life and have worked for 40 quarters, you will/may be able to collect Social Security. A spouse can collect Social Security even though he/she has not worked, if the other spouse has qualified for Social Security and is collecting. There are rules which must be followed and age requirements so discuss these alternatives with your attorney or social security office. However, there is no guarantee that social security will be around when you want to retire and if there is enough money to retire on.

Besides Social Security one should have set aside enough money to retire and not totally depend on Social Security. However, this does not always give one enough money as (1) you were unable to put enough away, (2) you may out live your savings, (3) expenses such medical expenses have eaten away your retirement funds.

Another way you can have money is if you have a primary residence and meet a certain age requirement, you may obtain what is called a Reverse Mortgage. You also must have equity in your home. A Reverse Mortgage is a loan that enables

seniors homeowners age 62 and older to convert part of their home equity into a tax free income without having to sell their home, give up title to it, or make monthly mortgage payments. The loan only becomes due when the last borrower(s) permanently leave the home. As far as whether the income is tax free, one should consult a tax advisor. There are different rules and products in each state.

A Reverse Mortgage looks like a home equity loan since it uses the equity in your home to provide you with readily available cash. However they differ in that with a home equity loan, you must make regular monthly payments of principal and interest. However, with a reverse mortgage you do not make any monthly mortgage payments for as long as you stay in the home. Since, Reverse Mortgage borrowers need not make monthly repayments there are no income qualifications.

This article gives you a small picture of what a Reverse Mortgage is. This writer will give more information about said Reverse Mortgage in future articles, such as advantages, disadvantages, etc.

If you have any questions, you wished answered in the article, you may e-mail the writer at S.fine2@verizon.com or contact said for an appointment at (978) 475-9886.

Don't rely solely on 'Uncle Sam's' help during retirement

Gregory Loosigian

FINANCIAL SERVICES PROFESSIONAL
NYLIFE, INSURANCE COMPANY

You can't watch television or read a newspaper without being reminded of the uncertain times we're in. Disappearing jobs, disturbing stock market losses — we don't need to tell you, it's rough out there.

This has made retirement planning more complicated than ever. From October 2007 to last December, the market lost nearly \$3 trillion in retirement savings.¹ Many who were counting on their 401(k)s don't even read their account statements anymore.

But other factors have muddled the waters for mapping a course toward retirement. People are living longer. An American born in 1955 was expected to live to age 69, on average. Forty years later, life expectancy was 76.² This is good news; but, we need to prepare for more years of retirement.

And, if you thought Social Security would take care of you, think again. Last year, the maximum monthly benefit was \$2,185³ — not enough for many of you to live comfortably.

While there are no easy solutions, the purchase of a life insurance policy can guarantee⁴ the protection of your loved ones and additionally supplement your retirement savings,⁵ if the death benefit is no longer needed.

Life insurance's primary purpose is to provide guaranteed death benefit protection, which can provide a tax-free legacy to your loved ones. But, permanent life also carries many living benefits. Cash value is money that accumulates within the policy, tax deferred. This means you do not pay taxes on any of the accumulation within

the policy. In addition, you can access that money tax free though policy loans.^{5,6} These same funds can also be used for college expenses, as collateral for a small business loan, or any other happily anticipated or unexpected event.

In addition to the death benefit protection provided by life insurance, it can also be used to supplement your retirement income. As such, it can be a vital piece of the complex puzzle of retirement planning.

For additional information on the information or topic(s) discussed, please contact Gregory J. Loosigian, Financial Service Professional at 978-273-8377.

¹Urban Institute, Fact Sheet on Retirement Policy, "How Is the Recession Affecting Older Workers?" Dec. 2009, Richard W. Johnson, www.retirementPolicy.org.

²Voice of America, "U.S. Life Expectancy Hits New High," Sept. 17, 2007.

³Fast Facts and Figures About Social Security, 2008, SSA Publication No. 13-11785. Released Aug. 2008, page 2.

⁴Guarantees backed by the claims-paying ability of the issuer.

⁵Loans against your policy accrue interest and decrease the death benefit and cash value by the amount of the outstanding loan and interest; withdrawals reduce the available death benefit.

⁶If your life insurance policy is paid up and your need for a death benefit decreases.

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.

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What I learned on the road

Mark Palermo

VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

When I turned 27, the existential void was breathing down my back. I visualized my remaining days on earth as a fifty-year routine of work, hot suppers, beer and TV. It was time for action, so I quit the job, the apartment, and cashed in my retirement account. I bought an old Econoline van, equipped it with a bed, guitar and ice box. I drove across country, worked odd jobs, and spent a year meeting sinners and saints along the way. Looking back now at 59, it was a good thing.

After a couple of months, I found myself one Sunday afternoon in a Mexican bar where I met Crazy Mike from Minnesota. He worked construction, and lived with his wife and brood of kids in a tarpaper shack on one of Mexicali's dusty back streets. As fate would have it, a torrential flood had just destroyed thousands of homes in the southern California desert. Mike got me a construction job and let me stay at his place for a while. He turned out to be a

sociopathic alcoholic, but oddly kind. Anyway, I grew up in a tenement in Lawrence in the 50's- a breeding ground for sociopaths- and thus had long ago learned to relax around them, but never relax too much...

All the guys I worked with were chronic alcoholics. My job was to mix cement, carry blocks, and on the side the contractor would give me a few extra bucks if I kept the bricklayers halfway sober, which wasn't easy. Starting work at 4 AM, they would send me to the liquor store soon afterwards to get their "breakfast." By 10:30, with the temperature around 100 degrees and rising, the crew would go to town for "lunch" to a 1930's tavern with a mahogany and brass bar and card room out back...

Nights on the desert were getting too cold for the van, so I moved into a rooming house where I met my new landlord, Larry. Outwardly and unabashedly gay- this was 1977 in a desert cowboy town - Larry spoke with a

lisp and walked with an effeminate swishing gait. I didn't care about that, but the guys on the job would joke about me living with "Larry the Queer," yet nobody called him that to his face- with good reason.

Larry was crazy. And it's true what they say- when they go berserk, it takes five strong men to take them down. Larry was about 40, not big or mean looking, but ferocious when ridiculed or threatened by homophobic cowboys, drunken rednecks or Mexican pachucos- to whom he administered some viscous ass whippings. And if that wasn't enough, Larry was a reputed arsonist and had been in and out of county jails and a mental hospital or two. I seem to

remember him mentioning something about electro-shock treatments.

But Larry was also irrepressible and funny. For example, after a night of drinking, he would go for nude midnight jogs in the town's central park. And Larry never, ever worked. He just drank and helped out in his Mom's rooming house. In the evenings, I would sit on the porch and drink beer, and he would sometimes join me. He was a self-reflective and engaging conversationalist, with profound insights into human nature.

I asked him once if he ever had the desire for women, and he surprised me by saying that once in a while, he did indeed feel the urge, but insisted that he himself was "all woman inside" and preferred

PALERMO, next page



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Thomas Connors
VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

It’s May! Can you Believe it? Time to Celebrate Mothers everywhere!

Ah, Yes! The Givers of Life. The Peace Makers and Peace Keepers. Moms who point out our shortcomings one moment and cheer us on to our greatest accomplishments the next. They are the ones who heal our wounds and strengthen our spirit when we are down. They are the family’s preacher and the family cop. From nurse to teacher. From chauffeur to personal trainer. **WOW!** Mothers always seem to manage to do it all!

*Mothers bring a natural passion for the WOW! to life. From the smallest WOW!s to the biggest. They never fail to amaze and surprise. Even at the end of life when you least expect it!

Susan Boyle. The dowdy, not so attractive singing sensation from England has taken the world by storm! She stole the hearts of people everywhere with her angelic voice and innocent personality. How was she able to conquer her fear of crowds and completely put out of her mind the catcalls and insults regarding her appearance to shock the world and most importantly the judges on Britain’s Got Talent ? Where did she get the strength? What caused her to blast through her fears and do it anyway? What allowed her to beat all the odds?

She found every bit of strength she needed in her Mum. A tremendous strength she got from her mother’s passing two years ago. She wanted her Mum to be proud of her. She was determined to make sure all those words of encouragement and praise would finally be put to good use. That desire to make her Mum proud, even in death, spurred her on to create the biggest **WOW!** the entertainment field has seen in recent memory. And what a tribute it was! Mum would indeed be proud.

***And the WOW! keeps growing. Multiplying and touching people from one side of the ocean to the other. All because a Mum encouraged her daughter to grander heights of success!**

The message is clear! Unmistakable. If Susan Boyle can do it, so can you. At American Training we constantly tell our Guests and Colleagues that it’s what’s inside that counts more than anything. And when you are able to get past your own self put-downs and

insecurities, then you can create one **WOW!** after another in your own life.

Ms. Boyle did more than merely entertain us. Because of her Mum, she has encouraged all of us to not pay attention to the superficialities, but, rather, to see the important things in people. She has caused us to ignore our shallow thinking and appreciate *who* people are not *what* they are. She is proof that ignoring our imperfections can undoubtedly lead us to more and more **WOW!** moments. More than we could ever imagine!

*My own Mom’s journey to heaven above provided me with the WOW! of a lifetime. Unanticipated and unexpected, it will forever be imprinted on my heart and soul. A WOW! I give Thanks for every single day!

I was quite fortunate to have had a Mom who knew just when to create a **WOW!** in my life. Growing up, she knew when the time was right to do something or even say something that would pick me up or encourage me right when I needed it. Or, she would do something that would cause me to step back and yell, “**WOW!**”, with a gift or *reward* for a job well-done. I even remember a **WOW!** that was *not* so positive; like giving me a good spanking for crossing the street when I was clearly told not to.

But, one of the most magnificent **WOW!**s occurred as my Mom lay dying a little over a year ago. She had suffered a good deal of pain from a flesh eating disease that attacked her leg. As she lay in her hospital bed she asked if she, “could just go home”. I knew that request would be one of her last and I was determined to make it happen.

I’ll never forget the look of **WOW!** on Mom’s face when she was taken out of the ambulance that frigid November morning and the EMT’s carried her into the house. She was alert and animated. “Finally, I’m home.” For her it would be her last **WOW!** For me, it was the beginning.

***The WOW! hit home. Like a smack across the head with a 2x4, I knew, in my heart, my role would truly become very special. Little did I know how special.**

Within hours, Mom became semi-conscious and considerably weakened. More times than I could ever have imagined, I had to feed her nutrition, liquids and pain medication through a feeding tube. And every day, sometimes by the hour, I could sense her passing from

this world to her place above in Heaven. As painful and hurtful as it was knowing her life was ending right there in front of me, it was the Gift of a Lifetime to know I was *preparing* her for her journey to God. And that journey was made comfortable and safe by me.

I remember thinking then, how lucky I was. How fortunate. Even in death, my Mom managed to give me one last unforgettable **WOW!** I continue to thank her every day.

Sure, you might consider it morbid. But, **WOW!** moments are all around us and present themselves when we least expect them. Sometimes even through people’s passing. That is why we must always be on our toes and ready for them when they show up. Because, moments like these are what make life truly meaningful and fulfilling.

***Follow every Mother’s example of creating a WOW! and use them to motivate yourself when you need it most.**

Use those examples to strengthen your relationships with your spouse and children. Even with your neighbors and friends. A Mother’s words or encouragement and wisdom can follow and influence you for a lifetime. Take advantage of it. Make her example the foundation for many a **WOW!**

Make THIS Mother’s Day a memorable one. Whether your Mom passed from this world in the past year or the past decade, use the **WOW!** moments she brought to you during her lifetime to influence your ability to **WOW!** those you love!

Now, *that’s* a **WOW!**



Tom Connors is President/ CEO of American Training, a diverse collection of companies committed to “Bringing Out the Best in Everyone They Touch”. He believes in living life to the fullest by making the **WOW!** a regular part of your personal, spiritual and working life. You can reach Tom at Tom@AmericanTrainingInc.com or by writing to him at Tom Connors, American Training, 102 Glenn Street, Lawrence, MA 01843, © copyright, 2009

SIMPLE WISDOM

Smoking Cigarettes

Gail Van Kleeck
VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

Smoking was forbidden in my home because my parents believed it was one of the first steps on the road to moral decay. This is why my friend Linda and I were especially surprised to find the sample pack of Pal Mal Cigarettes that had been inadvertently tossed into the kitchen junk drawer. We looked at each other, picked up the pack and slipped silently up the stairs and into my parent’s bathroom.

Closing the door and locking it, we lit our cigarettes, sucking in our breath with such enthusiasm that both of us were convulsed in a spasm of choking. Not wanting to look foolish, we tried again. As we grew more confident, we posed for one another, imitating the nonchalant sexuality we’d seen in magazine ads. By the time we’d finished, the room was completely filled with smoke.

Fearing that the thick gray cloud would incriminate us, we waved the bathroom door open and shut with such vigor and determination that the smoke drifted silently and invisibly into the upstairs hall. Feeling safe, although somewhat unwell, we slipped down the stairs and out the front door. Moments later my mother came through the back door, carrying the basket of laundry she’d just brought in from the line and began to climb the stairs.

I can still imagine how she must have paused at the top landing, how she must have lifted her head and sniffed the air. I can still remember the tremor in her voice as she called me inside. I can still remember her look of disbelief and the way her face dissolved into tears. I can

still remember the guilt. I can still remember the shame. I had smoked. I had been deceitful. I had made my mother cry.

My mother forgave me within a few days. She understood that I was a curious, although sometimes misguided child. She could see that I was sorry. It took years however for me to forgive myself.

Looking back over the shoulder of my life, I can see how imperfect most of us are. I can see how often we inadvertently bring sadness or disappointment or even pain into the lives of those we touch. Sometime, I think this is because either our expectations or the expectations of others are unreasonable or unrealistic. Sometimes I think it’s simply because we stumble as we walk life’s uneven path.

What would happen I wonder if we saw ourselves through the same compassionate and understanding eyes with which we see our children or our dearest friend? What if we blessed our mistakes and blunders once we had done all we could to correct them. What if we chose to view them as lessons, as opportunities to learn and grow, as stepping stones toward becoming more the kind of person we were so lovingly created to be?

How might that change in focus change something within us? How might that inner change affect our outer world?

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

Palermo: From Previous Page

men. He yearned to play the role of 1950’s housewife to a straight-acting husband. He would often talk about Bob, a Marine drill sergeant from San Diego. Their relationship didn’t work out, and he pined for Bob- whom he called the great passion of his life.

Larry could deal gracefully with difficult people, but he despised homophobes, and insisted that behind their poses, they were all closeted gays. He told me stories about judges, cops, teachers, ministers...Larry had dirt on half the town, which is why they mostly left him alone.

Larry’s life had been marked by horrible tragedies. And to deal with pain, he claimed to have mastered it through the application of mind power. I saw him do some amazing things. One time, for example, he took his shirt off, and pushed a threaded needle through his skin - sewing a dozen buttons into the flesh around his stomach and chest while keeping up a casual conversation. And it didn’t bleed a drop; because he willed it not to bleed.

I’ll never forget the people I met on the road, especially the characters like Larry in that sleepy desert town which reminds me of John Steinbeck’s Cannery Row. I would hear a song on the radio then, “Carry on my wayward son, there’ll be peace when you are done....” I came back a year later and enrolled in college. I had seen the creeping existential void and pushed it back.



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

valleypatriot.com

It's time to spin up a new season with the Lowell Spinners

Shawn Hansen

VALLEY PATRIOT LOCAL SPORTS COLUMNIST

Finishing with a 40-33 record last season, the Spinners look for a fresh start. They won their division taking home the Stedler Division Championship trophy sending them to their first playoff series.

Manager Gary DiSarcina said, "It was exciting because it was the first time the Lowell Spinners have been in the playoffs."

In the series, they lost three games to two in the first round to the Batavia Muckdogs, a minor league franchise of the St. Louis Cardinals in New York.

In minor league baseball, you can play on the Spinners until you are twenty-three years old, and with a few exceptions some are accepted over twenty-three.

"The Red Sox philosophy is to keep the majority of the team there who are draft kids or who are under twenty-three," said DiSarcina. The main goal is to develop each player, and give them the most experience they can get. When called up, players will either go to the Greenville Drive or Salem Red Sox.

"There's not that many kids getting called up because it's such a short season," said DiSarcina. A majority of the team will stay in Lowell for the season.

"Some players earn mid-season promotions, where two to - five players will end up in a Spinners uniform for a second year," said Media Relations Manager of the Lowell Spinners, Jon Boswell.

No one will know exactly who is on the team roster until the draft that will be held between June 8-10.

The Lowell Spinners organization wants to thank fans from communities around the Merrimack Valley. The residents of Dracut, Chelmsford, Tewksbury, Billerica, Tyngsboro, and



PHOTO: SHAWN HANSEN

A beautiful summer day at LeLachur Park, home of the Lowell Spinners baseball team

Lowell will each have their own night to shine at the ballpark. Nights dedicated to these communities will feature special tributes, from an elected official or a fan from that particular town throwing out the ceremonial first pitch. The specified nights will be as follows: July 7 - Lowell, July 29 - Dracut, August 7 - Chelmsford, August 21 - Tewksbury, August 31 - Billerica, September 1 - Tyngsboro.

If anyone has ever been interested in performing live in front of a group of fans, now is your time to shine. The Lowell Spinners organization will have auditions

for a lucky fan to sing the national anthem before the first pitch on Opening Day, June 19 at LeLachur Park. The person who wins the audition will also get free studio time in Boston to record a demo tape. Auditions will be held Thursday May 7 at 6:00 p.m. and Thursday May 14 at 6:00 p.m. at the Skybox Restaurant in Tewksbury. To register, fill out a registration and e-mail it to Jon Boswell at jboswell@lowellspinners.com. You may only audition one of the two days that are listed.

The first game of the season is scheduled for Friday, June 19 at 7:00 p.m. against the Vermont Lake Monsters at LeLachur Park.



Shawn Hansen currently attends UMass Lowell. He has written for "The Campus Report" at Middlesex Community College in Bedford and was also sports editor. Hansen has also written for "The UMass Lowell Connector" and is now a sports columnist for "The Valley Patriot"



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Thinking outside the box on high school sports fees - USA sports can help out

New England Patriots get picky

Mike Seaman
VALLEY PATRIOT LOCAL SPORTS COLUMNIST

A foundation is being created that will advocate and raise funds to assist student athletes and at-risk kids. The goal of this foundation will be to have student athlete advocates from each school system to keep the foundation’s board of directors updated on the needs of their school or a particular child. The foundation would then assist these student through funds or through the foundation’s network of supporters. The name of this foundation when incorporated will be the United Student Athlete Sports Foundation or, for short, the U.S.A. Sports Foundation.

After addressing the user fee issue, the goal of this group will be to sponsor and produce programs that will address many of the high risk behaviors and choices that our children are faced with. Among them are bullying and hazing, drinking, compulsive gambling, drugs, steroids etc. These programs will be made available to any and all schools that would like to participate.

We hope to have current and former pro athletes take part.

This brings me to a couple of events that are planned to raise funds to establish the foundation. A basketball competition is being planned for early June. The game is called 21 and competitions based on this game were very popular in many cities and a tradition up until around 1980. The Boys Clubs and

YMCA’S would put on these tournaments each year and would produce city champs in several different age groups. The game is played in teams of two and, in years past, boys and men would jockey for position in hopes of finding a sharpshooter as a partner.

Ironically the very schools whose students will benefit the most from this foundation have been the least helpful when asked to permit the fundraiser to be held in their gyms. Several have quoted hourly fees of up to \$45 for janitors that are not even needed since this is not a spectator event. In addition, they have demanded utility fees of up to \$25 an hour, as well as hourly rental fees.

The bottom line is that the cost of using their facility would be over \$1000 a day. Obviously, this would put the fundraiser in a hole before it could even get started. It would serve no purpose to mention the schools and colleges by name. However, I will say this, a local chamber of commerce president that serves as a school committeeman as well, would not even make a call to a local college that he has some influence with. A state representative refused to call the same college because he and his colleagues agreed to not ask for any favors from the state colleges because the house cut the Department of Higher Education’s budget. Fortunately Governors Academy is working on accommodating us for the weekend of June 13th and 14th.

St. Joseph’s school in Haverhill has also offered the use of their gym. We are

USA PORTS, page 34

Chris Papoulias
VALLEY PATRIOT LOCAL SPORTS COLUMNIST

The Patriots were back to their old tricks in this year’s draft. Belichick traded the 23rd pick to Baltimore for the 26th overall pick, only to trade that to Green Bay for a couple of picks, including their 2nd round pick. The first pick of the day for New England was hard hitting safety Patrick Chung (5’11, 212lbs.).

With Rodney Harrison unlikely to return, Patrick can step in and make an immediate impact. The Patriots then moved up a couple spots to grab homegrown defensive tackle Ron Brace (6’3, 330lbs.) from Boston College. Brace is a beast whose career at BC was overshadowed by first round selection B.J. Raji. Since Wilfork and Seymour are in contract years, this pick could prove to be a smart move.

With the next pick, the Patriots decided to stay with the New England theme and draft UCONN cornerback Darius Butler (5’11, 183 lbs.). Butler is a skilled corner with good ball skills and explodes when closing in on the ball. With an aging veteran secondary that Butler can learn from, he doesn’t have to step in immediately.

Also Butler has been working closely with primetime Deion Sanders at his Prime U camp. With the work ethic of Butler there is no doubt that in time Butler has the ability to become one of the best.

The Patriots selected three offensive linemen, including surprise pick Sebastian Vollmer with the 58th overall pick. In many mock drafts, Vollmer didn’t go until the 5th or 6th round. Belichick obviously saw


something that other teams just didn’t get.

With Vollmer’s size (6’7, 312 lbs.) and some work, he could develop into a starting right tackle. The patriots also selected Brandon Tate (6’0, 183 lbs.), a wide receiver from UNC. Tate is one of the best multi-purpose players in the draft.

Tate, who has had some injury and character issues, is going to be teaming with Randy Moss who had very similar issues when he was coming into the draft. Randy who is now a leader on the team will no doubt take Tate under his wing. With a teacher like Moss, where can you go wrong? Having traded a less than impressive cornerback, Ellis Hobbs, the Patriots will need help in the kick return game, which is exactly what Tate gives them. With 3,523 total combined kick return yards and six returns for touchdowns in his college career, Tate fills that void.

Finally, the Patriots filled the long-snapper position, vacated by Lonnie Paxton, with rookie Jake Ingram.

Overall the Patriots selected 12 players out of this year’s draft and collected two 2nd round picks for the 2010 draft. With the return of Tom Brady, refreshing the offense through free agency, and developing a defense that’s getting younger and more athletic, New England is looking like they are ready for yet another Championship run.



**Chris Papoulias is a Dracut resident, avid New England sports fan and former co-host of Front Row, a sports talk show on Dracut and Lowell Cable Access with George Papoulias.*



Valley Patriot photojournalist Jeff Guerra of Lawrence attended the 24 hour Spin-A-Thon for cancer research at Latitudes Sports Club in Methuen. Above Left: Owners of Latitude with James Montgomery, L-R, Eric Weaver, Ralph Bagarella, James Montgomery, Daniel Piccolo, and Joe DeMarco, Latitude general manager. Above Right, Matthew Gangi (9) from Methuen, gets some peddling in for teh cause. Bottom Photo: an overview of the event.

New England Revolution announces U16 and U18 tryout information

FOXBOROUGH, Mass. – The New England Revolution will conduct open tryouts for its Under-16 and Under-18 teams at locations around southern New England between May 26 and June 2. Entering its second season, the Revolution’s youth program is the only fully-funded youth program in New England, and competes in the prestigious U.S. Soccer Development Academy.

Qualified and talented players will be accepted into the Revolution’s youth program without regard to their financial situation. All players’ needs and expenses related to soccer activities – training, facilities, equipment, uniforms, travel associated with competitions – are provided by the Revolution at no cost to the players or their families.

Players are eligible for the Under-16 team if they were born on January 1, 1993 or after. Players eligible for the Under-18 team were born on January 1, 1991 or after. Players will only be able to attend one open tryout session. There is no fee to try out.

Open Try-out Schedule

Tuesday, May 26: Andover, Mass. (Wood Hill Middle School, 11 Cross St., Andover, Mass., 01810)

Under-16s: 5 - 6:30 p.m.

Under-18s: 6:30 – 8 p.m.

Friday, May 29: Cranston, R.I. (Briggs/Chafee Sports Complex, Hope Rd., Cranston, R.I., 02921)

Under-16s: 5 - 6:30 p.m.

Under-18s: 6:30 - 8 p.m.

Tuesday, June 2: Marlboro, Mass. (Ghiloni Park, 239 Concord Rd., Marlboro, Mass., 01752)

Under-16s: 5 - 6:30 p.m.

Under-18s: 6:30 - 8 p.m.

Call-back and invitation-only tryouts will be held at the Dana-Farber Field House at Gillette Stadium in Foxborough, Mass., on Monday, June 8 (Under-16s) and Tuesday, June 9 (Under-18s).

All players should arrive at the respective locations 30 minutes before their age-group tryout begins to ensure all required paperwork is in order.

All players who plan to attend a tryout session are required to have consent and liability release forms with them, signed by a parent or legal guardian. Players without the necessary signed forms will not be allowed to try out that evening.

The necessary forms will be e-mailed to all families who register their contact information at revolutionsoccer.net prior to the event, and will also be available for download on the tryout registration page on revolutionsoccer.net.

For more information about tryouts or to download the required forms, visit revolutionsoccer.net and click on “Academy” in the red navigation bar. The Revolution youth development program can also be reached at (508) 384-4349.



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Valley Patriot of the Month William Gallagher; From Page 1

deliberately fire into the mound so it would spray all over them. While the Ensign thought they were a poor shot, there was a more experienced Warrant Officer who knew what they were doing. He told the Ensign that he would never stay in the same trench with him during any future exercises!

Gallagher would continue his training in Lido Beach, Long Island, NY when in October of 1943 he was assigned to a new base. He received training in landing crafts for beach assaults. His group set up a tent city in order to simulate an actual field base with a motor generator for power and field kitchens. They even had a desalinated water supply. The group would use this base to train Navy shore parties for overseas assignments. Equipped with sand bars, these beaches proved beneficial for training. Often the landing crafts would find their way onto a sand bar and when the gate would open and extend, it would be over deeper water. Men in full combat gear would disembark and disappear below the waves. Bill and others would have to pull them out of the drink. This was great training because the same thing would later occur in actual landings.

On July 26, 1944 Gallagher would leave for Europe on the USS Lejeune, a former German supply ship that was converted into a troop carrier. He arrived in Bosneath, Scotland on August 5, 1944 where he boarded a truck and went to Helensboro, Scotland. A few days later, he went to Southampton, England where he would board a Canadian Landing Ship (LCI) that would take him to France.

The Germans were attacking in the area so the ship was delayed. They circled the English Channel and there were reports that it was probably sunk because it did not arrive as scheduled. The U-boats were everywhere and they were forced to observe radio silence so they were unable to communicate.

Finally, on August 11, 1944 he arrived in Cherbourg, France. Pup tents were set up and they worked on Omaha, Utah, Juno and other beaches constructing facilities that would allow troops and supplies to come directly ashore without the use of the landing craft. Additionally, the Sea Bees built large pontoon barges equipped with outboard engines to go to retrieve supplies from the bigger ships that were unable to enter the harbor. This often proved to be a difficult and dangerous operation due to the severe weather conditions in the English Channel.

The Sea Bees were always constructing new and temporary bases during the war effort. With their "can do" spirit, they constructed one in Cherbourg, France which consisted of Quonset huts, a mess hall, hot showers, laundry facility, and a recreation area. It was one of the best bases in France.

Gallagher's group left Cherbourg and arrived in Nantes, France. They set up tents



in an open field and on one of his first nights there, a guard heard noises in the bushes nearby. He gave the command to halt. The noise continued so he opened fire. Gallagher and others emerged from their tents in their skivvies carrying their rifles and ammunition. It turned out to be two cows that he killed and the farmer was none too happy. While in Nantes, the men all

acquired dysentery from drinking the water from a well.

The French Free Soldiers were a force to be reckoned with. They were executing German collaborators at night and it was in ear-shot of Gallagher's group. One night when he was on guard duty, he heard the shots.

Gallagher's tour of Europe would soon end. He left Nantes and traveled to Le Harve, France and to Salcombe, England on December 12, 1944. They arrived in Plymouth, England to wait for another ship to transport them back to the USA. Would you believe it was actually the USS Lejeune that took him to Europe in the first place? What a coincidence! They arrived on December 27, 1944. After having some leave, and allowing for some time for the 114th Battalion to regroup, he eventually received orders to go to the Pacific.

In March of 1945, Gallagher, having the new rank of Coxswain, left Port Hueneme, California on the S.S. Sea Bass. The ship arrived in New Hebrides and New Caledonia. Half of the battalion disembarked to do construction work, but primarily they were to load and unload supplies. His group loaded a complete Army division along with their tanks, artillery, ammunition and other supplies for the invasion of Okinawa. This invasion was to preclude the invasion of Japan itself. After the successful Okinawa operation, he was scheduled to be part of the invasion of Japan.

The first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945 and the second on Nagasaki on August 9, 1945. The Japanese surrendered unconditionally on August 14, 1945; the actual surrender being on September 2. Gallagher and his group received this information as they were preparing to leave for the Philippines. They were elated since the casualties were estimated in the millions on both sides had an invasion actually taken place.

Discharged in May of 1946, he was assigned to the Navy Reserves where he served until May of 1953. Thanks Bill and others like you for honorably serving your country.



Kathleen Corey Rahme is a former City Councilor in Methuen, is the founder of the Methuen Youth Corps., and hosts "Call to Serve." You can email her at kcorye.rahme@comcast.net or call 978-686-0008

VA offers new program where you can Adopt-A-Veteran

Tom Duggan

VALLEY PATRIOT REPORTER

The V.A. is starting a new program called Medical Foster Home (Adult Foster Care) for military veterans according to Cheryl Coviello of the Veteran's Administration office in Bedford Massachusetts.

Nationwide there are three states that have this program actively going on. There are pilot programs in Arkansas, Florida and Puerto Rico. "Now we have 33 other sites," Coviello says. "The Bedford V.A. in Massachusetts and the Boston V.A. are the only two in New England that have funding for this, so it's really kind of exciting to be at the forefront of this new project."

Coviello says that the VA is now trying to find people in The Valley who are interested in taking a veteran into their home. "We're just trying to do some

nursing home diversion," she said "we don't want people to have to go to the nursing home. We want to try and keep folks in the community, where they want to live. Lots of Veterans end up living in the same house or apartment for many years. They know they're not doing well. They might need additional help, but they don't want to leave because they love their home, they love their community and maybe they have a pet they don't want to part with. So, this is the kind of program where we really do our best to tailor the matching between the community, the care-giver and what the Veteran wants as well as where they end up living and what kind of services we can help them with."

Coviello says that anyone who wants to take in a veteran will not have to go it alone. "there is help for those who want to take in one of our veterans. The V.A. has home care teams that are basically, a team of nurses and social workers, rehab

therapists, etc., who come in and support the veteran in the home and, in doing so they are supporting the care-giver as well. Giving them education, training and so on.

"I'm getting calls randomly and I have some Vet agencies in the community saying 'hey I have a Veteran and the lady next door to him takes care of him. I already have a match for you how can we help them out and how can we legitimize the situation.'"

"Family members often take care of a parent or a grandparent or even now we have some parents taking care of their sons and daughters. We can work it out so that we can have a medical foster home setting, a care-giver setting and the care-giver does get compensated. They get paid by the veteran, with whatever income that veteran has. Part of my job in coordinating this program is to help the Veterans who come to us to maximize their

income as much as possible. Especially if they get some kind of benefits from the V.A. We look at what that is and what their needs are and try to see if we can increase their benefits to make it possible for them to pay for this."

Coviello says it is much more cost efficient to the Veteran because when a someone goes into a long-term care facility they lose just about all they have "You have to spend down your money before yo ugo into a nursing home and it's really difficult.

Coviello says that one of the questions she is consistently asked is: 'Could a care-giver potentially move into a Veterans home?'

"That's something that we'd like to eventually work out but that's not part of what we're able to do at this time. The way it would work at this point would be: the veteran would actually move into the

ADOPT, page 28

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CARING FOR OUR VETERANS

Spring is here!

John Lenotte

VALLEY PATRIOT VETERAN COLUMNIST

Spring has arrived, although it is feeling more like we jumped right into Summer! Here we go again, taking care of our lawns and other outdoor projects. As we approach Memorial Day, we will be getting the barbeque ready and all the good stuff that goes with it. Families will get together to celebrate the unofficial beginning of the summer season. Graduations will be happening throughout the area. Wedding plans will be finalized for all the June events.

For many, this is a bittersweet time. Many have loved ones who are serving our country around the world will not be home with their families. They can often connect by phone, email and/or internet. But this is not quite the same as being able to reach out and hug your loved one.

And for others, it is an even sadder time of year.

This is when we will visit our family and friends who have made the ultimate sacrifice for our country, for us! The crowds have been pretty good at the Memorial Day parades these last few years. But think, how many show up to see Santa in November versus how many show up on Memorial Day. We must not forget the sacrifices that these true heroes have made. There are many who were killed in time of service but also many who returned and have since passed on. These too should be remembered.

In Haverhill, for example, there are over FIVE THOUSAND veterans buried.

A daunting task for those few who place the flags on all those graves each year. But having participated in this, it is a labor of love. Cities and towns bear some of the cost of these flags but most of the cost is reimbursed by the

Commonwealth. A small price to pay for the sacrifices of these men and women.

This time of year we also enjoy the baseball season. But many forget that some of our baseball stars were also veterans. Some of the greats who served in World War II include: Ted Williams (also served during the Korean War), Joe DiMaggio, Stan Musial, Gil Hodges and Hank Bauer. They were heroes in the true sense of the word. They took time out of their athletic career to serve our country and did so willingly. Yet we rarely take note of that time in their life versus their time on the field.

I will quote one definition of a veteran: A Veteran - whether active duty, retired, national guard or reserve - is someone who, at one point in their life, wrote a check made payable to "The United States of America", for an amount of "up to and including my life." That is Honor, and there are way too many people in this country who no longer understand it. - Author Unknown. Enough said.

This Memorial Day, I hope you will take time to enjoy life with family and friends. But also take a few minutes to reflect upon this great nation that we live in. The wonderful freedoms we have. Yes we are in a very tough economic period but there is still much to be grateful for. And some needed respect for those who have made sacrifices by wearing the uniform of our armed services. May God Bless America and keep safe the troops who defend our way of life.



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

ADOPT: From page 27

care-givers home. The care-giver doesn't have to own they could even rent their home.

In most cases these are seniors, and in this country we don't always value them the way we probably should, especially when we're talking about veterans, people who've sacrificed for their country.

"If anyone is interested in being a care-giver, they have to be over 21. They can either own or rent their home and they would live there with the Veteran. Ideally you'd have a bedroom on the first floor, read, write and speak English. Bi-lingual folks are always welcomed because we have lots of Veterans who speak other languages so, please if you're bi-lingual or you know someone who is, it would be great if you could care for one of our vets.

Someone who's willing to get certified in CPR, First Aid and understand that there's going to be team members with the medical people from the V.A. helping the veteran with their unique needs.

Anyone interested in adopting a veteran can call Cheryl Coviello at: 781-687-2706 or 1-800-VETS-MED-1 or 1-800-838-6331 extension 2706. Care-givers will get compensated.



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

To advertise in The Valley Patriot call 978-557-5413

Re-elect

Jeanne Pappalardo
West District Councilor

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God Bless America - God Bless Our Troops

Contratulations to The Valley Patriot for FIVE GREAT YEARS!
Keep up the Good WORK!

VETERANS BENEFITS

Education, job training available for veterans

Susan Piazza

VALLEY PATRIOT VETERAN COLUMNIST

Registries are vital to the VA, they document service members affected with certain ailments and assist those who suffer from these illnesses. Particular registries normally correspond to certain wars/conflicts, atomic/ionizing radiation during WWII, Agent Orange and Vietnam, Gulf Wars and multi-symptom mystery illnesses. These registries keep records of how, when, where, exposure to certain harmful substances or potentially harmful substances effect or may effect its members. For more information go to: <http://www.va.gov/enviroagents/>

Those enrolled in a particular registry receive free medical treatment and follow-up services for conditions related to that registry. Any procedures deemed necessary by the treating physician are also covered, as are lab tests, x-rays, and any other diagnostic testing deemed appropriate. Treatment is not dependent on that person's disability rating or on their unemployability factor.

"Presumptive" conditions. Certain medical conditions can be linked to one's military service. Registries can help determine whether the medical conditions suffered are "unique" to those in a particular registry or whether they are something shared by the general public. There are some conditions so "unique" to the particular registries that they are "presumed" to exist as a result of the conditions of the registry.

EXAMPLE: Any individual who served "in country" during Vietnam is presumed to have been exposed to herbicides containing dioxin while in Vietnam. Certain medical conditions result from Agent Orange exposure.

If you have one of these medical conditions and were "in country" it is presumed that the condition is a result of exposure while in Vietnam; that medical condition is deemed a service-connected disability.

REGISTRIES: Atomic Veterans / Ionizing Radiation: This registry deals with WWII veterans who were exposed during the war. To be eligible for inclusion, exposure can be linked to either stateside, or overseas duty.

Stateside Exposure: 1) Individuals who served in the area where atmospheric detonation of nuclear devices occurred.

2) Individuals serving at gaseous diffusion plants at Paducah, KY; Portsmouth, OH; or the K-25 area in Oak Ridge, TN. To qualify under this section one must have served for at least 250 days prior to 1 February 1992.

3) Individuals who took part in underground nuclear tests at Amchitka Island, Longshot, Milrow, or Cannikin, Alaska prior to 1 January 1974.

4) Individuals treated with nasopharyngeal (NP) radium during military service.

Overseas Exposure: 1) Any individual who served in Hiroshima or Nagasaki from August 1945 through 1 July 1946

2) Any POW imprisoned in Japan during World War II.

Presumptive Conditions: Leukemia, certain cancers, and cataracts are among the conditions that have been linked to ionizing radiation.

Agent Orange: Herbicides and their effects continue to pose a huge problem to the segment of the veteran population that was exposed to them. Individuals involved in the transportation, testing, or spraying

of this carcinogen continue to suffer and die.

The "Valley Patriot's" April issue detailed the plight and fight of Vietnam Era veteran Agnes "Irish" Bresnahan and her struggle to call attention to those effected by stateside exposure to Agent Orange.

Vietnam: The VA classifies the wartime dates affiliated with this "conflict" as being from 5 August 1964 through 7 May 1975. For veterans who served "in country" the VA uses 28 February 1961 as a starting date.

Korea: One is eligible if one served inside Korea during 1968 or 1969.

Presumptive Conditions: Vary from Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma to Type 2 diabetes and prostate cancer. Currently the VA lists eleven different presumptive conditions. For more information go to: <http://www1.va.gov/agentorange/> Click on: "Health Conditions Presumptively Recognized to Date (November 2008)"

Gulf War/ Operation Iraqi Freedom Phantom illnesses plague much of the population who served in the Gulf Wars. These illnesses often seem vague when viewed in isolation, but when taken as a whole, in light of the service members' duty station the myriad of symptoms takes on a more cohesive load. Whether illness was the result of chemical weapons, biological weapons, the vast number of oil wells set on fire, or other such evils, veterans have suffered from a myriad of physical problems - some of which have been known to transfer to their offspring.

One must suffer from a particular medical condition for six months or more so it is imperative that one immediately report any medical problem(s) as soon as they occur. These chronic medical problems run the gamut (such as chronic fatigue, irritable bowel, skin problems, fibromyalgia, respiratory symptoms, unexplained weight loss, etc.). For more information go to: <http://www1.va.gov/gulfwar/> Check out: "Gulf War Review Newsletter (May 2008)" It is a good source of information. Also you may call the VA Gulf War Veterans Information Helpline at: (800) PGW-VETS or (800-749-8387).

Gulf Wars: Classified as running from 2 August 1990 until present, the cut off date will be determined either by law or by proclamation of the President.

Depleted Uranium: Two registries have been set up to deal with medical problems associated with depleted uranium. Depleted uranium (DU) becomes a problem when internalized (either through inhalation or through shrapnel composed of DU).

Gulf War: (dates as stated above)

Other: Bosnia and Afghanistan are among the other countries included in this group. Registries can be helpful in establishing a link between a medical condition and ones duty station, dates of service, and exposure to particular substances.

As always, check with your local veterans agent, veteran organization, or contact the VA directly to file a claim or to learn more about inclusion into one of these registries. Don't procrastinate, it could mean losing benefits. May God Bless those now serving in the military, and those who have served. And may God Bless this great democracy - the United States of 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

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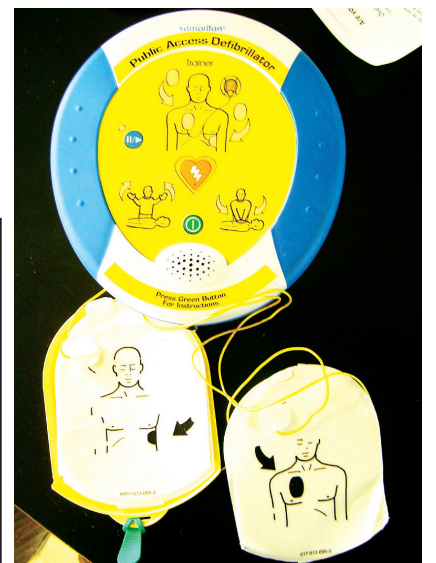
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TIP volunteers clear land donated by city for first Healing Garden in New England



PHOTOS: TOM DUGGAN

State officials must work to help municipalities with health care

William Manzi
METHUEN MAYOR

With the unveiling of the budget of the House Ways and Means Committee the full impact on municipalities is now coming into clearer focus. That impact will lead to fiscal Armageddon for cities and towns throughout Massachusetts, and requires both revenue side reforms, as well as cost side reforms. These reforms cannot wait, nor can they be half hearted attempts to mollify everyone at the table. The cost side reforms must produce immediate reductions in municipal expenses in order to allow us to mitigate the effect of the massive state aid cuts coming in FY2010. Anything less would be irresponsible.

The House Ways and Means budget cut aid to localities by a whopping 32% from

the figure we started with at the beginning of FY2009. That aid cut would bring into question the ability of many municipalities to deliver core services, and if it stands with no changes to the mandated cost structure that is imposed on us from Beacon Hill it will simply mean massive layoffs and service cuts at the local level. What are the cost side reforms that are needed? Let's start with the big one, health care.

Providing municipal employees with health care is one of the municipal budget busters, with double digit rates of increase in municipal health care plans crowding out all other areas of municipal spending.

The State has responded by passing legislation that would allow municipalities to join the State GIC, which is a lower cost plan. But in so doing the Legislature has added a proviso that prevents entry by a municipality unless a weighted 70% of the

local unions vote in favor. That provision has prevented most municipalities from joining, and would force most of the savings to be bargained away in any case. Speaking frankly the proviso makes the legislation worthless and does nothing to move municipalities to the lower cost model that we desperately need. That provision needs to be removed, and it should be replaced with language that allows a city to join the GIC by a recommendation of the executive, with ratification by the local legislative body. But more importantly than entry into the GIC municipalities are asking for the legal right to make design changes to local plans without collective bargaining. That right is one that is already utilized by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts at the State level.

All that we ask for at the local level is for the same rights exercised by the Governor and the Legislature with regards to plan design. We ask for nothing more or less than what the State has bestowed upon itself. Why the State is so reluctant to give us that right is beyond comprehension. In fact the House Ways and Means budget is balanced in part by raising the contribution rate for state employees paying into the state health care plan. Without real change in this

area we will all be back on the edge of disaster year after year. The time for action is now.

Other issues are critically important for cities, including immediate relief from pension burdens due to the full funding requirement that will become crushing in the next two years. It is apparent to many that the numbers as they exist today do not work. In fact they are not even close to working at either the state or municipal levels. And for those who think you can tax your way out of this it is apparent that they simply cannot read numbers, or base their fiscal policies on hope and prayer. That is no substitute for good management, and a willingness to make hard choices that will anger some constituencies.

Those decisions will either come today, or harder ones will come tomorrow.

Visit my blog at www.billmanzi.com or email me any comment or concern at wmmanzi@ci.methuen.ma.us



Bill Manzi is in his second, two year term as the Mayor of Methuen. You can read his blog at billmanzi.com or email him at billmanzi1@comcast.net

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PHOTO: COURTESY, METHUEN MAYOR BILL MANZI

Tom Schiavone, Lawrence's Economic Development Director barks out the orders at Opening Day for the Methuen Girls Softball League.

LIFE IN METHUEN

Kathleen’s Notebook

Kathleen Corey Rahme
VALLEY PATRIOT METHUEN COLUMNIST

Methuen Youth Corps volunteer opportunities

Saturday, May 9, 2009 at 9:00 AM, Walnut Grove Cemetery (off of Lowell Street in Methuen- on Grove Street across the street from the Methuen Senior Center). We will be replacing the flags there until 10:00 am. At 10:15 we will assemble at the Elmwood Cemetery and replace American flags on those graves. At the same time, we will have a group of volunteers across the street at the St. Anthony’s Cemetery. We will work until we are finished. We should complete all the graves by 12:00 Noon.

Saturday, May 16, 2009 at 9:00 AM, St. Mary’s Mausoleum, Methuen. We will place flags on the veterans’ graves at St. Mary’s and Bellevue Cemeteries. We need many volunteers for this project because there are nearly 7000 veterans’ graves that need flags replaced. We will be having lunch at 11:30 sharp.

Sunday, May 24, 2009 immediately following the 9:30 AM Mass and until 4:00 PM there will be an open house in the St. Monica School for the 10th Annual Wall of Honor. Over 650 veterans’ pictures will be on display. Come for coffee and view the Wall of Honor. Volunteers are needed to assist as hosts for the veterans and their families.

Questions? Call Kathleen (978)686-0008

one of the one hundred Commonwealth’s Unsung Heroines. She was also named 2009 Teacher of the Year by Principal Jim Guica.

She is a teacher at Tenney Grammar School in Methuen. She is the co-advisor of the Peer Leaders group at the school. Under her leadership, the students in the upper grades are encouraged to be very involved in the community. She mentors them and through her modeling, they are able to understand the importance of community service.

Their activities include marching in every parade that is sponsored by the City of Methuen including Veterans’ Day, Memorial Day and the Santa Parade. She partners with the Methuen Youth Corps and their projects involving veterans’ issues. Some of these projects include replacing thousands of American flags on veterans’ graves and edging the bronze markers on hundreds of veterans’ graves in preparation of Memorial Day. She exemplifies the leadership that motivates the young people. The peer leaders clean the campus of the Tenney Grammar School once a year during the city’s annual spring clean-up. She is a mentor, a leader and a volunteer extraordinaire.

She will be honored at a luncheon at the Massachusetts State House on May 13. Her nominator, Kathleen Corey Rahme will accompany her.

Congratulations Joyce. Well done!



Kathleen Corey Rahme is a former City Councilor in Methuen, is the founder of the Methuen Youth Corps., and hosts “Call to Serve.” You can email her at kcoreyrahme@comcast.net or call 978-686-0008

Local woman named unsung heroine of the year

The Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women has named Tenney Grammar School teacher Joyce Wyman



PHOTO: COURTESY

Happenings at Methuen Village

By Kathleen Corey Rahme -•When the Methuen Senior Center and the Methuen High School Adopt a Grandparent Program hosted a “Senior Prom” this month, Methuen Village at Riverwalk Park residents went in style. Arriving in a stretch limousine, and donning wristlet’s and boutonnieres, residents (left to right) Stanley Harackiewicz, Maria Daigle, Werner Sohn, CNA Monica Gonzalez, Gene Nicolaison, and Rose Abbott danced the afternoon away. Werner Sohn was named King of the Prom and Monica Pitman of the Council on Aging was his Queen!

MINGYA VALLEY USA!

Mingya, can I catch the Swine Flu from one of my Facebook friends?

Andy Kelley
VALLEY PATRIOT MINGYA COLUMNIST

Mingya, with all the concern over the Swine flu and “don’t go out in crowded areas” or stay out of a “closed container” as Vice President Joe Biden suggests, wouldn’t it be nice to have a safe place for citizens of the Merrimack Valley aka Mingya Valley to go, a sanctuary of sorts? Imagine a place where you wouldn’t have to cough in your sleeve, disinfect your loved ones, open doors with your elbow and close them with your foot.

Now, don’t get me wrong, I feel for those who have fallen victim to this awful disease, but as I sit here writing this on a flight to Los Angeles on my way to work (while holding my breath for six hours), I know that life has to go on despite the fact that I am trapped in a “closed container” at 36,000 feet above sea level.

Life must go on in Mingya Valley too! So, imagine a place where you could go to share funny stories about growing up in the Merrimack Valley or even discuss where to get the best chicken barbecue sandwich. Imagine an online place where you can reconnect with your best buddy from Junior High. I reconnected with my buddy, Domenic Laudani after not seeing or talking to him for over 30 years! You can do the same.

Whether you live in California or Pleasant Valley Street in Methuen, there is a place for you Mingya Valleyites to go, a place where more than 1,800 others from Mingya have found. It’s a group on Facebook called Mingya valley. Find it here: www.mingyavalley.com

Mingya Valley is a group on Facebook, the popular social networking site, where you can connect with long lost friends, share photos of life in Lawrence, read and share your personal stories about growing up in what we fondly refer to as Mingya Valley. Mingya Valley is not meant to offend, its not a scary place where creeps hang out, nor is it a place where people trash one another. I like to think that Mingya Valley on Facebook is a happy state of mind where people can go to have lots of fun, where in fact people actually say, “OMG!!! I’m the happiest person since I found this group”, or “mingya..the best people are up on here!”

We asked people in Mingya Valley, “What Are Some of the Funniest Mingya Valley Expressions You Have Ever Heard? Here’s a sample of just a few of the posts.

-“I had a slice of Tripoli’s pizza and MINGYA it was good...I might buy tree more.”

- “Mingya, look how big yoa haya is! The bigga the haya the closa to God.”

- “Mingya that sangwich (Italian for sandwich lol) was awesome.”

- Mingya wanna play 45s”

- “Mingya, I’m ascarded!”

We asked people, “What’s your favorite Mingya Valley restaurant?” - omg I miss Bishops, they had the best fries and salad and the lamb was awesome!!!!

- “I liked Morins because it was dark and quiet in there. My mother and I used to go there on Saturdays. back when it was safe to walk down Essex Street alone.”

- “Norm’s White Horse has the best Chicken Barbecues.”



There are numerous discussion groups like “How Did You End Up in Mingya Valley?”, or “Where did you grow up and where do you live now?” or the most recent, “Mingya, How are You Coping with the SWINE FLU?”

One very popular place in Mingya Valley is the photo section. Here you’ll find old and new photos of Lawrence. One young woman from Manchester, New Hampshire reminisced when she saw an old picture of a Lawrence mill, “My grandfather Mr “K” was a glazer amongst many other things during the tough times. He was so proud of these mills, having had a part in their history. He loved Lawrence and I loved as a little girl listening to all of the stories. The photo brings happy tears to my eyes :)”

There are dozens of photos and several hundred posts by people you know.

Ok, now back to the question about catching the Swine flu from one of your Facebook friends. I am pretty sure that you cannot. But, just to be extra careful, whenever I go to Mingya Valley on Facebook, I type with two pencils duct taped to my elbows. Become a member of Mingya Vally on Facebook by going to www.mingyavalley.com and pick up next months issue of Valley Patriot for the next Mingya Valley column.



Andy Kelley left Lawrence a long time ago, but it turns out, Lawrence never left him. He lives in Andover with his family and owns Effective Student Marketing, Inc. a marketing firm for colleges. He can be reached at andy@andykelley.com

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PAGE 1

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<<<**Roxie** - I am a very playful girl who needs lots of lovin'! I am still a pup, only 4 months old, so I could use some extra training. I'm friendly and love to give kisses! I would love a home with a big yard so I can run around and tire myself out! I would be great as a starter dog, with older children. I am a bully breed so would do well with someone who has done their research. I am curious about other animals and would love a home to call my own! Can I be your new best friend?



Ben - I'm big and fluffy and beautiful. I'm extremely curious and love to be pet. I am FIV positive; you should ask your vet about it - it's not as scary as it sounds. I should be an only cat because I love to have all the attention to myself.

>>>**Sharkey**- Sharkey is a 2 year old Tortoiseshell cat who was abandoned here at the Humane Society. Although her obvious under bite makes her interesting and unique, it causes her no physical problems. For unknown reasons, Sharkey has been here at the shelter since January. She is lovable and affectionate, although she is a bit frustrated with life at the shelter. She wants nothing more than to relax peacefully in the sun and enjoy the quiet - something that is virtually impossible at the shelter. Don't you want to be the one to provide Sharkey that place to call home?



Dear Bings

Dear Bings,

With the warm weather approaching, I have a pet cat, like yourself that I wish to keep its coat shiny and clean, not so dullish looking. What can I use to achieve this without harming its skin? Thanks Bings!

Sally - Epping, NH

Let your individual cat tell you how often they should be bathed. After a bath using the hypoallergenic shampoo and conditioning after bath,

your pet's itching should be eliminated or significantly reduced. When the itching begins to return, whether in a week or a month, it's time for another bath. If the itching begins again within a day or two after a bath, there probably is an underlying medical problem that should be treated by a veterinarian.

I hope this helps you out Sally....
MEOW for now....
Love, Bings



Dear Sally,

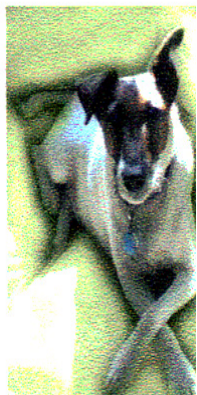
That's a great question and being a cat, I think I may be able to answer it pretty well. Dish detergents and shampoo intended for humans should never be used on dogs or cats. Your dogs have skin that is thinner and much more sensitive than human skin, and shampoos for humans have completely different pH levels. Research indicates that high-quality hypoallergenic shampoos, conditioners and food supplements achieve best results for skin and hair coat care when they are used in combination

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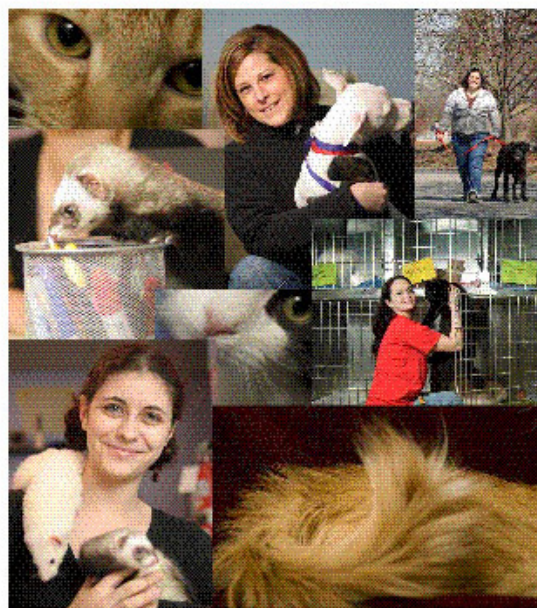
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Kate Whitney
VALLEY PATRIOT PUPPY COLUMNIST

PLEASE HELP!!!

As some of you might have heard, there was a fire on route 110 in Merrimac on Friday April 17.

The fire spread quickly through the small strip mall and left nothing once it had been put out. One of the places that was burned to the ground was a veterinary’s office.

The rescue I volunteer for, One Tail at a Time Rescue, rented space in this unit, and subsequently, everything went up in smoke.

All of our donations that we had worked so hard to get, all of our very expensive medicines that are used to treat our puppies and dogs, microchips, crates, adoption day tables, gone, just like that, in an instant.

We are now, once again, reaching out to our family, friends, neighbors, and animal lovers. Now more than ever, we need your support.

If you have anything that is “dog-related” (see the list of needed items below) please contact me and arrange a pick up or drop off. One Tail at a Time Rescue is a 501C3 federally recognized non profit dog rescue. Therefore any donations are tax deductible.



PHOTOS: COURTESY



with wonderful families who will provide forever homes for these amazing dogs.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at Kate@swingrite.com. All checks should be made out to: One Tail at a Time Rescue, Inc. and mailed to PO Box 155 Boxford, MA. 01921.

Kate Whitney is a Boxford resident and owner of the Swingrite corporation. If you are interested in adopting a puppy or becoming a foster parent to a puppy waiting for a home you can email Kate at Kwswingrite@aol.com



If you do not have any of the items listed below, a monetary donation would be greatly appreciated in the attempt to once again purchase the much needed medications, heartworm pills, flea/tick preventative, and microchips that are needed to keep all of our rescued dogs healthy and safe.

Dog Crates, Food/Water dishes, Collars/Leashes, Sheets, Towels, Dog Food, Dog Treats, Dog Toys (new), Cleaning Supplies, Paper Towels, Bleach, Trash Bags

One Tail at a time Rescue pulls its dogs from kill-shelters in the South and gives them a second chance at life. With your help, One Tail at a Time can continue rescuing dogs and matching them up



PHOTO: COURTESY

Boxford resident Kate Whitney, Dash and Honey all want you to know how important it is to adopt a shelter dog. For more information you can email One Tail at a Time at onetail@comcast.net

Dog Day Festival

For the canine members of the family, Smolak Farms will once again hold its Dog Day Festival to benefit the MSPCA next month.

Scheduled for Sunday, May 17, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., the farm will be given over to pooches and their people for a day of doggie fun to include a water rescue demonstration, hay rides, walking trails, a dog-shaped bounce house, and duck races with rubber doggies.

The event will also feature a rabies vaccination and microchipping clinic run by Drs. Tracey and George Fountas of River Road Veterinary Hospital of Andover.

Also attending the event will be representatives from the MSPCA, Bulger Animal Hospital, Wiggles & Jiggles Pet Care, Good Dog Aquatic Fitness, Groom Town Pet Salon, Ciao Bow Wow, Bag-a-Bones and Sit Pretty.

As usual, the popular vanilla ice cream and dog treat “doggie dishes” for pets — and everything else ice cream for people — will be available at Treadwell’s during the event.

Visiting dogs should be kept on leashes, and bags will be available for owners to pick up their dogs’ waste.

For information on the Dog Day Festival, call Treadwell’s at 978-686-1850 or Smolak Farms at 978-682-6332. Or, visit the farm online at www.smolakfarms.com or in person at 315 South Bradford St., North Andover.

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Plum Grove Note About Lyme Disease

As the long winter gives up its icy hold, I move from my period of introspection into wonder, hope and renewed energy for the year ahead. I reach out and embrace the awakening of spring. The trees are beginning to bud, the perennials push their way out of the ground and the birds sing the sun into the morning sky. The last of the snow and ice has melted away and the days grow warmer as the sun approaches the earth. I share this time of joy and renewal with others who emerge with an equally charged zest for life. TICKS!

Yes, my friends, it is tick season again. Most of you are aware of the diseases carried by the deer tick, brown dog tick, American dog tick and wood tick, but for those who are not familiar, these ticks are responsible for Lyme disease, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever (also known as rickettsia), ehrlichiosis, anaplasmosis and babesiosis. All of these diseases can cause joint pain, lethargy, fever, loss of appetite, and depression. Some of them can have more serious affects such as eye disease, spontaneous bleeding, stiff neck and neurological symptoms. The diseases are spread by the ticks which carry the offending bacterium. In order to pass the bacteria along, the tick usually has to be attached for 12-48 hours, so early removal of ticks is essential in prevention of disease. Not all animals or people who test positive for the bacteria will have symptoms, which makes treatment and control of the disease difficult.

My dog, Zuvée seemed to have injured his shoulder. He hobbled about for a couple of days. He did not want to be petted. I really began to worry when he became very "lazy". He did not bark at people as they approached the house. He seemed excessively sleepy. He even gave up playing ball, a sure sign that something was wrong! A trip to the vet confirmed my suspicion that he might have Lyme disease. My horse, Plum stopped enjoying her daily riding routine. She seemed to be "off", but had no outward signs of specific lameness. First her right hind leg seemed sore, then her left front, or was it the right front? She began to lose weight rapidly. When it came time to be groomed for a lesson, she was cranky and did not seem to enjoy the attention. As with the dog giving up his ball, Plum not enjoying the attention from the children, was alarming.



Having yourself and your animals tested each year and again if you suspect there are symptoms of the diseases will allow for early treatment. I am happy to report that Zuvée has finished his antibiotics and is enjoying weekly massages. He greets guests at the door and plays ball every day. Plum received antibiotic treatment daily for 3 months and massages twice a week. She has gained weight and is back to her role "Lesson Horse Extraordinaire". Her pleasant attitude has returned and she looks forward to her riding and grooming sessions. All of our animals receive added support through supplements to keep their joints healthy and homeopathics to ward off the return or occurrence of Lyme disease.

At Plum Grove Therapeutic Massage, we can help you explore ways to keep yourself and your pet healthy and disease free. Aside from the obvious measures of wearing protective clothing, applying repellants and insecticides, the importance of a strong immune system cannot be stressed enough. It is essential for you and your pets to be at your best if you are going to have a natural defense against tick borne diseases. Maintaining a healthy weight, receiving good nutrition and supplements and being protected from disease and parasites through vaccinations and regular de-worming, for pets, are conventional measures to support the immune system and promote health and well-being. Other practices to help support your health and keep stressors to a minimum include massage, proper spinal alignment through chiropractics and VOM (Veterinary Osteopathic Manipulation), herbs, acupuncture and homeopathic remedies. Let us guide you toward the best treatments and support for your system, as well as your pets. Visit plumgrovemassage.com to learn more about staying healthy..

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"SIX INCHES OFF THE GROUND"

Let me introduce myself, My name is Chaucer

Hello! I'm Chaucer, a feline columnist. I recently came across this paper and was interested to see whether they featured a "Pet Page". Smart people; they do but I was disappointed to see no commentary written by pets. I decided to pursue the job and had mom, my agent and manager, set up a meeting.

That afternoon I put my best paw forward. While meowing things over a bowl of water I expounded on what I could deliver, explained my positions on a few issues and expressed my desire to add "real" pet commentary to their "Pet Page".

They liked me and I hope you will too.

Now a bit of history.... I'm a special needs kitty who joined my family in 2001 after living in the next door neighbor's bushes, getting rained on, eating whatever and drinking yucky water. Yeesch!

I had been watching the house for awhile and knew mom had kitties that were safe indoor pets. From the packages of Iams and boxes of litter I knew they were well treated. I had to make a decision here. Did I want to remain on the street or succumb to the rigors of affection? I was giving up a lot—garbage food, buggy

water, freedom to roam the streets at will, getting hit with stones, chased, practically run over by racing cars, crossing paths with not well mannered other felines, and facing down wild animals who now inhabited the neighborhood. When I added it all up I knew it wasn't going to be easy but I wasn't getting any younger either.

I put on my best sad face and hung around for a few weeks. I got fed and watered but not taken in. The weather turned colder and I guess mom thought I wouldn't survive the winter. I wanted to live with her so somehow I'd make it through the cold.

When she first saw me scruffy and unkempt at the beginning of spring she knew I survived just to be with her and opened her door and heart. Oh, we had our differences and I was a rebellious cat-ager but mom hung in there. It took us about five years but we made it. I don't know which of us is happier. Mom loves me and I adore her and we make a feline-ously marvelous writing team from my view of the world "six inches off the ground".

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COUCH: from page 5

benefit but who can afford that? Soon after all the networks are airing their 10PM talkers and their advertising rates have capped themselves who's to say they won't go from 9PM to 10PM. Leno moves up... 9PM is the new 11:30PM and 10PM is the new 12:30AM. The end of television as we know it folks.

Write a letter, make a stink. Let's end this before it gets out of control people! So who wins?

Jay Leno and NBC do, while we, the fans of primetime variety, take it on the chin... pun intended.



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

GEORGETOWN: From Page 14

the U.S. has provided trucks, firefighting equipment, and a building to house them and training for its members for longer than most can recall. In exchange, the Town has paid certain utility bills, and provided Erie with a \$3,000 stipend to offset a portion of Erie's equipment insurance costs.

The payment stoppage caused much angst at the last Selectman's meeting, as Selectman Evan O'Reilly questioned the timing of the payment freeze near the end of the fiscal year. Mr. Delaney explained that when he discovered that the payment was illegal (because there is no filed, signed contract between the Town and Erie 4), he immediately stopped payments. Budgets are tight, and things are getting close scrutiny.

Mr. O'Reilly questioned why this matter wasn't handled before, and more importantly, why Mr. Delaney wrote to the town's attorney that, "I recently became aware of the fact that the Town has been paying the electric bill..."

A terse exchange ensued as Mr. Delaney repeated his requirement to comply with the law: Mr. O'Reilly asking how the town administrator could write that he "recently" became aware of the payment considering that he had previously discussed the payment with the selectman (and had signed off on such payments for years).

Essentially, Mr. O'Reilly's attempted to point out that the use of the word "recently" did not accurately reflect the situation.

After several tense exchanges, outgoing Chair Matt Vincent intervened and requested that the new selectboard, constituting after the May election, enter into a written agreement with Erie, to prevent any problems in the future, and to protect both Erie and the Town.



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

USA SPORTS, From page 25

still in need of a facility that has at least six hoops if we are to have separate divisions for girls. The following are the divisions Middle school, High School, Men/women and father/mentor and sons/daughters. This is an open event and all are welcome to participate. The fee will be \$40 per team. Awards and prizes will be announced.

Winners will receive trophies and will have their names engraved on a larger

trophy as well. Any business or person who would like to sponsor or donate prizes is asked to contact us at the following email usa.sports@comcast.net



ore information or to register you can e mail us at usa.sports@comcast.net or call Mike Seaman at 978-314-5656 There will be a limit of 64 teams of two in each division, first come basis.



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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

Hats Off to the Class of '09: -The graduation ceremonies of the Dracut High class of 2009 will be taking place on

June 5, 2009 at 6:00pm. If outdoors, the graduation will transpire at the Dracut High School football field. If held indoors due to rain, the graduation will transpire at the Englesby Junior High School gymnasium. Rain tickets will be issued for graduates and their families upon picking up their cap and gown.

Dracut Town Meeting: -The town will be adjourning for its spring town meeting. It will take place on Monday, June 1st at 7:30pm. The location will be the Dracut High School auditorium.

Senior Sports Banquet: -A special evening is planned for Dracut High sports athletes. On May 26th, there will be a senior sports banquet sponsored by the Dracut All-Sports Boosters Club. It will be a sit down dinner dedicated to senior student athletes who have been offered 12 varsity letterheads. The banquet will take place at Lenzi's Catering on 810 Merrimack Avenue beginning at 6:00pm. Tickets are available to family and friends of the athletes and are \$30. Make checks payable to Dracut All-Sports Booster Club at the following address:

PO Box 208, Dracut, MA 01826.

Spring Sports Awards: -There will be a special recognition night dedicated to

athletes which excelled in this year's spring sports. The Spring Sports Awards will be issued on Tuesday, June 9th at 7:00pm at the Dracut High School gym.

Pride Night:

-Pride Night takes place Wednesday, June 3rd at the Dracut High auditorium. It's a special night for scholarships and academic excellence awards dedicated to 2009 graduating senior class room standouts. Family and friends of the class of '09 are cordially invited.

Prom Festivities: -The 2009 Prom festivities take place on Thursday, May 21st. The pre-prom starts at 4:30pm at the Dracut High courtyard. The show then continues on the road as the prom begins at 6:00pm at the Boston Copley Marriott on 110 Huntington Avenue. The prom will then extend to the Boston University recreation center at midnight on 100 Ashford St.

DHS Pops: -On Tuesday, May 19th there will be a Dracut High Pops event at the Pelham Inn commencing at 7:00pm. The night will consist of a meal and



performances by the Dracut High show choir, girls select groups and soloists. The Pelham Inn is located on 65 Ledge Road. For ticket information contact Mr. Leon Grande at (978) 957-1500.

Spinners Baseball Tournament:

On May 19th and 20th, the Dracut High baseball team will participate in the annual Lowell Spinners Baseball Tournament. The tournament invites four teams from the Merrimack Valley Conference and begins at 4:00pm. Other towns which will be represented include Lowell and Tewksbury. Which ever team loses twice will be disqualified from participating the following year.

Lelacheur Park Honoring the Middies Super Bowl Run: The Dracut/Lowell Spinners tandem will continue on Wednesday, July 29. The Spinners will be hosting a Dracut community night to honor the town. There will be special tributes to members of the town including an elected official or fan possibly throwing out the first pitch. The night will also celebrate the Dracut Middies

Football 2008 Super Bowl victory. The first 1,500 fans who arrive to Lelacheur Park for the night's game will receive a Middies Football Player Mini-Bobble Head. The game begins at 7:05pm as the Spinners will be hosting the Tri-City Valley Cats. For ticket information, log onto www.lowellspinners.com

Laugh, Laugh: -The Comedy Club presents "Direct from Dave Letterman: Joe Wong" at the Lin Garden on Saturday, May 30th. Joe Wong received rave reviews for his material and set during his recent performance on the "Late Show." The show will also include Andrea Henry. Andrea is one of Comedy Central's funniest moms and was a contestant for Misses Massachusetts. Shaun Bedgood, one of the funnier young Boston comics will also be performing. The show begins at 8:00pm. The Lin Garden will also be providing a buffet prior to the show, at 6:30pm. Ticket prices are \$12 for the show, \$13 for the buffet or \$25 for both. For more information, contact Mark Bedard at (978) 270-2100 or the Lin Garden at (978) 458-8113. The Lin Garden is located on 511 Merrimack Ave. in Dracut.



George Papoulias is a Dracut resident and graduate of Rivier College with a B.A. in Communications. He is a producer at WCAP 980 AM in Lowell, MA for Merrimack Valley Afternoons, Paying Attention with Tommy Duggan, Lowell Devils Hockey, the J-Team with John Molori and Riverhawk Radio with Bob Ellis

Tea Parties — The Beginning of a Revolution ... or the Last Gasp of Liberty?

April 15th, Tax Day, was the kickoff for a nationwide protest of the growing government threat to individual Liberty. Over 300 Tea Parties were held all across the country with a total attendance approaching half a million people.

Boston hosted two Tea Parties, one on the Boston Common attracting nearly 1000 demonstrators and another one at Boston Harbor with an estimated 1500 supporters of Liberty. Another major Tea Party occurred in Worcester with an even larger crowd of about 2500 stalwart souls who took a day off from work to make their voices heard. The Merrimack Valley hosted its own Tea Party in Lowell where 300 Patriots registered their protests.

While the total attendance in Lowell was more modest than Boston or Worcester, the enthusiasm was second to none. As evidenced by the colorful homemade signs, the speeches presented, and the remarks made in private conversations, the Lowell protestors demonstrated a remarkable consistency in their disgust with the emerging socialist nanny state.

While the destructive effect of taxes on individual citizens, families, and the economy as a whole was a common thread that ran through the demonstrations, an equally strong message was the demand that government trampling of our individual liberties must be reversed.

Neither of the two major parties was praised by rally participants. The Democrat Party was abhorred by most because it is seen as the major force behind the growth of government and the systematic destruction of individual Liberty. The Republican Party was also detested for routinely being a willing participant in the carnage. In fact, for many, the anger with the Republican Party goes deeper because its failure to oppose Big Government is seen as a betrayal of trust.

As in 1773, after the original Boston Tea Party, the question that now has to be asked is: What happens next?

Real change can only occur if an informed and aroused citizenry comes together and acts. This mini-revolution may peter out and soon be forgotten. Or, hopefully, those who stood on the sidelines this past April 15th can decide that enough is enough and add their voices to a new movement that embraces Liberty, real justice, private property rights, and free markets.

What can concerned citizens do?

First: Get connected. Start by linking to Americans for Tax Reform at www.ATR.org and Freedom Works at www.freedomworks.org. Sign up, keep in touch with events, and make connections to national and local groups that share your concerns over the growth of government and the decline of individual Freedoms.

Second: Take the time to build your understanding of the principles of Freedom and free markets. The following are both easy reading and informative:

Free to Choose, by Milton and Rose Friedman

Economics in One Lesson, by Henry Hazlitt

The Law, by Frederic Bastiat

Atlas Shrugged, a novel, by Ayn Rand

Third: Get involved. Contact those who head local organizations that interest you. Talk to them about events. Attend, help out, provide your support, and convince others around you to join in.

That is how the Revolution will catch on and how we can save the precious Freedoms we have cherished and enjoyed for over 200 years.

Wouldn't it be a shame if Freedom died on our watch? It could, if we just sit back and do nothing.



Retreat from Reform

Governor Patrick talks eloquently about supporting public education. But he has sometimes put special interests ahead of students, undermining accountability, oversight and the proven success of Massachusetts's education reform.

Up until now, the state's 1993 Education Reform Act has been a national model for reform. With bipartisan support, it tied dramatic increases in school funding to greater school choice and accountability.

By 2007, the average Massachusetts fourth grader was performing at a higher level in math than the average sixth grader in 1996. Indeed, Bay State students had closed the achievement gap with their international counterparts.

This might seem like a sign the state was on the right track. But powerful interests — teacher-union bosses, superintendents and school committee members, supporters of Mr. Patrick — don't want to be held accountable. (Few people do.)

Charles Chieppo and Jamie Gass discussed the new game in their March 8 piece here ("Patrick guts Mass. education reform").

Mr. Patrick scuttled the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability, which had conducted audits of more than 175 school districts and made its findings public. He created in its place a new agency, the Advisory Council on District Accountability and Assistance, replacing an independent five-member board with a 13-member panel made up of the very interests that were supposed to be held accountable: unions, superintendents and school committees. Human nature being what it is, it is hard to imagine such a panel effectively taking their fellow unionists and administrators to task.

Governor Patrick has also failed to support the full flowering of charter

schools, which offer children a desperately needed alternative to standard public schools that seem unable to cut through union and bureaucratic red tape.

One of the saddest changes was Governor Patrick's takeover of the Massachusetts Board of Education, which had been independent since it was founded, in 1837, under the leadership of Horace Mann, the great early champion of public education.

It was this independent board that had shaped education reform after the passage of the 1993 act — implementing such superb changes as high-stakes testing for graduation, teacher testing, a curriculum framework and an approval process for charter schools. The result of these changes — all of which offended powerful interests — was a superior education for students, rich and poor. Massachusetts, unlike Rhode Island, has consistently ranked among the top-performing states in measurements of student achievement.

Now that the board is firmly under the governor's political control, reforms could be at risk..

Massachusetts Secretary of Education Paul Reville argues that Governor Patrick's concern about public education can be seen in his lobbying President Obama and Congress to includes lots of money for public schools in the stimulus bill. But money not more specifically targeted and protected for students may do little good.

The damage wrought by removing independence, choice and accountability will not be immediately apparent. It will only become clear as test scores decline in the yeyears ahead — perhaps after Governor Patrick is long gone.

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Verifying the documentation of employees is a valuable service, not a discriminatory practice

Robert Casimiro

VALLEY PATRIOT CONTRIBUTOR

Trust, but verify. Ronald Reagan made this Russian proverb popular during his negotiations with Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev during the Cold War.

It is also useful to characterize E-Verify, the federal government's voluntary system for employers to verify documentation of prospective employees, to ensure they are U.S. citizens or legal immigrants authorized to work in this country.

It is something that makes so much sense, one would assume everyone would be for it.

Originally known as Basic Pilot, E-Verify got its start in the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996. It was first used in five states, later became available nationwide and has grown in acceptance until it is now used by more than 100,000 businesses across the country and has an accuracy rate of 99.6 percent, according to Rep. Ken Calvert, R-Calif., one of the original backers of Basic Pilot/E-Verify.

A friend here in Maine who has E-Verify for his business tells me it is fast - needing only 10 to 15 seconds to respond - and it allows prospective employees 10 days to straighten out problems they may have with their documentation.

Identifying problems with an employee's documentation is one benefit seen as a drawback by those who are against it.

I had an experience that showed the value of verification when I obtained my Maine driver's license. E-Verify and the Maine Bureau of Motor Vehicles both access the Social Security Administration database, so the example is apt for a discussion of E-Verify.

My name, Social Security number and date of birth did not match what the SSA had on file. After getting over my ire at having to make an extra trip from Bridgton to Portland to resolve it, I ended up with a better appreciation of the security and privacy it accords the user.

If a verification process is used, such as for a license or with E-Verify, the employee knows right away of discrepancies and can straighten them out. Otherwise, the employee may find out years later, which could affect serious issues, such as Social Security payments. The longer it takes to discover a "mismatch," the longer it will take to correct the record.

Knowing about a mismatch right away is a benefit, not a hindrance of E-Verify; many Maine businesses are using it.

Yet because of the federal government's erratic enforcement or just plain indifference to the problems posed by

illegal aliens, many states, counties, municipalities and private businesses have had to pass their own regulations and enforcement rules that include the use of E-Verify.

Arizona and South Carolina have made it mandatory, as has Columbia County in Oregon and, recently, Albertville, Ala., passed an ordinance requiring contractors to use E-Verify.

Rep. Calvert is trying to make E-Verify mandatory with a bill filed in January of this year, H.R. 19, to require employers to conduct employment eligibility verification. There is another bill, H.R. 662, filed by Rep. Gabrielle Giffords of Arizona, which would also extend its usage and authorize additional funding.

But if E-Verify is so great, why is it so opposed by business interests, civic organizations, and legal institutions? Eleven years after its initiation, the proponents of E-Verify are still fighting an uphill battle to gain its acceptance.

The Wall Street Journal, a mouthpiece for the business community, is probably its most vocal detractor - it is content with businesses hiring illegal aliens and sees the issue of verification as detrimental to business.

The House version of the stimulus bill contained a provision making E-Verify mandatory for contractors who receive funding for stimulus projects, but it was stripped out.

Robert Rector of the Heritage Foundation estimates up to 300,000 illegal aliens could be employed because the verification requirement was taken out of the bill.

So, how do our legislators stand on E-Verify?

On Tuesday, the U.S. Senate voted to table renewing E-Verify. Sens. Susan Collins and Olympia Snowe voted against tabling the program. I contacted the offices of Reps. Chellie Pingree and Mike Michaud but had not yet received answers.

Notb only should our legislators support E-Verify to enure that jobs in this tight employment climate go to Mainers, but it should be of extra importance to Sen. Collins because she is the ranking Republican on the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, and verificabtion is a national security issue.

Robert Casimiro of Bridgton is executive director of Mainers for Sensible Immigration Policy (MSIP). E-mail: arcasimiro@msn.com

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Arthur Joncas **Bob Joncas**



Dr. Wilfredo T. Laboy - Superintendent



- Restored NEASC Accreditation to Lawrence High School by 2004
- Opened state-of-the-art, 25-acre campus of six small, thematic high schools
- Acceptance of high school graduates by Harvard, Brown, Dartmouth, MIT, Stanford
- Developed local curriculum aligned to the Massachusetts Curriculum Content Standards
- Developed and implemented a Structured English Immersion program for non-English speaking students
- Increased amount of professional learning and training for teachers to 50 hours a year

VISION FOR EXCELLENCE

- Increased enrollment in Advanced Placement (AP) courses by more than 300%, with student enrollments over 400, and 80 teachers certified to teach an AP course
- Increased the percent of students meeting state graduation requirements from 75% (class of 2003) to 89% (class of 2008).
- New construction of three elementary and middle school sites
- Increased teacher retention rate from 49.7% to more than 90%
- Implemented full-day kindergartens; opened four Early Childhood Centers
- Implemented consistent core curriculum, instructional practices, assessment and professional development system-wide
- Received top rating by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for meeting requirements in Special Education – only district to receive this rating among 14 urban districts
- Increased student attendance at all levels, with average elementary attendance rate outperforming that of state
- Implemented after-school and summer school programs available to students from all schools
- Expanded opportunities for parent participation and leadership through PTA, Project PLAN (Parent Leadership Assistance Network) and EPIC (Every Person Influences Children)
- Developed the Stand and Deliver program to provide students with community and business mentors

