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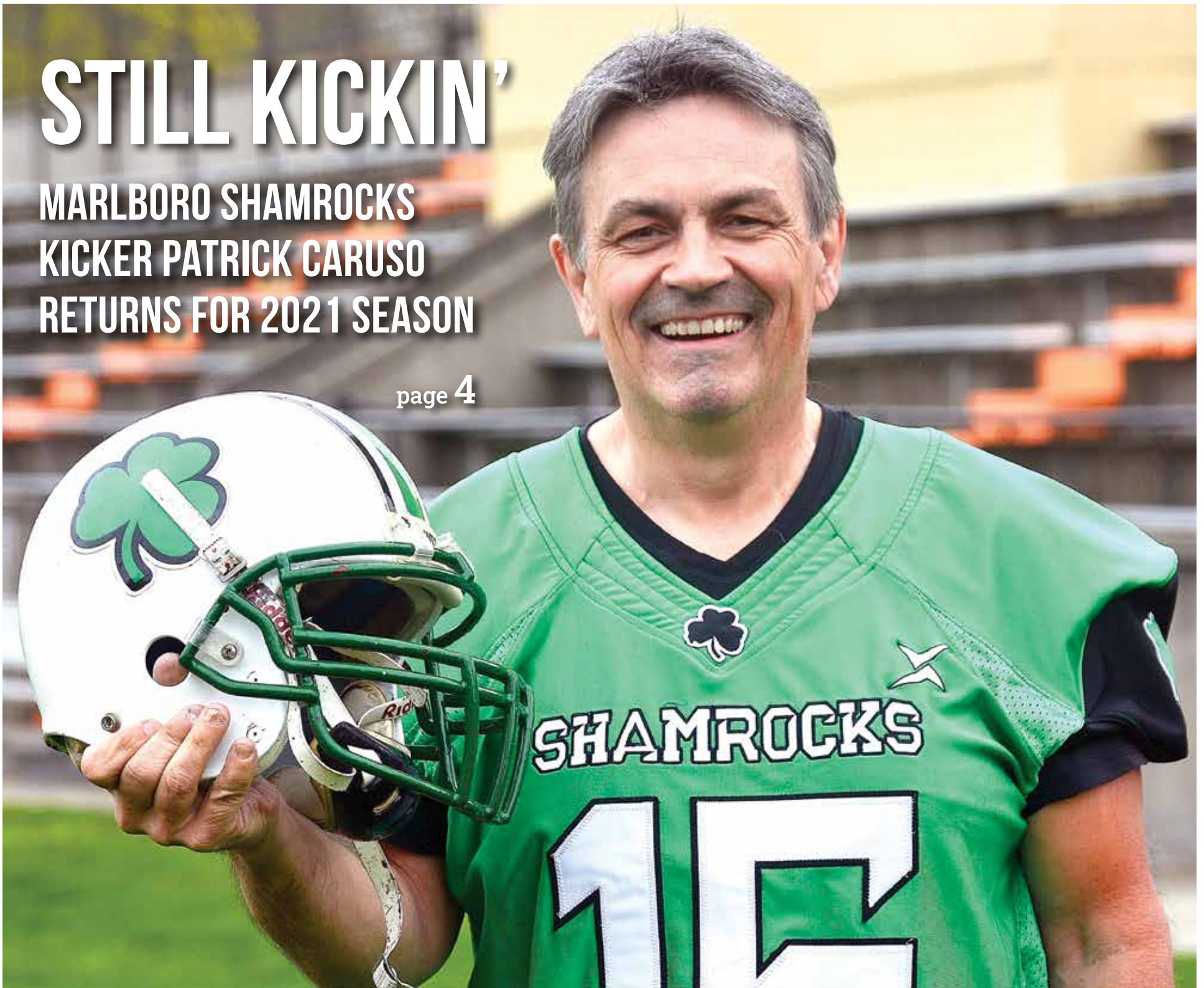
Valerie Stephens
embodies her
longtime
passion

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Patrick Caruso displays his original Marlboro Shamrocks helmet from 1980 at Kelleher Field in Marlborough.

PHOTO/ED KARVOSKI JR.



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Massachusetts

New AARP Analysis Shows Massachusetts COVID-19 Cases and Deaths Declining in Nursing Homes; Chronic Issues Remain

New AARP Analysis Shows Massachusetts COVID-19 Cases and Deaths Declining in Nursing Homes; Chronic Issues Remain

BY MIKE FESTA, STATE DIRECTOR
AARP MASSACHUSETTS

The latest release of AARP's Nursing Home COVID-19 Dashboard shows that both cases and deaths in nursing homes fell in the four weeks ending February 14. Although these rates are improving, new infections and deaths in nursing homes are higher than they were in the summer of 2020. Deaths of nursing home residents are slightly lower than what they were in the previous time period, dropping from a rate of 1.19% to .79% per 100 residents. New infections among residents and staff also declined to less than half of previous levels. Resident cases fell from 6.3 to 2.4 per 100 residents, and new staff cases declined from 6.2 to 2.4 per 100 residents.



Mike Festa

The dashboard also reveals that staffing and shortages of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) remain a problem. In Massachusetts, while the number of facilities reporting a shortage of PPE has declined, .011% did not have a one-week supply in the last month.

One year into the coronavirus pandemic, we continue to see disgracefully high numbers of cases and deaths in Massachusetts nursing homes and long-term care facilities. Decreasing numbers and vaccine rollout give hope, but we should not lose sight of the chronic, ongoing problems in our long-term care system that were exposed by COVID. AARP Massachusetts will continue fighting for reforms that make nursing homes safe and provide options for seniors to stay in their homes.

AARP continues to urge elected officials to act immediately, focusing this year on:

- Enacting or making permanent the components of AARP's five-point plan
 - Prioritizing regular and ongoing testing and adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) for residents and staff, as well as inspectors and any visitors.
 - Improving transparency focused on daily, public reporting of cases and deaths in facilities; communication with families about discharges and transfers; and accountability for state and federal funding that goes to facilities.
 - Ensuring access to in-person visitation following federal and state guidelines for safety and requiring continued access to virtual visitation for all residents.
 - Ensuring quality care for residents through adequate staffing, oversight, and access to in-person formal advocates, called long-term care Ombudsmen.
 - Rejecting immunity for long-term care facilities related to COVID-19.
- Establishing minimum nursing staffing standards
- Ensuring progress is made so that in-person visitation can safely occur and facilitating virtual visitation
- Creating a pathway for single occupancy rooms in nursing homes

The AARP Nursing Home COVID-19 Dashboard analyzes federally reported data in four-week periods going back to June 1, 2020. Using this data, the AARP Public Policy Institute, in collaboration with the Scripps Gerontology Center at Miami University in Ohio, created the dashboard to provide snapshots of the virus' infiltration into nursing homes and impact on nursing home residents and staff, with the goal of identifying specific areas of concern at the national and state levels in a timely manner.

The full Nursing Home COVID-19 Dashboard is available at www.aarp.org/nursinghomedashboard. For more information on how COVID is impacting nursing homes and AARP's advocacy on this issue, visit www.aarp.org/nursinghomes.

“AARP Massachusetts will continue fighting for reforms that make nursing homes safe and provide options for seniors to stay in their homes”

Mike Festa is the State Director for AARP Massachusetts. For more articles visit www.fiftyplusadvocate.com.

Teaching with a passion for safe, quality yoga focused on age and ability of students

BY MARY PRITCHARD
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

CAMBRIDGE - In 1986, Barbara Lyon, feeling like she needed something new and different, attended a yoga class. She recalled that while her teacher was new to teaching and still learning herself, she quickly encouraged Lyon to consider teaching. "She told me she saw something in me. She said, 'you need to teach.' I said, 'No, I love someone leading me. I love being a student. After working all day, I like to come to class and forget work, do yoga, and be led through it.'" She would remain with that yoga teacher for 10 years. "Over time, she taught me to teach," Lyon, owner of Come to Yoga in Cambridge, Massachusetts, said. "In 1995, I began filling in for her, teaching her classes when needed, and a year later, I had my own classes." Two years later, her teacher moved to California. Barbara bought the business with another instructor, who ended up leaving the area to open his own school. "I im-



Barbara Lyon of Come to Yoga works with students in her studio prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

mediately liked teaching and continued to learn about things that caught my attention. I'm adventurous... I love to bring in interesting things," she said. "Right now, I'm studying fascia, which is connective tissue, and how to approach incorporating fascia release into yoga classes to release long-held tight spots. Tight spots can be released with deep tissue massage or through a long-held pose. If we keep at it, a little each week, we can release and bring ease to tight spots, and release pain by adding in very fascia focused gentle stretches. Over time, this promotes more flexibility through being aware of how we work our fascia in yoga poses." Lyon is currently earning certification as a Yoga Wellness Educator.

"There is always something that hooks me. I'm always studying and learning new things I can bring to my students," she said. "I communicate during my classes to bring awareness of what is really happening in our bodies with each pose. Students

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STILL KICKIN' MARLBORO SHAMROCKS KICKER PATRICK CARUSO RETURNS FOR 2021 SEASON

By ED KARVOSKI JR.
CULTURE EDITOR

MARLBOROUGH/CLINTON – While currently working his second stint as a Marlboro Shamrocks kicker, Patrick Caruso wears a helmet that's older than some of his semi-pro football teammates.

A Marlborough native now residing in Clinton, he first joined the team at age 18 in 1980.

"It was my goal in high school to play for the Shamrocks," he noted. "I still wear my original Shamrocks helmet that I got in 1980. I want to give the younger guys a background of how special it is to be a Shamrock."

Preparing for goal

Growing up in Marlborough, Caruso frequented Marlboro Shamrocks games with his father. He also participated in youth sports programs including Punt, Pass and Kick competitions offered by the National Football League.



Patrick Caruso holds the national championship trophy won by Marlboro Shamrocks at Palm Bowl XIV in January 2020 in Florida.

"Sports was my whole life when I was younger," he recalled. "I liked the comradery and competition."

After playing football in middle



Marlboro Shamrocks teammates Patrick Caruso and Chris Kane on the field in the 1980s

school, he continued at Assabet Valley Regional Technical High School with its Aztecs team. By sophomore year, his positions were starting quarterback, punter and kicker.

A highlight as an Aztec occurred as a sophomore.

"I kicked a 38-yard field goal in overtime to win the game," he recounted. "The guys gave me a ride on their shoulders."

His Aztecs' successes culminated as a senior when they earned the Colonial League football title.

Upon graduating in 1980, Caruso achieved his goal. He joined the Marlboro Shamrocks.

First Shamrocks stint

The rookie Shamrock accepted challenges.

"I was an 18-year-old kid, playing with men in their 20s, 30s and 40s," he relayed. "That's a pretty big age difference."

As backup kicker for his first Shamrocks game, Caruso kicked a game-winning field goal.

"I endeared myself to the veteran players on that day," he noted.

In 1986, he got the chance to play with the Shamrocks in Ireland. The original Marlborough-based WSRO-AM broadcast the game to America.

"We were the first American football team to play in Ireland," he explained. "We were treated like rock stars. It wasn't a very competitive situation."

The Shamrocks won with a lopsided score, 36-0.

Caruso became the Shamrocks backup quarterback his second year, then kicker from 1982 to '89 when he decided to leave the team. He played in five Shamrocks' Eastern Football League championships during the 1980s. The Shamrocks folded in 2006.

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Patrick Caruso (second from left) with (l to r) his brother Dan Caruso, sister Beth Ferns, and brother-in-law Larry Ferns at Kelleher Field in Marlborough

Back on the field

In 2007, Caruso began a few-year stint with Framingham-based Metrowest Colonials followed by other semi-pro teams. Meanwhile, he regularly attended Assabet Aztecs football games.

Caruso got inducted into Assabet's Aztec Athletic Hall of Fame in 2018. Among the ceremony's attendees were his children Rachel and Joey along with circa-1980s Shamrocks.

He was nominated by his girlfriend Deb Harper, an Assabet teacher since 1994.

"Deb has always been very supportive," he noted "She's giving up summers for football."

Shamrocks return to Marlborough

In 2019, Shamrocks' original owner Bob Kays joined forces with Worcester-based Mass Fury team owner/coach Chris Chambers. They brought semi-pro football back to Marlborough's Kelleher Field. With the move, the team's name became the Marlboro Shamrocks. Eastern Football League closed, so the Shamrocks competed in New England Football League in 2019.

"Bob opened all the doors for us in Marlborough," Caruso proclaimed. "The guy's energy level – even now – is amazing."

Caruso attended Shamrocks meetings with the intention of helping on the sidelines. However, at age



Patrick Caruso and his girlfriend Deb Harper at Kelleher Field in Marlborough

57 in 2019, he got signed to return as the team's kicker.

The Shamrocks captured 2019's New England Football League championship at Marlborough's Kelleher Field. Subsequently, they won the Palm Bowl XIV national championship game in Florida in

January 2020.

In addition to his 1980 helmet, Caruso now wears his ring from the Shamrocks' most recent national championship.

"Playing in a national game and winning at my age is a blessing," Caruso said. "I'm very lucky."

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can visualize what's going on in their body to help them become a partner in whatever the work is and what is happening in their body." Lyon noted that often a pose using a certain part of the body will be felt, and be helping elsewhere in the body.

Silver Age Yoga

One area of study that has had a significant impact on her instruction is the Silver Age Yoga Program. "I was probably thinking about turning 60 when I found the program that seemed perfect for learning how to modify poses to make yoga safe and accessible for seniors," she said. "I finished that in 2011 and completely incorporated it into my yoga practice and classes. It's been invaluable. It helps me to understand what might be better positions for my students."

Lyon is committed to finding ways to teach people with various abilities. Many of her students have been with her for more than 17 years. She teaches several levels, from beginner to advanced, for men and women. She offers chair yoga as well as gentle yoga for age 55+ and beginners. "Silver Age Yoga is always with me in everything



PHOTOS/COURTESY OF BARBARA LYON



Barbara Lyon of Come to Yoga in her home studio, where she teaches her virtual classes during the COVID-19 pandemic.

I say and everything I see as I observe my aging students. It permeates all of my teaching," she said. "It's a way of learning how to see and respond to what I see, and to help my students be able to be successful in their yoga practice, have more stamina, more balance, better sleep. There are many side gifts — they're not promised — but many people experience side gifts."

Virtual classes and connection

Lyon, who is currently teaching her classes virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic, reflected on what her own yoga practice and teaching others mean to her. "It helps me be complete," she said. "It is restoring to me in so many ways.

During the pandemic, it puts so many people 'into my house' [virtually]; their smiling faces give a human touch, connection, and community. Through the years, some students have become my best friends. It has enriched my life beyond words."

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It's good to be WISE

Assumption University WISE program engages lifelong learners during pandemic and beyond

By JANE KELLER GORDON

WORCESTER – Art history, bird watching, and immunology are three of the many topics explored in classes offered by the Worcester Institute for Senior Education (WISE) at Assumption University. Usually held in-person, this member driven non-profit has adjusted to the COVID pandemic. WISE Director Monica Gow said, “We are now 100% remote including myself and our office manager. Offering virtual classes by Zoom has allowed us to broaden our reach to different parts of the state and beyond – South Shore, North Shore, Western Mass, Florida, Texas, Washington – we even have students from Canada.”

WISE has also been able to recruit instructors from a wider geographic area. “Most of our teachers are retired professors or experts from the private sector... These instructors have to be on their A game because in many cases our students know as much or more about the subject,” said Gow.

Founded in 1993, WISE is considered a premier lifelong learning program. While others now exist, it is the only program of its type in Worcester. Its focus is to, “...(foster) a culture of teamwork, participation, acknowledgment, respect, inclusivity and transparency.”

Gow added, “We are very focused on adding diversity to our program, in classes, members and faculty. I have been meeting with different groups throughout the community. We offer free sessions so people can try out our program, and we offer scholarships.” WISE



WISE members

PHOTO/SUBMITTED BY MONICA GOW

seeks to,”... break barriers of communication among members of different communities and learn about the rich culture of diverse populations.”

Schedule

Sixteen courses are offered in each of WISE’s two spring sessions (A and B) and two fall sessions (A and B). Spring and fall sessions A and B each run for 5 weeks, with 90-minute weekly classes. This year’s summer session runs from June 14 to July 15, and includes 10 courses. A link to the courses can be found at: www.assumptionwise.org/courses.

Teachers follow their own classroom management, but in every case, WISE members help moderate the online sessions. “That means WISE members master all the Zoom features, such as raising hands and managing chats,” Gow explained.

Zoom Coffee Breaks

WISE member volunteers offer Zoom support by request and during a Zoom Coffee Break on Mondays at 9:00am. During that session, members may test their Zoom skills and ask questions.

Free Lectures

The WISE Special Guest Speaker Series – free hour long lectures – are presented two to three times a month, usually at noon on Tuesdays. This gives potential members a taste of WISE classes.

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Seniors help Sudbury Valley Trustees protect and preserve open space

By BRETT PERUZZI
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

REGION - It's been a long year of restrictions imposed by the governor because of the COVID-19 pandemic. One salvation for many people cooped up at home has been getting outside to enjoy nature in local open spaces.

And properties owned and managed by Sudbury Valley Trustees (SVT) are often the destination that many head to in the region west of Boston when they need an outdoors fix. SVT is a Sudbury-based non-profit dedicated to preserving open space in the 36 towns and cities that surround the Sudbury, Assabet, and Concord rivers. The organization cares for more than 5300 acres on 91 reservations and 90 conservation restrictions and maintains more than 65 miles of trails. Since its founding in 1953, it has assisted other organizations and governmental agencies in protecting an additional 3000 acres in the region.

Volunteers are key contributors

Karin Paquin, a 65-year-old Marlborough resident, is the president of SVT's board of directors. She also serves on several of its key committees,



Kimball "Kim" Simpson of Westborough uses a chainsaw to remove a fallen tree blocking a trail at Walkup and Robinson Memorial Reservation



Karin Paquin of Marlborough is president of the Sudbury Valley Trustees board of directors

and occasionally does volunteer work at SVT properties. "What I enjoy most about volunteering at SVT is connecting with folks who have a passion for the outdoors," said Paquin. "And preserving natural open space for wildlife and people."

Paquin has noticed a definite increase in visitors to SVT properties over the past year. "It's really inspiring to see so many young families, groups of teenagers, solo hikers, and seniors enjoying the land," she said. "During this pandemic, being able to meet and connect outdoors has been a remedy for the isolation we've all felt."

Kimball "Kim" Simpson is another avid SVT volunteer. The 77-year-old Westborough resident has been doing trail maintenance work for the organization for 20 years. He centers his efforts at the Walkup and Robinson Memorial Reservation in his town. "I focus on keeping the trails open," Simpson affirmed. "Generally, this involves walking all the trails after storms, clearing the small stuff and then going back with a chainsaw to clear major blowdowns." He noted that he has been an active hiker his entire adult life and started doing trail work in the late 1970s. "I gain considerable satisfaction from knowing that my work is keeping these hiking trails open for all to use," he said.

Collaboration is critical

Despite all its successes, SVT is always pushing forward to get more open space protected and preserved.

One focus is helping landowners find ways to avoid selling family-owned open space for development when faced with high expenses or estate taxes. SVT presents a variety of options to pursue, including funding for conservation from municipalities, grants, or private fundraising campaigns. It also collaborates with other organizations that focus on land protection. These include TerraCorps, part of the national AmericaCorps program, which provides supplemental staffing, the Metrowest Conservation Alliance, the Bay Circuit Alliance and the River Stewardship Council.

"Healthy, abundant natural areas are essential to our individual health, and a healthy society," said Lisa Vernegaard, executive director of SVT. "And to our ability to adapt to and withstand climate change."

Current projects

"We are currently working on about 30 land protection projects spread among 12 of the cities and towns in our region," Vernegaard noted. "In Marlborough, we are assisting state and city officials to protect the 33-acre O'Donnell property that is surrounded by Callahan State Park. To prevent a future owner from prohibiting public access that exists now, we are raising funds to help the state purchase the property. This will guarantee the public always has full access to this beautiful landscape."

For more information about Sudbury Valley Trustees, visit svtweb.org.



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Cambridge director of senior service agency, likes learning from elders

By PEG LOPATA
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

CAMBRIDGE - Liz Aguilo, 55, likes to help others. After she obtained a master's degree from Simmons College School of Social Work in Boston, she started working with seniors. She is now director of Paine Senior Services (PSS) and a geriatric social worker.

"I liked working directly with clients," said Aguilo. "This is why I became a social worker."

Aguilo and Paine Senior Services

She continues to work directly with clients, but as director of PSS also develops policies in collaboration with the board of the agency and is responsible for day-to-day operations, including finance, outreach, fundraising and clinical supervision of the other social workers and students.

The majority of PSS's work is done through home visits with clients, but due to the pandemic, this has been greatly curtailed to keep elders safe. It's not only made it difficult for Aguilo and the agency, it's very hard on the clients they serve.



PHOTO COURTESY OF LIZ AGUILO

Liz Aguilo

Seeing clients through tough times

"Without a doubt," she said, "My clients say that it's hard not seeing people for extended periods of time. Also, our clients find having to rely on technology to get anything done is quite a barrier, which adds to feelings of frustration and helplessness. It's even hard to have to plan so much for even simple things like just going outside."

Aguilo added, "For our clients who live alone and did not necessarily have

a clear support system, they had to quickly devise survival strategies – this is not an exaggeration, especially as the systems and services they depended on needed time to adjust. The consistency of the uncertainty has been exhausting physically and emotionally."

Finding her own way

Though overall she feels blessed in many ways, it's been hard for Aguilo personally, too.

"I really miss being around people, especially friends and family, and I cannot wait until we can hug again," she said.

However, Aguilo is not the type to dwell on what she doesn't have and even more so during these times.

"I've had time to create more balance in my life – to garden, appreciate the beauty in my own neighborhood in South Boston, take walks, and have long talks with friends and family," she explains. "Learning ballet has been my therapy. I've watched a lot of cooking videos and have learned how to cook some delicious dishes."

Learning from our elders

Like elders, perhaps her resilience comes from some hardships in life,

such as the loss of her brother when he was twenty-eight years old and raising her daughter as a single mom. But Aguilo thinks elders may have some advantages over younger people weathering this storm.

"Many elders have already lived through other traumatic events. If we are wise, we can learn lessons of resilience from them," said Aguilo.

We can also learn some practical things from our elders, as Aguilo has discovered.

"Because of my work," she said, "I have learned many lessons about planning for retirement."

Making the most of life

But whatever lies in the future, Aguilo will continue following her guiding philosophy.

"When my brother died, I vowed to be grateful for my life – mess and all. I work hard not to dwell on the negative and to appreciate my blessings. I acknowledge any sadness, worry, anger, fear and remind myself that these feelings will pass. I have made a decision to choose to live my life with the knowledge that this is my one and only chance at this life, and I want to make the most of it."



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REMAX/Advantage 1 : Worcester Realtors Offer Experience, Client Commitment



Diane Casey Luong (left) and Jo-Ann Szymczak

WORCESTER - The housing market, like businesses everywhere, has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

For realtors, that has meant dealing with limited inventory, something which REMAX/Advantage 1 realtors and colleagues, Jo-Ann Szymczak and Diane Casey Luong, acknowledged can be challenging for those needing to sell before buying.

"[It] can add additional stress to someone looking to make a downsize change," they noted.

Other stressors, for both clients and agents alike, have been the implementation of health and safety pro-

ocols to protect potential buyers and other agents at the property for sale, as well as those living within the home.

"Understanding what our clients' comfort level is, planning accordingly with safety gear and protocols, is key to their peace of mind," said Luong.

Experience Matters

Before committing to buy or sell, Szymczak and Luong recommended that potential clients take time to choose an agent who is an experienced realtor.

Real estate, especially when the market is strong, can be a magnet for people looking for a lucrative new career. A substantial financial investment – your home! – could end up in the hands of someone inexperienced.

"Buyers and sellers should... interview and evaluate the agent or agents that they will be working with," advised Szymczak. "It can make all the difference."

Szymczak and Luong have worked together for over ten years. Szymczak, Realtor Emeritus and past president of The Central Massachusetts Association of Realtors, has over forty-five years in real estate. She has a BS in Education, has been a real estate instructor for over thirty years and holds several

designations in the field. Luong, who is a Realtor Affiliate for the Homes for Heroes program, has sixteen years in real estate. She has an MBA, an extensive background in several service industries, and strong, tech savvy skills.

For Seniors Looking to Downsize

Older adults often have a lifetime of possessions which can hinder their ability to downsize. Luong suggested that seniors start the de-cluttering process early, well in advance of listing their property for sale. Not only will an uncluttered home show better; advance-planning will also alleviate the stress of the seller of having to make last-minute decisions on what to purge or keep.

Where next?

Once they have committed to downsizing, older adults may ponder their next move. Should they consider a 55+ community or a smaller residence in a traditional neighborhood?

While a 55+ community can offer the benefits of low maintenance, snow removal and lawn care, Luong cautioned that there can be some negatives, such as restrictions on gardening, as well as limited time for family or visitors under 55 for extended vis-

its. Realtors can offer buyers guidance as to what option is best for their situation.

Homes for Heroes

The current pandemic has renewed the focus on our everyday heroes: health care workers, firemen and EMTs, police officers, military, and teachers, who put their lives on the line daily in service to others. The Homes for Heroes program, which was initially established after 9/11, offers an opportunity to say "thank you" to these selfless individuals.

Luong was proud to have been the #1 Homes for Heroes Realtor affiliate in Massachusetts for 2020. Hero Rewards are offered to eligible buyers and sellers; Luong pays a referral to Homes for Heroes, after which the client receives a reward check from the program. Although Szymczak is not an agent affiliate, she and Luong collaborate and share eligible clients. Visit <https://www.dianesmybroker.com/homes-for-heroes> for more information on the program.

Diane Casey Luong and Jo-Ann Szymczak can be reached at REMAX/Advantage 1, 25 Union Street, 4th Floor, Worcester, by calling Luong at 774-239-2939 or Szymczak at 508-943-7669.



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Worcester, MA Not For Profit Corporation www.colonyretirementhomes.com



Hudson couple shares passion for taking pictures

By SERENA DOMOLKY HOWLETT
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

REGION - “It was the M&M’s that brought us together,” quipped Maureen Mathieson, with obvious pleasure.

The year was 2000. Todd Mathieson was an attorney in Worcester, and Maureen was a chemist working in a pharmaceutical lab in Cambridge. Todd’s high school friend was Maureen’s co-worker. He invited them to a party at his house and lured them to the table with the tempting bowl of M&M’s.

Maureen laughed, “The rest is history.”

Still involved in the local photography community, the Mathiesons are, indeed, well-traveled experts with intertwining stories of love, leadership and art.

Couple bonds at camera club meeting

When the couple met, Maureen was already an avid amateur photographer, serving as the president of the Assabet Valley Camera Club (AVCC).

“Maureen owned a classy single-lens reflex camera,” Todd recalled. “I had only a point-and-shoot camera. But I enjoyed taking pictures and wanted to learn more.”

So, Todd attended the AVCC meeting Maureen presided over.

“On my next trip,” said Todd, “I asked to borrow Maureen’s camera.”

Monarch butterflies introduce love of photography

Long before meeting Todd, at the age of three, Maureen discovered butterflies and, in turn, found her passion for photography.

“My parents bought me a butterfly net,” she recalled, “and helped me set up a space on our screened porch for the tiny butterfly eggs. I found the eggs among the milkweed in our garden.” This awareness of the way a butterfly develops became a lifelong hobby.

“When I was 10,” Maureen said, “My dad let me take pictures with his Polaroid camera. It was a thrill to photograph the butterflies at different stages. It made me want to keep taking pictures.”

Maureen Mathieson passes baton to Todd

One of Maureen’s activities as AVCC club president, back when she met Todd, was to recruit new members.

As she and Todd bonded, Maureen remembered one of her friends saying, “Mo, you don’t have to marry a man just to add a new member.”



Todd and Maureen Mathieson at Hurricane Ridge in Washington State

When Maureen’s term expired in 2004, Todd became AVCC president for the next four years. Maureen was his vice president.

AVCC has continued to thrive and now boasts about fifty members at any one time.

Maureen became a science teacher in Marlborough

As she handed off control of the AVCC, Maureen also decided to leave the pharmaceutical industry and transition to teaching. She became a seventh-grade science teacher in Marlborough.

“It was an opportunity to inspire kids to be curious about the natural world,” she recalled.

Maureen also got involved in community theater, in part, because of her job.

“To be a good teacher,” she said, “it helps to be a good actor.”

Mathieson’s share tips with AVCC members

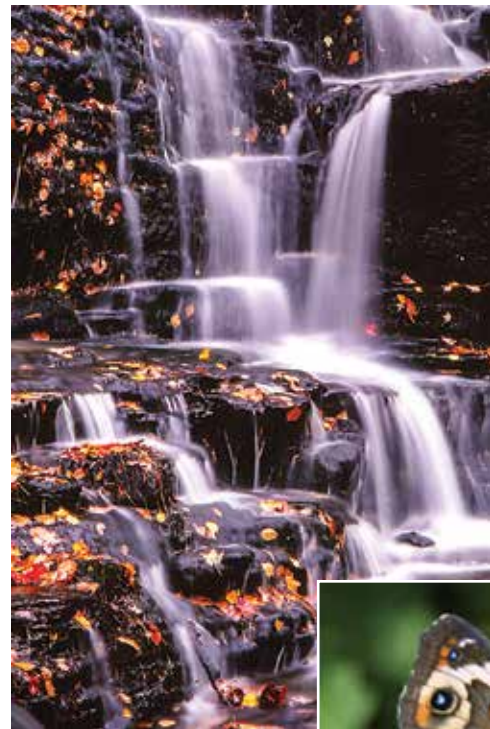
Recently, the Mathiesons have enjoyed entering some of their pictures in camera club contests and have also served as competition judges.

On February 3, 2021, they spoke at a virtual AVCC meeting. “The turnout was excellent,” Maureen reported.

The two explained how to submit images for club competitions and talked about what judges look for in those contexts.

“We emphasized that camera clubs evaluate art with ‘rules’ that don’t apply to fine art,” Maureen said.

The Mathiesons suggested some simple things people can do with design software to create an impact. “We call that the ‘wow! factor,’” Maureen said. “We were happy to have the opportunity to share what we know.”



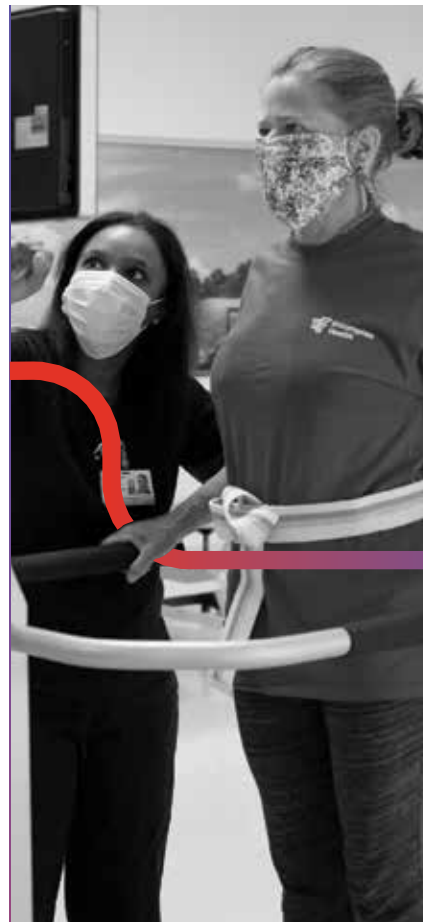
Water cascades over Whitmore Falls in Western Massachusetts

A photo by Maureen Mathieson shows a unique Buckeye butterfly at Epcot within Disney World in Orlando, Florida



PHOTO/MAUREEN MATHIESON

The Assabet Valley Camera Club usually meets at the Hudson Senior Center. During COVID-19, though, meetings are taking place online. For more information visit www.assabet-valleycc.com.



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Bill Schawbel: Man on the run in more ways than one

By PEG LOPATA
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

NEEDHAM - If there's one person who may have the secret to a super long and healthy life, it could be Bill Schawbel, age 80. Schawbel of Needham, MA, lives on an old ten-acre farm by a river. But he's not sitting by the water and watching it flow by. This native of Boston with four grandchildren is always on the run - in more ways than one.

Schawbel's a runner. He runs his own companies, Schawbel Technologies, LLC and the Schawbel Group, and has run an Ironman Triathlon and seven Boston Marathons - his first when he was forty.

"I ran relay races and cross country in high school. I've been running ever since," said Schawbel.

Being an athlete, successful business owner, and corporate executive is just part of who this man is. What really makes him run is helping others, such as creating products that are of value and raising money for nonprofits. That's why he runs marathons.

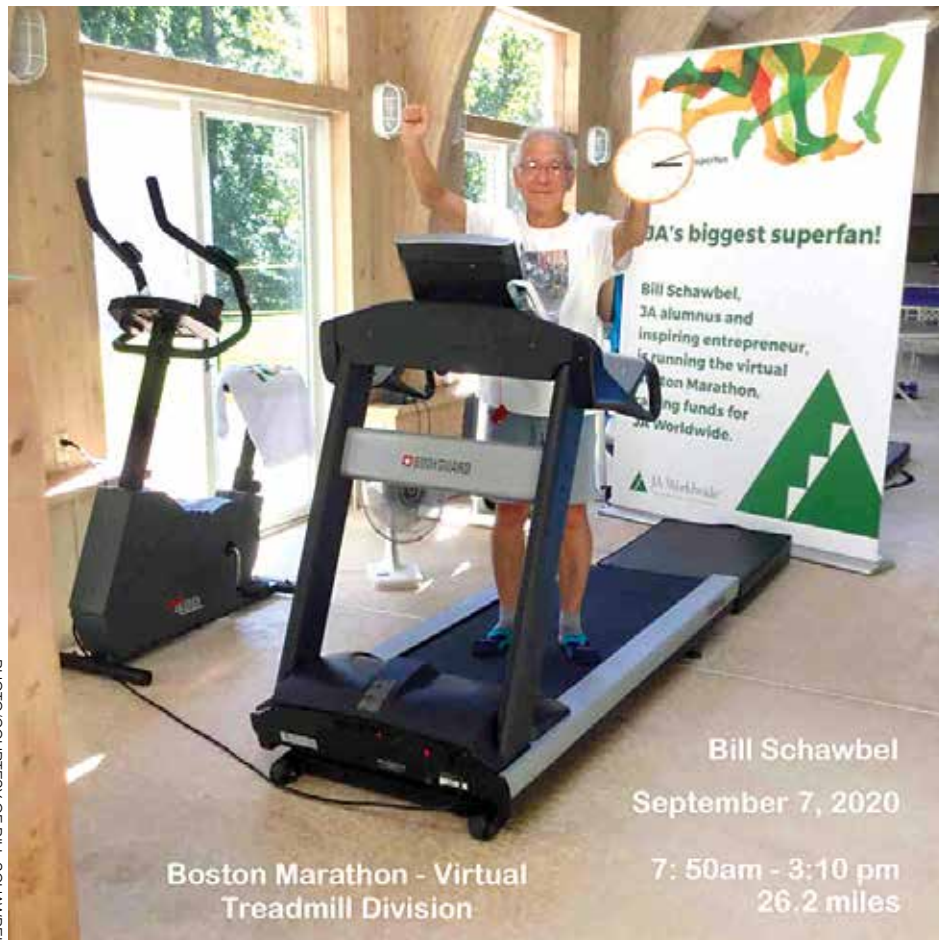
"In the last fifteen years, I have raised in excess of \$100,000 for each marathon," said Schawbel.



Bill Schawbel

When he means to help out, he helps out in a big way. Short races? Minor contributions? Not his thing. He brings large-size tenacity, resilience, and endurance to everything he does.

Whether it's the racecourse, treadmill, or the boardroom, Schawbel brings his optimism, too. His guiding philosophy of life is to be optimistic and to share his success with



PHOTO/COURTESY OF BILL SCHAWBEL

Bill Schawbel completes the Boston Marathon virtually on a treadmill, Sept. 7, 2020, to raise money for Junior Achievement, an organization that supports the development of young entrepreneurs

his family, friends, and nonprofits. He reads motivational and how-to books to always keep improving himself and what he does. His idea of relaxing is running, walking, swimming, climbing, bicycling, playing tennis, and traveling. He admires people with common sense, especially those who begin life poor and become successful later.

Common sense is what has driven his own life. So it's not surprising that he feels his best life decisions have been getting a good education, being in the military, and his line of work. Another decision he's glad he made was choosing to become what he calls an intrapreneur (one who is involved in innovation and startups using corporate money) in a major corporation and then leaving the corporation to become an entrepreneur in his own business forty years ago.

Even the pandemic hasn't slowed down Schawbel. Though the Boston Marathon of 2020 was canceled, he still ran it - on a treadmill, completing the race in seven hours. In doing this, he raised money for Junior Achievement, an organization that supports the development of young entrepreneurs. As he said in the September 12 issue of The Taunton Gazette, "This organization changed my life. You build confidence. You learn teamwork, you learn innovation, but you understand that there's a reason to make a living."

Keeping things moving along in difficult times has not deterred Schawbel. But as he admits, in life, some luck helps everyone. "Luckily, we were already established in remote offices," Schawbel explained. "We've been able to maintain our business and nonprofits with virtual tools."

But Schawbel has an especially strong skill set in surmounting difficulties. After all, there's a lot to contend with running long road races, such as the way your body feels running a marathon. It doesn't sound like fun, even at the finish line. "When you finish, you feel relief, jelly legs, exhaustion," he said. But there is a reward. Schawbel said he feels pride when he completes a marathon not finishing last. However, most importantly, he raises funds for worthy charities. After all, for Schawbel, it's not about the race; it's about helping others.

For the next marathon and his work life, he's keeping that same common sense that's made him successful in so many ways throughout his life. He's looking most forward to just completing the marathon. For his career as a business owner and corporate executive, he is not planning on making any changes there. What does he hope to accomplish in the future?

"I look to retire at age 123 without changing any of what I currently do." If there's anyone around to break any world records for longevity, it seems like Schawbel's the man to do it.

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Shining the light on caretakers

By MARIANNE DELOREY, PH.D.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, COLONY RETIREMENT HOMES

Many brave things were done that night, but none were more brave than those done by men playing minute after minute as the ship settled quietly lower and lower in the sea.

Quote from a *Titanic* passenger about the musicians who played to soothe the crowds boarding the lifeboats.

A few weeks ago, we had a fire in our building. It was confined to one apartment and although we had some damage, it could have been a lot worse. We were all so impressed with Worcester's firefighters, who not only put out the fire but also helped our residents evacuate if they had trouble.

They are, without hesitation, our heroes.

The most touching part of the experience was that they were also our caretakers. The firefighters brought blankets for our residents who had left their apartments in a hurry without a coat. Since the sun was setting, it was growing increasingly cooler when the firefighters showed up and wrapped our residents up while they finished clearing the smoke out.

The city also sent another caretaker – her name was Megan. I can't recall her actual title, but she showed up and said, "I am here for whatever you need." We put her to work sitting with and comforting one resident who was particularly disoriented. I imagine that in other fires, she has helped find people shelter, get in touch with loved ones, and find other resources for people who did not even know



Housing Options

what questions to ask.

All during the event and aftermath, I kept thinking about the famous quote by Fred Rogers. "When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, 'Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.'" She was right. All around us were residents helping each other step over hoses, stay warm in cars, check in on each other, and more. Regardless of their role, staff also rose to the challenge. Some staff grabbed clipboards and started checking people off, making sure everyone was accounted for. Some staff helped the firefighters access locked doors. My youngest staff members all asked, "What do you need? How can I help?" Knowing they could stick around in case we needed them was a powerful comfort to me.

The helper who stuck out the most to me was Cindy, who works in our kitchen. Once we were back inside but still waiting for some units to be cleared of smoke, Cindy went and made a pot of coffee and served people something hot to warm them back up. Mind you, Cindy could have left an hour earlier, but she chose to stay. And like the musicians on the *Titanic*, she chose to provide comfort in the way that was most familiar.

Food workers embody the belief that food is love. They remember their "regulars" and the special items they like. They remember hundreds of details like "cream no sugar" and "hold the mayo" for more customers than I can count. They make us feel cared for and about. They make us feel joy in times of celebration and safe in times of crisis. Maybe the firefighters should bring a Cindy as well as a Megan to each fire. Maybe coffee would have gone well with that last beautiful melody on the *Titanic*.

While I am glad that that episode is behind us, I am grateful for the experience to see our caretakers shine. Seeing people excel at whatever they do best is truly magical, and crises offer us a unique glimpse into the special talents we all have. While I do not wish an emergency on anyone, I do hope that you have your moment to shine, but also that you get to witness the brilliance of those around you. A star cannot see other stars for their own brightness gets in the way. The light of the other stars is best seen when we are in the dark.

Marianne Delorey, Ph.D. is the Executive Director of Colony Retirement Homes. She can be reached at 508-755-0444 or mdelorey@colonyretirement.com and www.colonyretirementhomes.com

It's good to be WISE

Wise | from page 7

Cost

A full-year membership from July 1 to May 31 costs \$265. A half-year membership at \$165, is also available. Members may take as many classes as they would like, join various clubs and attend special events. Full-year members may serve elected office and vote, while half-year members may not. The Summer Session is offered for a fee/class.

The Future

Gow expects that the future of WISE is a hyflex model. She said, "I expect that we will have a demand for a virtual platform as well as in-class learning. Some members will be in the classroom, while others will be Zooming in. We're excited about reaching a broader audience with this approach."

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viewpoint

I become invisible

By JANICE LINDSAY
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

I attend the closing on the sale of my mother's house as executor of her estate. I sit on one side of a long table in the conference room of the buyer's lawyer.



Inklings

I have never met this man. He bustles in. He greets my realtor and my lawyer, who know him. I expect that next he will introduce himself to me.

Nope. So I expect (Plan B) that my realtor or my lawyer – I've been working with both of these women for months – will introduce us.

Nope. My instinct (Plan C) is to stand up, extend my hand across the table, and

say, "Hi. I'm Janice. The seller." But by now this has become an interesting social experiment. I decide to say nothing, to watch and see what happens.

Attorney Stranger grabs papers off the table and leaves to get copies. My realtor and my lawyer converse about realty topics with no attempt to engage me in the conversation or even to acknowledge my existence. I could be a window screen, obscuring their vision of each other slightly but not enough to hamper their chat.

Attorney Stranger returns and tosses papers across the table for me to sign. My lawyer and realtor show me where to sign. I sign. I collect my check. I leave.

My realtor and lawyer know this is a Very Big Day for me. For months, I've worked with them and lots of others to make this sale happen. Yet now I have become invisible. My only importance is that my signing hand couldn't attend without me.

I think of other times when I've been invisible.

I'm greeted warmly on the sidewalk by an acquaintance. As we chat, another acquaintance of hers, apparently more

In this hypothetical an elderly woman, seen around town but of no particular prominence, dies, leaving \$15 million. To her dog. People wonder why they didn't know more about her.

important than I am, walks up. That person is greeted even more warmly. They chat. I am forgotten. I drift away.

Or I'm standing with a few acquaintances when another person joins us. She and I know each other, and she also knows another member of the group. I see her first and greet her. But the other person ranks higher in her social hierarchy. She chats with him, leaves. I say good-bye. She doesn't.

I'm reminded of occasional news items about nearly invisible women. In this hypothetical, though not unrealistic, example, an elderly woman, seen around town but of no particular prominence, dies, leaving \$15 million. To her dog. People wonder why they didn't know more about her.

Not that I have \$15 million. Or a dog. But you know what I'm getting at. Wrapped up in our own concerns, we allow each other to become invisible.

I wonder how often I've allowed someone to feel invisible. I try to remember to introduce acquaintances to each other. I try not to exclude a nearby person I don't know well from a conversation with a friend. I wonder how many times I've failed.

We can drift through each other's lives like ghosts.

For several summers, when I did afternoon errands in our little downtown, I saw an elderly lady doing the same, always alone. She always wore a neatly ironed dress and a prim hat. I once saw her enter a small, older house at the edge of town, apparently her home. We would pass, say hello, drift apart.

We were ghosts to each other, nearly invisible, except that I remember her. Remembering seems better than not remembering, but it doesn't seem like enough.

Contact jlindsay@tidewater.net

SUPER CROSSWORD PUZZLE

"WELL-PRESERVED"
(answers on page 15)

- ACROSS**
- 1 Tribal emblems
 - 7 Sobbing
 - 14 Hunt for food
 - 20 Of a big blood vessel
 - 21 Church part near the altar
 - 22 Mistreating type
 - 23 Start of a riddle
 - 25 Starts a PC session
 - 26 Copies a cat
 - 27 Pop singer Grande, to fans
 - 28 Doctrine in copyright law
 - 29 Buy that can be deleted
 - 31 With 110-Down, decisive trial
 - 34 Hawk's nest
 - 37 Goldman's partner
 - 38 Riddle, part 2
 - 43 Fig and fir
 - 44 Foster
 - 45 Miner's strike
 - 46 Unruffled
 - 48 Plotting group
 - 51 Pastry variety
 - 57 Riddle, part 3
 - 62 Pieces of gig gear
 - 65 Bridle part
 - 66 Of a central point
 - 67 Perform wonderfully
 - 68 Buck mate
 - 69 Apple's apple, e.g.
 - 70 Miss.-to-Minn. dir.
 - 71 Foyer floor protectors
 - 73 Linking word in Leipzig
 - 74 Befogged
 - 76 1960s radical Hoffman
 - 78 Huge hauler
 - 79 February 14 deity
 - 80 Riddle, part 4
 - 84 Weds on the fly
 - 85 University of — Dame
 - 86 Buddy from way back
 - 90 Group in a roundup
 - 93 Griffin who created "Jeopardy!"
 - 96 Debonair
 - 97 End of the riddle
 - 105 Helmsley with hotels
 - 106 Beau —
 - 107 Rebuke to Brutus
 - 108 "Hel-I-pp!"
 - 109 Divided into segments
 - 111 Cry of cheer
 - 113 Part of OTB
 - 116 Provoke answer
 - 117 Riddle's dir.
 - 123 Fishing nets
 - 124 Vacillated
 - 125 Comic Boosler
 - 126 Most eccentric
 - 127 Cabbie's query
 - 128 More packed
 - 1 Shooting marble
 - 2 Cry of delight
 - 3 Stomped on
 - 4 Kin of -ess
 - 5 Japanese soup variety
 - 6 Investment bigwig Charles
 - 7 Hosp. section
 - 8 Bruins' org.
 - 9 "I did it!"
 - 11 More tender
 - 12 Mr. — (old detective game)
 - 13 Foxy
 - 14 FDR's dog
 - 15 Wind section player
 - 16 Little kid
 - 17 "That being the case ..."
 - 18 Hostess in a kimono
 - 19 Borgnine of "Marty"
 - 24 Grouchy Muppet
 - 28 Familial fight
 - 29 Deeds
 - 30 Prune
 - 32 34th prez
 - 33 Priest's assistant
 - 35 Threw the dice
 - 36 Altar avowal
 - 39 Conducts
 - 40 In re
 - 41 "Dam it!"
 - 42 Relinquish
 - 47 The younger Saarinen
 - 49 Grammy winner Tony
 - 50 State frankly
 - 52 Grows older
 - 53 Shoot down
 - 54 Rack up
 - 55 Old-style office scribe
 - 56 Clings (to)
 - 58 "Just Shoot Me!" actor George
 - 59 Mourner of myth
 - 60 Personal identifiers
 - 61 Pin it on
 - 62 Wise truism
 - 63 Roadhouse
 - 64 Basil-based sauce
 - 69 Overdue
 - 70 Boy, in Bolivia
 - 72 DVR pioneer
 - 75 Sci-fi power
 - 77 Family on "Married ... With Children"
 - 78 Jacket part
 - 79 Finish
 - 81 Court king
 - 82 Cookbook writer
 - 83 Snow queen in "Frozen"
 - 87 Openers of many locks
 - 88 Chevy debut of
 - 2004
 - 89 Some watch displays, for short
 - 91 Leg up
 - 92 Pop's Carly — Jepsen
 - 94 Like a prof. emeritus
 - 95 Flashy Chevy, for short
 - 97 Texas city
 - 98 Got close to
 - 99 Doughnut-shaped figure
 - 100 Harmonious
 - 101 Hoists
 - 102 Took pains
 - 103 Physician, often
 - 104 Lay in concealment
 - 110 See 31-Across
 - 112 Roll call reply
 - 114 Proficient
 - 115 — -Grape (Ocean Spray flavor)
 - 117 URL part
 - 118 "Take that!"
 - 119 Sweaty, say
 - 120 Old Tokyo
 - 121 Prop- or hex-ender
 - 122 The, in Vienna

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Mark Skin Radio bridges gap between musicians and listeners

BY SUSAN GONSALVES
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Above all else, Mark Skin Radio seeks to bring artists and listeners closer together through music, according to its founder, Chris Johnson.

Keeping Boston radio alive

In 2012, Johnson started the experimental free-form, online rock and roll station to keep the tradition of Boston radio stations like WBCN and WFNX alive.

After the beloved giants were taken off the airwaves, Johnson followed the path of WBCN Program Director Sam Kopper, who began operating a throw-back digital operation that streamed everything from Bach to Frank Zappa.

“It was a wild and non-commercial oriented music experience done from a mobile recording studio, a restored bus, and I became inspired, bitten by the bug,” Johnson said.

A long-time software engineer, Johnson helped with scheduling, interviewing and artwork for the venture before eventually branching out and setting up his own online collaboration.

One of the early DJs was Mark Schultz, another WBCN fan who did marketing and advertising for Kopper. At first, Schultz pre-recorded a show but switched to live broadcasting, where he’s more in his element.

“The only criteria is that it is good,” Schultz said of his “On the Record” Wednesday night program.

The show features “virtually anything,” the DJ explained. “From 1897, for example, we had Thomas Edison’s first recording.”

Segments like “Flash Back” consist of four songs in a row and a history of the artist, while “Warped News You Can Use” could “air the police blotter from somewhere in Montana,” Schultz said.

Other features are songs written by one notable performer for another and covers of popular tunes.

Answers to Super Crossword (puzzle on page 14)

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Chris Johnson (front right) celebrated the first live event at the Zullo Art Gallery in Medfield with a group of DJs and the band “The Cast Irons” after the show.

Johnson emphasized that listeners can enjoy a variety of styles of music, far beyond mainstream rock and roll. The library has 140,000 songs currently, and is always growing.

Audience grows beyond Boston

Having added a total of 20 DJs from around North America and even in the United Kingdom over the years, their programs highlight an eclectic mix of tastes – blues, jazz, alternative, folk, opera....

What was that?

Mark Skin’s newest DJ is Kirsten Chervinsky, a nurse originally from California who immersed herself in the Boston-area music scene while at Mass General – listening to punk, vocal and Americana and acting as a guest DJ once a year for a college station.

Following her husband’s death, she became a fan of Mark Skin and now has a “Rock Opera” program on Wednesday night. She and Schultz are among the DJs to also fill in on Sunday’s Supper Serenade.

Chervinsky’s mother is a vocal instructor and opera singer who dubbed her daughter’s program as airing “the two screaming art forms.”

The DJ said she learns a lot about arias from both her mother and listeners and is able to provide context and generate questions and interest in the art form.

Now working at Fenway Health, Chervinsky said it is also important to her that the LGBTQ community has its musicians represented.

At the heart of Mark Skin Radio is exposing listeners to new local artists and giving them a forum.

Johnson noted that he is continually impressed by the quality of new musicians out there just needing exposure to get a break in the industry. The station conducts interviews with them and occasionally produces and hosts special music events where they can perform.

DJs working from home and continuing to grow audience during pandemic

The pandemic has not really slowed Mark Skin Radio at all as the DJs work

from home using their own equipment. Johnson noted that a sound studio is not required. All that is needed is the internet, a microphone and a computer connection.

He said that the audience actually grew this past year, attributing the hike to people being home looking for something to do and checking out on-line offerings.

Johnson added that they strive to blur the distinction between listeners, musicians and DJs.

“It’s a community,” agreed Chervinsky. “And I love that we all collaborate and support each other.”

Schultz said that audience members on Facebook can interact with him while he’s on live, and frequently make comments and song requests.

He harkens what Mark Skin Radio is doing now with back in the day when he’d bring a new vinyl record home, put it on the turntable and invite friends over to listen.

“I love that we can share and turn each other on to stuff so that we can all appreciate great artistry together,” Schultz said. “I feel like I’m doing something that counts.”

For more information, visit www.markskinradio.com

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Storyteller and vocalist embodies her passion for history onstage

By ED KARVOSKI JR.
CULTURE EDITOR

BOSTON – Valerie Stephens of Boston has embodied her longtime passion for history on stages continuously for over three decades.

“In order to know where you’re going, you have to know where you came from,” she advised. “We continue to make the same mistakes over and over again because we don’t look back.”

Stephens looks back at growing up in South Boston when she didn’t see herself reflected in children’s literature.

“There were no Black people in any of my books,” she recalled. “I was constantly looking for something that showed me. I started looking at history in middle school. I fell in love with history.”

Life-changing experience sparks stage work

Her interests expanded while majoring in psychology at UMass Amherst.

“UMass changed my life,” she declared. “I got to UMass the first year that they started Black studies and the second year that they started a scholarship program to bring in more people



Valerie Stephens

PHOTO/MICHAEL BRYANT PHOTOGRAPHY

of color.”

In her 1969 freshman year, Stephens took an intro to Black drama class and made her stage debut. Also that year, she attended a concert of singer-songwriter and civil rights activist Nina Simone.

After graduating, Stephens performed theater in Western Massachusetts. Her interests in history and performing merged when she portrayed

abolitionist and political activist Harriet Tubman in a national tour for about nine years with the Underground Railway Theater.

Upon returning to Boston, Stephens attended Nina Simone’s 1986 concert at Symphony Hall.

“I started seeing the effect that Nina Simone had on people,” Stephens recounted. “She was completely authentic and spoke her mind to the powers that be through her art form.”

Educating on music history

Beginning in the late-1990s, Stephens educated youth on blues music via stints at the House of Blues’ original Cambridge location in Harvard Square. Working as director of cultural programming and community partnerships for the International House of Blues Foundation (now known as Music Forward), she created “The Blues Schoolhouse: History of the Blues” with performances in Boston and Los Angeles.

When the U.S. Congress proclaimed 2003 as Year of the Blues, she produced and performed “Sweet & Salty: Dressed to the Nines” at the now-closed Ryles Jazz Club in Cambridge. The tribute featured music of renowned classic blues singers including Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Dinah Washington.

“All the talk during Year of the Blues was about men with no mention of women at all,” Stephens noted. “Women upgraded the blues in this country. Before classic blues singers like Ma Rainey, it was called country blues with men playing instruments at juke joints. Classic blues came after that with almost all women led by Ma Rainey.”

In 2007, Stephens paid tribute to the “High Priestess of Soul” with “The Music & Times of Nina Simone” at multiple Boston venues.

‘Going to the edge’

After concentrating on singing and storytelling at clubs, festivals, libraries and museums for a number of years, Stephens accepted an invitation to return to the theatrical stage. She played the role of Mammy Crow in Company One’s 2011 production of “Neighbors” at Boston Center for the Arts.

“I did the play because they asked me to perform in blackface,” she shared. “I have no problem going to the edge.”

The experience prompted her to produce and perform the solo play “The Mammy Diaries” in 2012. It was workshopped at Roxbury’s Hailey House Bakery Café and then staged at Cambridge’s Multicultural Arts Center.

“In ‘The Mammy Diaries,’ I wanted to explore two questions: What’s the price of assimilation and who determines our aesthetic?” she explained. “We’ve cast these women out in order to assimilate, but has it really worked?”

Continuing to produce relevant projects

Inspired by Simone’s mantra, “an artist’s duty is to reflect the times,” Stephens began producing and performing “Four Women: Nina Simone” in 2015, and “Nina Simone & Hip Hop” in 2018, both at venues in central and eastern Massachusetts.

“Her work is still relevant,” Stephens said of Simone.

Although the pandemic canceled many of Stephens’ gigs, she presented three summertime 2020 performances of “Nina Simone & Hip Hop” at Cambridge’s outdoor Starlight Square.

Pre-pandemic, Stephens performed on stages nearly nonstop.

“I’ve been working for the last 35 years and have never been offstage for longer than three months – and that’s when I had a knee replacement,” she shared. “I’m at my best communicating directly with a live audience.”

Find more information about Valerie Stephens at valerie-stephens.com



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Medford chef goes from TV's Food Network to films and commercials

MEDFORD –

By ED KARVOSKI JR., CULTURE EDITOR

While working as a U.S. Postal Service supervisor, Frankie Imbergamo of Medford wrote a cookbook and appeared on TV's Food Network. Upon retiring after 32 years, he launched another career working in films as a featured background actor. He also appears in lead roles of an independent film, a web series and several TV commercials.

Imbergamo's longtime culinary skills bridged one career to another. He learned how to cook while raised in Boston's North End, aka "Little Italy."

"I didn't need to go to cooking school," he noted. "I was brought up in a culinary atmosphere."

His family belonged to neighborhood social clubs where he observed experienced chefs. Many club members were restaurateurs.

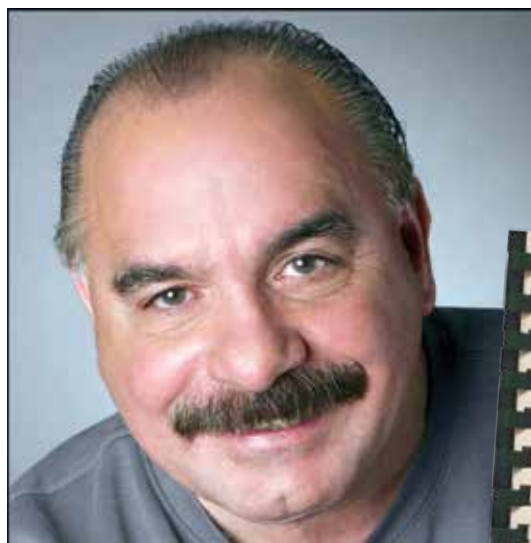
He also learned from family. On weekends, his grandmother stayed at their home and cooked with his mother. He watched them prepare Sunday

dinner's meatballs and "gravy," aka sauce.

"Where I grew up, everybody called it 'gravy,'" he explained. "When you put any meat into a red sauce, it becomes 'gravy.' With no meat, it's marinara sauce."

Sharing recipes

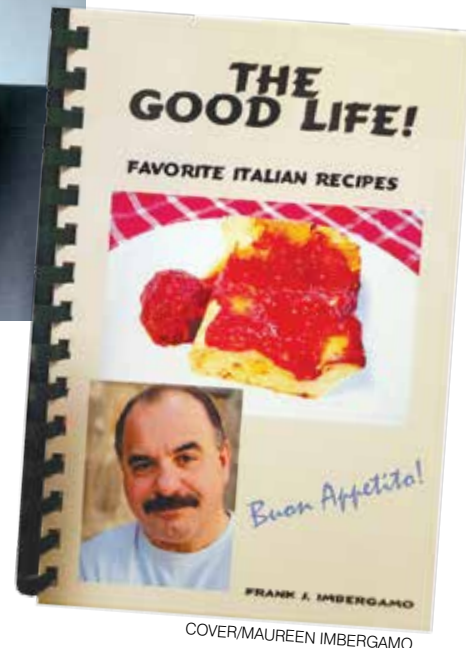
Imbergamo cooked meals for his post office co-workers. When they requested recipes, he gave them handwritten instructions. It motivated him to write a cookbook titled "The Good Life: Favorite Italian Recipes."



PHOTO/INN WAYNE PHOTOGRAPHY

Frankie Imbergamo

"The Good Life: Favorite Italian Recipes" by Frankie Imbergamo



COVER/MAUREEN IMBERGAMO

His favorite chef is Emeril Lagasse. Imbergamo saw Lagasse announce an Italian recipe contest in 2005 when "Emeril Live" aired on the Food Network. Imbergamo submitted his "gravy" and meatballs recipe.

Chosen from 1,500 contestants, he was named one of four winners.

Food Network filmed him shopping at North End's Abruzzese Meat Market and cooking the winning recipe at his Medford home. He and his wife Maureen were flown to New York City for him to appear on "Emeril Live."

Friends and family were thrilled to see Imbergamo on TV. Particularly pleased was his early cooking mentor.

"My mother was very proud," he shared.

Getting gigs

Shortly afterward, he got a call from Angela Perry, owner of Boston Casting. Impressed with his TV appearance, she invited him to audition for a featured background acting job in the comedy mob film "Stiffs."

"I was retiring from the post office, so I auditioned and was cast in my first film," he recounted.

His scenes were filmed at an Everett funeral home with Academy Award nominee Danny Aiello portraying a hearse driver. Playing a mourner, Imbergamo is consoled by Aiello's character.

To date, Imbergamo has worked in about 50 films. He took acting classes and joined the film/TV actors union SAG-AFTRA.

When Imbergamo worked in the film "The Fighter," his workplace was Billerica's Middlesex Jail and House of Correction. Playing a prison guard, he heartily gives thumbs up to Oscar-winner Christian Bale in response to good news from Bale's character's brother portrayed by Mark Wahlberg.

Among Imbergamo's other film credits is "Pink Panther 2." As a banquet guest, he mingles in multiple scenes alongside comedic star Steve Martin as Inspector Clouseau.

In a lead role, Imbergamo plays a wedding photographer in "DJ Stan Da Man." The tag line of this indie film proclaims: "It's dark. It's gritty. It's the wedding business."

Appropriately, he makes pizzas in the comedy web series "Pizzer Makers" on YouTube and Facebook.

"That's right up my alley," Imbergamo said of his character's Italian cooking similarities.

His TV commercials include appearances and voice-overs for several products, including Amtrak, Connecticut Lottery and JetBlue. In a Vicks commercial, the bed-ridden, bathrobe-clad Imbergamo is surrounded by tissues.

Still cooking

Along the way, Imbergamo continues cooking. For about four years, he wrote a newspaper column in the Medford Transcript called "Cooking with Frankie."

He encourages other retirees to consider a second – or third – vocation.

"Work hard and take chances," he advises.

Imbergamo's cookbook is sold at the Boston Gift Shop, 17 North Square in Boston's North End, next to the Paul Revere House. It can also be ordered by sending a check or money order for \$20.00 (includes shipping) to Frankie Imbergamo, 20 Bowen Ave., Suite 1, Medford, Mass. 02155.

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Frankie's Gravy and Meatballs

Gravy (Sauce) Ingredients

- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1 garlic clove, chopped
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 6 ounce can tomato paste (Flotta or Pastene)
- 1 6 ounce can water (use empty tomato paste can)
- 2 28 ounce cans Pastene Kitchen Ready Tomatoes
- 3/4 can water (use empty Kitchen Ready Tomatoes can)

Meatball Ingredients

- 2 pounds ground beef
- 4 eggs
- 1-1/2 cups plain bread crumbs
- 3/4 cup grated Pecorino Romano cheese
- 2 garlic cloves, chopped
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1 tablespoon fresh parsley, chopped

Directions

In a bowl, mix all ingredients for meatballs by hand for about five minutes, until well mixed. Form about 16 meatballs and place on a platter. In a frying pan, add olive oil and when hot, add meatballs and cook on medium heat until browned. Place meatballs on new platter. Do not discard the oil.

Sauté chopped onion and chopped garlic in the oil for approximately two minutes. Add tomato paste and cook on medium heat for three minutes, stirring all the while. Add can of water (tomato paste) and cook and stir for one minute. Take off heat and set aside.

In an eight-quart pan, add tomatoes and cook on medium heat for five minutes. Add 3/4 can of water (Kitchen Ready Tomatoes can), tomato paste mixture from frying pan, and browned meatballs. Mix thoroughly, stirring carefully with a wooden spoon as not to break the meatballs. Add salt, ground pepper, and parsley and cook on medium heat for the first 15 minutes, then cover and cook on low heat for two-and-a-half hours, stirring every 15 minutes to prevent sticking and burning on the bottom of the pan, until done.

Serve over al dente pasta and sprinkle with grated Pecorino Romano cheese, along with crusty Italian bread and a good bottle of red wine.



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