Milford Regional Needs Medical Supply Donations

Milford Regional Medical Center appreciates the support of the community as we work together to meet the growing need of medical supplies in response to the coronavirus outbreak. We have listed below some of the critical items we need:

- Nasopharyngeal swabs
- NIOSH approved N95 masks and face shields
- Surgical procedure masks with elastic ear loops

We encourage everyone to visit MilfordRegional.org to stay up to date on the Medical Center’s response to COVID-19.

Mendon’s Annual Town Meeting Moved to June 1

By Michelle Sanford

Mendon’s Annual Town Meeting has been postponed until Monday, June 1, one month after its originally scheduled date of May 1. The Select Board unanimously voted to move the town meeting date during a March 24 meeting via conference call. The new date comes after the Governor declared a state of emergency for Massachusetts as cases of the coronavirus continue to increase.

On March 25, the Select Board posted the following statement: “Due to the state of emergency declared by the Governor pursuant to Executive Order 59, Declaration of a State of Emergency to Respond to COVID-19, that the date of the Mendon Annual Town Meeting, currently scheduled for May 1, 2020 at 7 p.m., be postponed to June 1, 2020 at 7 p.m. at the Miscoe Hill Middle School.” Obviously this is something we need to do,” said Town Administrator Kim Newman. “Everyone is in the same situation.” Town officials will continue to assess the situation and notify residents if the new date needs to be postponed again.

To date, the Select Board had taken one pass at the draft warrant. However, during the March 24 discussion, the Board agreed it would be best to simplify the warrant with more pressing articles and push others off, such as bylaw language amendments, until the fall special town meeting.

“It would be my opinion that if we could condense that down to just financial articles that are going to get us to the next cycle, then everything else should be pushed to November,” said Select Board member Lawney Tinio. “Let’s keep this as simple as possible.”

According to Town Counsel Cindy Amara, who was on the conference call, articles can be taken off the draft warrant by the sponsoring board or committee or can be passed over on the town meeting floor.

In addition to changing the Annual Town Meeting date, the Board also voted to change the date of the Annual Town Election to Tuesday, June 9, originally scheduled for May 12.

The last day to register to vote in the Annual Town Election is Friday, May 29 by 8 p.m. The last day to register to vote at the Annual Town Meeting is Tuesday, May 12 by 8 p.m. The Town Clerk’s office is closed to the public until further notice; however, residents may register to vote online at sec.state.ma.us/ovv.

Mendon Selectmen and Finance Committee Talk School Override

By Michelle Sanford

Staff Reporter

Mendon Selectmen and Finance Committee held an online meeting on Monday, March 23. In addition to the Board, members of the Finance Committee were in attendance. The main topic of conversation was the Mendon Upton Regional School District’s annual override request.

Finance Committee Chair Paul Flaherty read off some of the Regional School District’s major budget drivers that are resulting in the District’s additional funding request that includes approximately $636,000 in increases for wages including steps and lane changes, a $575,000 increase in health insurance, $111,000 increase in regular transportation, $92,000 in special education transportation, $92,000 in charter school assessments.

“Because of contractual obligations and other matters over which no one has any control, you’re looking at $1.5 million in the whole to start,” said Flaherty.

An additional $350,000 has already been budgeted into the Regional School District’s annual contribution from Upton. However, the school is requesting an additional $1.17 from Upton. “We know what happens when we don’t fund the schools; we’ve seen that, we’ve been there,” said Selectman Maureen Dwinnell. “I know not everyone likes to pay or do overrides, but you do have to consider the education and expenses they have.”

Mendon will likely need to bring an override before voters as well in order to fund their portion of the Mendon Upton Regional School District and Blackstone Valley Tech’s increased budget requests.

Finance Committee member Jonathan Calianos. “This should come as no surprise that an override is being sought; they put this in their five-year plan.”

Blackstone Valley Tech’s budget request was also discussed. “Last year, their budget went down, last year they took a decrease of $82,080,” said Selectman Chair Stephen Matellian. This year, BVT is asking for an additional $114,000 due to mostly wages and transportation increases. Upton’s new budget has already placed an additional $57,000 in their contribution to BVT’s budget and would need to add another $57,000 to fund the vocational school’s request.

Matellian suggested adding all additional $57,000 in the town’s budget instead of adding that figure to the override. However, after some discussion, it was agreed to add BVT’s funding request to the override’s total amount. As a result, the $57,000 figure for Upton would total $1,229,135; $1,171,697 for the Mendon Upton Regional School District and $57,438 for Blackstone Valley Tech. “I think it should go to the voters to determine what they want to pay,” said Selectman Maureen Dwinnell. “It would be my opinion that if we could condense this ballot question.

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Small Businesses Part of the Community

Life is changing fast in the face of the Coronavirus. But small businesses are here to help. They know what is happening in our neighborhoods and our towns. Smaller and more flexible they can respond more quickly to your needs.

Support your local, small businesses. They are ready to help you.

Easter orders can be placed online at www.wrightsdairyfarm.com

PASSOVER SERVICES

Chabad House Jewish Community Center
34 Cedar St., Milford, 508-473-1299
Gotchabad.com, email is info@gotchabad.com, or Facebook
Passover Seders, services and holiday events at Chabad House Jewish Center are open to every Jew regardless of prior knowledge, affiliation or non-affiliation. Visit JewishMA.com or call the Passover Hotline, 508-473-1299, to register and for information.

There are many unknowns due to the outbreak of the coronavirus, please make sure to email or call the Chabad House to find out how any of the scheduled events may have changed.

For those who plan to hold a private family Seder, Chabad can assist with everything needed, including instructions on conducting your own Seder for no charge.

Wednesday, April 8
First night, 90-Minute-get-out-of-Egypt-quick Seder for adults and children, 7 p.m.
Candle Lighting, 7:02 p.m.

Thursday, April 9
Seder, 10 a.m.
Candle Lighting, 8:04 p.m.

Second Night, Traditional No-shortcuts Seder 9:15 p.m.
Friday, April 10
Morning Services, 10 a.m.
Light Candles at 7:04 p.m.
Saturday, April 11
Morning Services, 10 a.m.
Sunday & Monday, April 12 & 13
Urban Air in Bellingham will be open with Special Pesach Pricing, Hours & Jewish Music.

MENDON/UPTON EASTER SERVICES

Bethany Community Church
15 Cape Road, Mendon
Pastor Phil McCutchen
VisitBccMa.org or call 508-478-0482 for information on Easter Services.

Faith Baptist Church
7 Main St., Mendon
Pastor Varnum Shults
Call 508-478-2301 for information on Easter Services.

Immanuel Chapel OPC
38 Hopkinton Rd., Upton
Pastor Mark Marquis
508-529-4468
Broadcasting Live Services at 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.
Visit Immanuel-Chapel.org for Link

Mendon Community Church
4 Harrington St., Mendon
Conservative Reformed - Evangelical
Pastor Harlen Deligiannides
508-473-9030

Sunday, April 12
Resurrection Day Worship Service, 10 a.m.
Visit MendonCommunityChurch.org to join a digital service if an in person Easter Service is not held.

Mendon Mennonite Church
70 Cape Rd., Mendon
Pastor Glenn Auker
Call 508-473-7478 for information on services.

Unitarian Universalist Society of
Upton and Grafton
3 Grafton Common, Upton
Reverend Daniel Gregoire
508-839-2927
Sunday, April 12
“Take Care of Yourself and Each Other” online via Facebook Live, 10 a.m.

St. Gabriel the Archangel Parish
535 Millville Rd., Mendon
Pastor Larry Brault
The following will be live streamed through the Parish Facebook page, 7:30 p.m.: Holy Thursday, April 9, Good Friday, April 10, and Easter Vigil Mass, Saturday, April 11
April 12, Easter Service:
Live streamed through Facebook at 7:30 a.m.
Stations of the Cross are cancelled.

Unitarian Congregation of Mendon and Uxbridge
1 Maple St., Mendon
Rev. Ralph T. Clarke
508-473-8681
Visit UcMU.org for details or call.

United Parish of Upton
1 Church Street
Rev. Lourey Savick
508-529-3192
Live streaming Easter Service at 9:45 a.m. on YouTube.
Visit UnitedParishUpton.org for the link
The Mendon Neighbor Brigade, a chapter of the state-wide Neighborhood Brigade organization, has been hard at work helping families and individuals who may need access to food for a multitude of reasons including job loss due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Neighbor Brigade brings together a network of volunteers that can be mobilized to help residents facing a sudden crisis manage day-to-day tasks such as meal preparation, rides, and basic household chores.

The Mendon Upton chapter has been in effect for the past eight years, and has over 45 volunteers that have done everything from prepare hot meals, do medicine runs, or even driven people to doctor’s appointments prior to this crisis.

Although the volunteering has been narrowed down to just delivering food during this time, never has there been such a need for the community to come together to help their neighbors, said Mendon Brigade officials.

“We have been delivering boxes of food from the Mendon Food Pantry and giving gift cards to local supermarket to families in need,” said Amy Fahey, one of the Mendon Brigade’s co-leaders.

Because they knew that families who are self-quarantining may not be able to get to the grocery store themselves to help fill the food pantries, Fahey and her co-leader Alanna Bodo decided to host a gift card campaign, asking for gift cards to local restaurants and food delivery services.

“In just a few short weeks we received over $2,200 in gift certificates,” said Fahey, noting the donations came from both Mendon and Upton.

“We want everyone who needs help and does not know how to receive it to reach out to us,” said Fahey. “We don’t want people to feel embarrassed. This is such a difficult time for everyone.”

For information on how to volunteer for the Mendon Neighbor Brigade, or to apply for assistance, visit NeighborBrigade.org and type in Mendon or Upton zip code under the Local Chapter Search. Or visit Facebook: MendonNeighborBrigade for more information on donating gift cards.
Jack Thompson, Newest Eagle Scout for Upton Boy Scout Troop 132

Eagle Scout Jack Thompson (center) is shown along with his parents, Linda and David Thompson (left), Scoutmaster Shelley Cook and Mendon Chief of Police David Kurczy (far right). For additional information about the troop, visit Troop132upton.org. Boy Scout Troop 132 photo

Jack Thompson of Mendon, the newest Eagle Scout for Upton Boy Scout Troop 132, was recognized for his achievement at a Court of Honor Ceremony held in February at the St. Gabriel the Archangel Church. The ceremony was led by Troop 132’s Senior Patrol Leader, Sean Hurley, and included family, friends and honored guests.

For his Eagle project, Jack constructed a kennel for Mendon Police Department’s K-9 Officer, Brady. Inspired by learning of Brady’s role in finding a missing person, Jack worked to raise funds, purchase materials, and coordinate the construction work with volunteers that included fellow Scouts, family and friends. Thanks to the hard work and dedication of Jack, the Troop’s 115th Eagle Scout, Brady now has a home that he can call his own.

Meals on Wheels Continuing to Deliver Food

By Michelle Sanford
Staff Reporter

Although closed to the public, local senior centers remain staffed and are working hard to provide what services they can as residents wait out the coronavirus. One of those critical services includes the Tri-Valley Elder Services Meals on Wheels program, which provides meals to elderly homebound residents in multiple communities, including Mendon, Milford, and Upton.

In an interview on March 24, Tri-Valley Elder Services Nutritional Director Kristin McCarthy explained the Meals on Wheels program was deemed an essential service by Governor Baker when he put into place a stay-at-home advisory through April 7. “As long as we possibly can, we plan to deliver meals,” said McCarthy.

Because seniors are more susceptible to the virus, McCarthy says she’s seen an increase in requests for meals as of late. “We’re seeing a pretty dramatic increase. We serve about 750 people each day. I would say in Milford, Mendon, and Upton our volunteers deliver about 175 meals daily and now, that number is increasing,” she said.

Tri-Valley’s meals are prepared by a caterer in Worcester and then delivered to various serving locations where volunteers pick them up and deliver the food to clients in different communities. McCarthy explained many of those volunteers are seniors themselves and therefore some have decided to step back from volunteering until the virus is no longer a threat.

“Some of our volunteers are making the decision to stay at home because they are at a higher risk because of their age or they might have an underlying medical condition,” said McCarthy. “They’re reluctantly stepping away and they’re upset about it, but we understand,” she said.

Adults who are interested in volunteering for Meals on Wheels, should visit TriValleyInc.org for the online application form and information.

Volunteers are also being taught to take extra precautions when delivering meals. Previously, volunteers could pair up with one driving and the other one delivering the meal. “Now, you need to be in a vehicle by yourself unless it’s a husband and wife together volunteering,” McCarthy explained.

Social distancing has another change in the program for volunteers. Instead of bringing meals into homes, they now place meals in a familiar area, such as near the door, knock, and then step away but making certain clients know their meals are waiting. “It’s a whole different way of doing things,” she said.

McCarthy added Meals on Wheels volunteers are also encouraged to use hand sanitizer very frequently, however because hand sanitizer is so difficult to find these days, donations are very welcome at location sites where volunteers pick up meals to deliver.

Anyone willing to donate hand sanitizer or has questions concerning the Meals on Wheels program can call Tri-Valley Elderly Services at 508-949-6640.
The Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) announces changes to reduce customer volumes in physical locations and maintain “social distancing.”

**Appointment-Only Online Reservation System**

An appointment-only reservation system is being implemented for required customer transactions—certain Commercial Driving License (CDL) and some new registrations—at the RMV’s eight open service centers. Appointment reservation times will be available on a rolling basis up to two business days in advance on Mass.Gov/RMV in the myRMV Online Service Center under “Make or Cancel a Reservation.” Customers with an appointment receive a confirmation email that they need to show on arrival. Residential driver’s license and ID credential examinations can be performed online at Mass.Gov/RMV along with more than 40 other transactions that can be conducted online, over the phone, or by mail.

**Commercial Transactions**

The Milford and Wilmington RMV Service Centers will remain open to exclusively perform walk-in commercial transactions for CDLs and permits (CLPs), and CDL road tests continue to be administered.

**60 Day Extensions**

All Class D, Class M and Class DM driver’s licenses, ID cards, Learners’ Permits, and commercial driver’s licenses and permits (CDLs / CLPs) with an expiration date between March 1 and April 30, 2020, have had a 60-day extension applied to their credential, with the exception of customers whose end of stay in the United States is the same as the expiration date on their driver’s license, ID card, or Learner’s Permit. Customers eligible for these extensions expire after March 1 will have a 60-day extension.

**Suspending Issuance of New REAL IDs and Non-Commercial Learner’s Permit Exams and Road Tests**

The RMV has already suspended knowledge/write exams and road tests for non-commercial (Class D and Class M) learner’s permits. In addition, the federal government’s REAL ID Act deadline has been postponed, and is now next year, in October 2021, so the RMV has suspended issuance of new REAL IDs.

For more information RMV services and changes visit: Mass.gov/info-details/rmv-covid-19-information.

**Public Safety Departments Changing Certain Protocols Amid Covid-19 Spread**

By Michelle Sanford
Staff Reporter

Per the Governor’s state of emergency order, communities have closed multiple town departments to the public in an effort to stop the spread of the Covid-19 virus and through social distancing. While Mendon and Upton’s essential public safety departments are continuing to operate, they too are changing up their protocols to protect the public and themselves.

Part of those changes include extra precautions when interacting with the public, such as wearing personal protective gear and keeping their distance when possible.

Mendon Fire Chief Bill Kessler explained he recently went on an ambulance call with a member of his staff. When they arrived, Kessler said he stayed outside.

“Normally, I would have gone in too. Right now, we’re just sending one person in at a time when it’s possible,” he explained.

Upton Fire Chief Mark DiFranzo added that when they receive medical calls, individuals may now get more detailed medical questions to get their case history. “This helps protect patients and our first responders,” he said.

On March 26, Upton reported its first confirmed case of the Covid-19 virus in town. As an added safety measure, both fire and police departments are trying to keep residents from entering their respective stations and instead use other means such as the phone to contact them. “We’re not closed but asking people to come in only for emergencies,” said Mendon Police Chief David Kuczynski.

Upton Police Chief Michael Bradley reiterated the same. “Our lobby is open but we’re encouraging people to call or email if they can. If still, there’s an emergency, yes, we’ll respond,” said Bradley.

Upton Fire Station has a lobby that separates staff from residents. DiFranzo said there have been a few instances where people have come in for permits or those who have no online access looking for information. However, he said for the most part the public has been doing a great job of keeping their distance and calling instead of coming to the station.

Kessler explained Mendon is now taking burning permit requests over the phone and then mailing them out. As far as having enough protective medical supplies, such as gloves, masks, and gowns, both towns are doing okay for now.

“We’re in a pretty good position now, but if we get hit with hundreds of calls, we won’t be able to handle it,” said DiFranzo. “We have enough to handle a small surge but not a surge of 500 or 400 people.”

Bradley said while Upton has confirmed case in town as March 26, “We expect that to change, we expect that number to climb.” According to Kessler and Kurczy, their inventories in Mendon are also fine.

“Hopefully we have enough for a month’s worth right now,” Kurczy said.

Kurczy added he’s also trying to keep disinfecting wipes and hand sanitizers stocked to continuously wipe down equipment and cruisers for officers to use regularly.

Kurczy said his call volume hasn’t changed drastically but Kessler, DiFranzo, and Bradley said they’ve noticed a decrease in calls their receiving due to everyone staying home. Regardless, all say they’ve noticed residents in both towns are adhering to staying home and practicing social distancing.

“Residents are stepping up, they’re being cooperative and understanding with everything going on,” Kessler said.
Mendon were saved from removal this way. Keep an eye out and if you notice a tree that you think could be pruned or defended themselves like in the Lord of the Rings, but they can't. We need to be their voice. If you see a tree that you think could be pruned instead of removed, request a second opinion from an arborist. Two 150-year-old sycamore trees in Mendon were saved from removal this way. Keep the trees on your property trimmed of dead wood and away from wires. If you are an arborist, apply to be the Tree Warden. Trees give us so much, let's speak on their behalf.

Andy Finton, Nature Conservancy Forest Ecologist, says that the healing power of nature is real and critical to human health. Numerous studies show that time spent in nature has therapeutic effects. It improves mental function, lowers stress and boosts the immune system. There is a growing body of knowledge that supports this.

While being outdoors, you may have noticed that many large trees have been cut down along the roadsides. Some trees are healthy and 80-100 years old, but in an inconvenient location, by an electrical line or a poorly-sited new house lot. Tree trimming is essential to reduce power outages, but it seems that there could be more pruning and less removal. We will never be able to recreate these majestic trees in our lifetimes.

A century ago, when our towns were rolling pastures, these legacy trees were left to shade the sheep and the roadsides. They are historic. It’s not noticeable when the trees are removed one by one, but the accumulation of lost trees has left some of the once tree-canopied country roads stark. Trees are no-cost powerful machines that clean and filter our drinking water, cool us in the summer heat, soak up water like a sponge to prevent flooding and slowly release water during times of drought. These giants provide cavities for birds and other wildlife to live in, which smaller trees cannot provide. They absorb carbon and release the oxygen we breathe. We need trees more than they need us.

I wish trees could talk like in the Wizard of Oz or defend themselves like in the Lord of the Rings, but they can’t. We need to be their voice. If you see a ribbon or mark on a tree (orange/red is generally removal; blue, pruning) and are concerned, call your town Tree Warden or National Grid 1-800-322-3223 to inquire. Your Tree Warden can request the NGrid tree removal schedule. If there is a public hearing attend it and if not, request the Tree Warden set one. If you see a tree that you think could be pruned instead of removed, request a second opinion from an arborist. Two 150-year-old sycamore trees in Mendon were saved from removal this way. Keep the trees on your property trimmed of dead wood and away from wires. If you are an arborist, apply to be the Tree Warden. Trees give us so much, let’s speak on their behalf.

And, according to many research studies, we need our trees, and we need them quickly.

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Read the Town Crier Online

To read the April 3, 2020 Upton-Mendon Town Crier online visit, TownCrier.us. Click Online Newspapers in the left-hand column, scroll down to Mendon/Upton Town Crier PDF Archive, and click on UTC 20.04.03.pdf.
Blood Donations Desperately Needed

By Chris Villani
Staff Reporter/Columnist

The blood donation center at Milford Regional Medical Center is open and accepting donations amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic as the Red Cross warned that 86,000 fewer blood donations are threatening the nation’s supply. Officials have said donors are desperately needed.

Milford Regional representative Terri McDonald said blood donations are still taking place at the Blood Donor Center, located at the Imaging Center entrance of the hospital.

“The Red Cross is currently facing a severe blood shortage and urgently needs all blood types,” a message posted on the hospital’s website reads. “Milford Regional supports the ongoing efforts of the Red Cross to ensure patients continue to have access to a safe, adequate blood supply.

Milford Regional is scheduling appointments for blood donation, and appointments can be made by calling 1-800-733-2767, visiting RedCrossBlood.org, using the Red Cross Blood Donor App, or by enabling the Blood Donor Skill on any Alexa Echo device. Anyone who wishes to donate blood will be screened before entering the Medical Center, the hospital said, and Red Cross employees are required to follow thorough, extensive safety protocols.

The guidance from the hospital comes as the Red Cross sounds the alarm about a severe dip in the number of donations caused by coronavirus concerns, which have led to an unprecedented number of blood drives being canceled.”

As the coronavirus pandemic has grown here in the U.S., blood drive cancellations have grown at an alarming rate,” the Red Cross said in a statement. “To date, nearly 2,700 Red Cross blood drives have been canceled across the country due to concerns about congregating at workplaces, college campuses and schools amid the coronavirus outbreak.

The cancellations have resulted in around 86,000 fewer blood donations. In Massachusetts, 115 blood drives have been canceled, resulting in 3,130 fewer blood donations.

The number of cancellations is expected to increase, raising the level of concern among the medical community when it comes to the nation’s supply of blood. I am looking at the refrigerator that contains only one day’s supply of blood for the hospital,” said Dr. Robertson Davenport, director of transfusion medicine at Michigan Medicine in Ann Arbor. “The hospital is full. There are patients who need blood and cannot wait.”

Red Cross Biomedical Services president Chris Hrouda called on the American public to come together and support those in need during the shortage, particularly given the ongoing health crisis.

“The Red Cross said it is implementing new measures to ensure donor safety, including checking the temperature of staff members, providing hand sanitizer, increasing disinfecting of surfaces and equipment and spacing beds, where possible, to follow social distancing practices. Red Cross employees already follow thorough safety protocols to help prevent the spread of any type of infection. There is no data or evidence that this coronavirus can be transmitted by blood transfusion, and there have been no reported cases of transfusion transmission for any respiratory virus including this coronavirus worldwide.

Love your local shops! Support them through this crisis. Phone and online orders, and buying gift cards are some ideas to keep them going.
Upton remains in a local state of emergency with all town buildings closed until at least Tuesday, April 7. All town offices that do not provide essential services will operate remotely. Residents may call the appropriate office with questions during normal business hours. All town boards and committees are authorized to use remote participation to hold meetings during this emergency.

A list of phone numbers and emails are available at UptonMA.gov.

Cleaning routines in town buildings have been increased and emergency paid time off enables employees who are not feeling well to stay home without losing time off.

Emergency paid leave has been increased and emergency paid sick leave is available at UptonMA.gov.

Committees are authorized to use remote meetings to conduct business during normal business hours. All town boards and committees will operate remotely.

Residents may call town offices that do not provide essential services for assistance with heat and SHINE/Health Insurance; emotional support; grocery shopping; and picking up prescriptions. Transportation for medical appointments and grocery shopping is being handled by Upton Center only.

Upton Center is accepting donations for the food pantry, especially peanut butter, crackers, multigrain cereals, canned meats, powdered milk, canned vegetables, tissues, paper towels, toilet paper, pull up briefs, trash bags, hand soap, body wipes, bottled water. Contact the Center and leave a message to arrange a drop off time.

Inspections

Inspections conducted by Code Enforcement are suspended thru April 7. Smoke alarm inspections by the Fire Department have been delayed for 90 days.

Trash

The Board of Health announced that trash bags can be purchased at Honey Farms, Liquor Plus, and Country Club Sooper. Bulk stickers can be purchased either on-line or through the mail.

Payments

Payments to the Treasurer Collector’s office are due on the date listed on the bill. Deposit payments by check in secure black tamper proof pedestal mailbox in the Town Hall parking lot; do not deposit cash.

Upton Bloomer Girl Scholarships

The Upton Bloomer Girls will be awarding several $1,000 scholarships to graduating high school seniors who are Upton residents attending any high school and who are looking to continue onto higher education. Scholarships are also available to children and grandchildren of any current Bloomer Girl members. The Upton Bloomer Girl Scholarship applications are available at the Nipmuc Regional High School and Blackstone Valley Tech guidance departments. The Scholarships are funded by Bloomer Girls fundraising events and donations.

Unitec Parish Church of Upton offered encouragement to all those affected by COVID-19 with messages of hope and support on the church steps. Susanne Farber photo

A Message of Support from Upton

Members of the United Parish Church of Upton offered encouragement to all those affected by COVID-19 with messages of hope and support on the church steps. Susanne Farber photo

United Parish Food Pantry

The United Parish Food Pantry will be open again on Tuesday, April 7 from 9:30 to 11 am. Call the church office at 508-529-3192 if you need assistance before then.

Town of Upton’s Annual Scholarship

The Board of Selectmen is now accepting scholarship applications from Upton high school seniors planning on furthering their education.

The Town of Upton Annual Scholarship Policy the Board of Selectmen established in 2012 outlines the applicability and the implementation procedures. Visit UptonMa.gov for more information and an application. Scholarships will be awarded to deserving students in May.

Completed applications must be returned to the Board of Selectman’s Office by Thursday, April 16 at 12 noon. Applications received after this date will not be considered.

Unitarian Universalist Society of Grafton and Upton Scholarship

The Unitarian Universalist Society of Grafton and Upton has announced the availability of one or more scholarships to help defray the costs of higher education. The scholarship fund was established as a memorial to the enduring presence of the Unitarian Church. Applications are available for one or more Upton students who will be entering an accredited college.

For information contact the Grafton Unitarian Universalist Society office admin@usgu.org at 508-839-2927.
Upton News
Upton Selectmen Contemplating Changing Dates of Town Meeting and Election; No Decision Yet
By Michelle Sanford
Staff Reporter
During a March 24 online meeting, the Board of Selectmen discussed the possibility of moving the dates of Upton’s Annual Town Meeting and the Annual Town Election, but during the discussion the Board opted to put off making the decision that night.
In March, state legislators passed a bill permitting boards of selectmen to postpone or change the dates of local elections and town meetings due to coronavirus concerns and social distancing efforts. The bill also permits residents to mail in ballots during early voting and through absentee voting for town elections.
However, the Upton Board of Selectmen felt it was too early to make the decision and will wait to see how the effects of the virus pan out before making any changes to the current dates. Upton’s Annual Town Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 7 and the Annual Town Election is scheduled for Tuesday, May 19. Both take place at Nipmuc Regional High School.
“Is it a decision we will do a lot of impact,” said Selectman Chair Stephen Matellain.
According to Town Clerk Kelly McElreath, the majority of Massachusetts communities, including Hopkinton and Mendon, have already moved the dates of their May meetings and elections to June.
The Town Clerk added it would be better for the Selectmen to make the decision sooner rather than later to make certain dates are adhered to including posting the town meeting warrant within seven days of the meeting. In addition, the election has to be 20 days in advance of the announcement of the new date.
McElreath also wanted to make sure residents are given enough time to educate themselves on the override that will likely appear on the warrant and then as a ballot question. “The fact that there’s an override on there, I think for the voters, it might be better to give them as much warning as possible,” she said.
As a result of the state of emergency, the Governor has limited public gatherings to no more than 10 people in the same place. That is set to expire on April 7, but could be extended.
The Selectmen agreed it was best to wait until April 7 and then decide whether or not to change the town election and meeting dates.
“We’ll make the decision when we need to make it,” said Selectman Brett Simas.
Deadline Comes and Goes for Nomination Papers in Upton
By Michelle Sanford
Staff Reporter
As of Friday, March 27, there were still several candidates who have yet to return their completed nomination papers in time for the March 31 deadline, and there is still one elected office with no papers taken out.
Currently, Upton’s Town Election is still scheduled to take place on May 19, however, the Board of Selectmen could decide to change that date depending on the path the Covid-19 virus takes.
Regardless, Upton ballot is taking shape. The Board of Selectmen’s seat for three years will likely be the only race that Upton voters will determine. Incumbent Stephen Matellain is again seeking office after completing his first term as a Selectman. He also served on the Finance Committee. Mattellain is being challenged by resident David Loeper for the one year Moderator’s seat, Finance Committee and as a Selectman in Grafton.
Those who have taken out papers but not yet returned them as of March 27 include Philip DeZutter for Mendon Upton Regional School District Committee for three years, Thomas Davidson for Planning Board for five years, Robert Fleming for Board of Commissioners of Trust Funds for two years, Rena Richard for Housing Authority for five years, and Richard Kennedy for Housing Authority for four years.
Those who have returned their papers: David Loeper for Moderator, James Earle for Assessor of Taxes for three years, Edward Philips again seeking office after completing his first term as a Selectman.
Funds for two years, Rena Richard for Housing Authority for five years, and Richard Kennedy for Housing Authority for four years.
No nomination papers have been taken out for the Finance Committee’s three-year seat; Richard McGuire is the incumbent. Currently, the Town Hall is closed to the public. However, residents with questions on their voter registration status are encouraged to call the Town Clerk’s office at 508-529-3565 or KMcElreath@uptonma.gov.
UPTON TOWN LIBRARY
2 Main St., Upton • 508-529-6272 • uptonlibrary.upton.org Tu, Wed, Th 10-8 • Fri, Sat 9-2, Sun & Mon closed
Submitted by Matthew Buchhold, Library Director and Ann Murphy, Children’s Librarian
Librarians
Library Services
Upton Town Library is closed to the public until further notice. Due dates on all items will be extended, so please keep your library items at home, practice social distancing, and follow recommendations from local and state officials. Call 508-529-6272 and leave a message or email mbachtol@cwmars.org with any questions about library services.
Virtual Library
Upton Library is offering virtual library services through our website at uptonlibrary.org
CoVID-19 Information
Get accurate and up-to-date information at Upton.library.org, click the ‘get the facts’ button for links to local, state, and global websites and sources.
Visit the town website, UptonMA.gov for local updates, and search for “smart 911” in the upper right search box to sign up for local emergency alerts.
Educational and Cultural Resources
New resources on library website: The Kids’ Resources and Adult Resources pages have links to classes, museum, video, stories, and digital resources that are free to use!
If you see any great programs that you’d like us to share, email mbachtol@cwmars.org
Children’s programs
Children’s Librarian Mrs. Murphy will be offering virtual storytimes for preschoolers and our middle-school group zoom video-platform events. Events will be announced on our Facebook page, or email lmurphy@cwmars.org for times of events.
Also see our website for printed lyrics to some of Mrs. Murphy’s favorite storytime songs!
Library Accounts
Accessing library digital content requires an active library account and password. Contact us by phone or email if you need help with your card number or password reset, and library staff will get back to you as soon as possible.
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Borrow and download ebooks using your library card and password using Overdrive and the ‘Libby’ app for your tablet or mobile device. Overdrive is a collection of ebooks and eAudio provided by your local library. Visit Upton.library.org for detailed instructions, or if you want to dive right in, search for the ‘Libby’ app
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Electronics Recycling Day

The First Congregational Church of Milford is sponsoring a drive through Electronics Recycling Day, Saturday, May 2, from 8 a.m. to 12 noon at 4 Congress St. Milford. All computer monitors, computers, parts and accessories, fax, copiers, printers, scanners and TVs can be recycled for fees of $5 to $35, cash only. Cell phones are recycled and hard drives erased and shredded for no charge. Nearly all items will be recycled. For more information, contact Martha, 508-904-4471.

Spring has sprung! Time to plan for outdoor living!

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Mendon's Annual Town Election Moved to June; Ballot Set

By Michelle Sanford
Staff Reporter

Mendon's Annual Town Election to Tuesday, June 9, is now scheduled for Tuesday, May 12 by 8 p.m. The Town Clerk's office is closed to the public until further notice, however, residents may register to vote online at sec.state.ma.us/ovr. Anyone with questions on their registration status or mail in ballots should contact the Town Clerk’s office before registration deadlines at 508-473-1085 or email townclerk@mendonma.gov.

Spontaneous Food Drive Helps Stock Mendon Food Pantry

By Michelle Sanford
Staff Reporter

During an uncertain and stressful time for individuals and families, there are many stories of communities coming together to help those in need who may be affected by the coronavirus. One such story was a spur of the moment food drive recently held for Mendon’s food pantry.

The food drive was spearheaded by Janet Dixon, a Mendon resident who works at Clough Elementary School.

“I was out driving with my daughter and we were talking about this crazy time we’re in and I said ‘Wouldn’t it be nice if there was something we could do to help out?’” said Dixon.

It was then that Dixon rang up the Mendon Senior Center and spoke with Director Amy Wilson Kent who told Dixon the food pantry was in need of donations. And that’s when Dixon sprang into action.

With permission from Clough Principal Janice Gallagher, Dixon spread the word to Clough families explaining a food drive would be taking place on Wednesday, March 18 from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. in the school’s parking lot. The Mendon Police Department also shared the event on their social media pages and it was announced on the town’s Facebook page. “It snowballed from there,” said Dixon.

For more than three hours, it was pretty much nonstop drop-offs from generous residents who filled nearly five truckloads with food, cleaning products, and paper goods for the food pantry. "Someone even dropped off five masks that will be donated to someone in the medical field. I was just overwhelmed with people's generosity." In addition to all the donations, Dixon said the event wouldn't have been as successful without all those who came out to help. "We had so many volunteers including parents, Clough staff, and the Boy Scouts offered their expertise too," she said. Volunteers were careful to practice social distancing and wear gloves.

The food drive couldn't have come at a better time explained Wilson Kent. "We currently have 40 to 50 households we supply food to on a monthly basis," she said. “These families and individuals, many of them seniors, needing assistance rely on a little help to make it through. We anticipate there will be more.”

Selectman Mark Reil said the food drive exemplified what living in Mendon is all about.

“The people who organized this food drive are true examples of what Mendon residents care about. I am sure we will continue to hear stories such as this one as we persevere.”

Mendon News

Mendon's Annual Town Election Moved to June; Ballot Set

By Michelle Sanford
Staff Reporter

During a Mendon Select Board meeting held on March 24 via conference call, the Board voted unanimously to move the date of the Annual Town Election to Tuesday, June 9, previously the election was to take place on Tuesday, May 12. The town is also delaying the Annual Town Meeting until Monday, June 1, it was originally scheduled for May 1.

The move to change the town election date comes after a state of emergency was declared in Massachusetts as coronavirus cases in the state continue to climb. State legislators passed a bill permitting communities to postpone or change the dates of local elections that were originally scheduled prior to May 30. The bill also permits residents to mail in ballots during early voting and through absentee voting for town elections.

“There’s no early voting or absentee voting in person right now,” explained Mendon Town Clerk Ellen Agnor, who stated she is going to push for residents to opt for the mail in ballots.

According to Agnor, the new law states that town clerk offices are to mail early voting ballots out as soon as the ballots are ready; the same for absentee vote. Residents may go to the town’s Web site at MendonMA.gov to apply. Mendon residents have until noon on June 8 to apply. All ballots must be returned by close of polls on June 9. Mendon’s Town Election ballot is set. Candidates include David Atkinson, who is challenging incumbent Lawney Tinio for the Select Board’s three-year seat; and Matthew O’Brien who is challenging incumbent Jay Byer for the one-year Moderator’s seat.

The remaining candidates are unchallenged and include Alan Tetreault for the three year Highway Surveyor’s seat; Alan Greenberg for the three year Board of Health’s seat; Dan Byer for the three year seat for Park Commissioner; Allan Kent for the three year seat for Water Commissioner; Sean Nicholson for the three year seat on the Mendon Upton Regional School Committee; Barry Iadarola for the five year seat on the Planning Board; and Ellen Agro and Wayne Phipps for two Library Trustee seats for three years. There are no candidates for the three-year Assessor’s seat or the five-year Housing Authority seat on the ballot.

With the new June 9 election date, other dates have changed as well. Now, the last day to register to vote in the Annual Town Election is, Friday, May 29 by 9 p.m. The last day to register to vote at the Annual Town Meeting, which is now scheduled for June 1, is Tuesday, May 12 by 8 p.m. The Town Clerk’s office is closed to the public until further notice, however, residents may register to vote online at sec.state.ma.us/ovr.

Anyone with questions on their registration status or mail in ballots should contact the Town Clerk’s office before registration deadlines at 508-473-1085 or email townclerk@mendonma.gov.

Members of Boy Scout Troop 1, including Sam Aubit, helped make a spur of the moment food drive for Mendon’s Food Pantry a huge success that helped restock its shelves.

Shelves in the Mendon Food Pantry were soon filled with donated items thanks to a spontaneous food drive organized by resident, Janet Dixon.
COVID-19 Updates for Mendon

Due to COVID-19, all public buildings in Mendon will remain closed to the public until further notice. Town employees will be working during normal business hours. Residents will be able to make contact through phone or email. Visit MendonMA.gov/contacts-directory for a complete listing of phone numbers and emails for town offices.

Meetings of town boards and committees will continue with remote participation. The following updates are current as of March 27:

Town Hall
As Town Hall is closed, residents are urged to use the drop-box by the front entrance for payments, completed census forms, dog licensing and applications. Checks should be used for any payments. Payments may also be mailed or handled online by visiting MendonMA.gov and clicking on the Online Payment link on the menu on the left side of the page. Online payments are accepted for all tax bills, dog licensing and park registrations.

Annual Town Election
In accordance with a state act allowing a change in Annual Town Election and Annual Town Meeting dates due to the COVID-19 emergency response, the Select Board voted to postpone the Mendon Annual Town Election from May 12 to June 9 and the Annual Town Meeting from May 1 at 7 p.m. to June 1 at 7 p.m. Both the election and town meeting are held at Muscoie High School, North Ave. See page ---- for articles on these topics.

Building Department
While the Building Department/Permitting Offices are closed to the public, payments and paperwork may be left in the drop-box outside the office. The office is located in the former Taft Public Library Building. Online permitting is now available at MendonMA.gov/viewpoint.

Trash Service
The Board of Health has announced that as of March 16 normal trash services will be provided. Residents are asked to maintain social distancing with the trash truck drivers and to be follow town guidelines in packaging and placing their trash on the curb so the collection can proceed efficiently. Trash stickers can be obtained by mail. Send a self-addressed, stamped envelope along with a check in the amount for the number of stickers ordered to the Board of Health, Office, 18 Main St., Mendon 01756. Stickers are $2 each. All Massachusetts Simple Recycling collection operations, including those in Mendon, which utilizes the plain bags are suspended until further notice. Also closed until further notice is the Recycling Center at the Mendon Highway Barn.

Alerts
Residents are reminded to visit MendonMA.gov for the latest COVID-19 updates. To sign-up for email updates, go to the Town website and click on the Subscribe to News link on the menu on the left side of the page. Phone alerts are available by the Mendon Police Department's CodeRED community notification system to send important alerts and time-sensitive messages. Along with emergency and critical messages, the CodeRED also provides release non-emergency information such as road closures and trash collection schedule changes, snow plow schedules and other services. Registration information is available at MendonMA.gov.

New Bylaw Discussed After Board Approves Circus for July

By Michelle Sanford
Staff Reporter

During a March 24 meeting, the Mendon Select Board approved a request from the Lion's Club to hold its annual circus and authorize parking for the event. The meeting took place via conference call due to the closure of the Town Hall and social distancing efforts remaining from the coronavirus.

After approving the request, several residents chimed in their concerns that the traveling circus would not adhere to the town's new bylaw passed at the November 2019 Special Town Meeting. The general bylaw now prohibits the display of certain wild or exotic animals in traveling animal acts for public entertainment or amusement. Some of those animals banned would include giraffes, camels, elephants, monkeys, lions, tigers, alligators, and crocodiles. Mendon resident Carole Carnovale spearheaded the passage of the bylaw in an effort to stop what she and other supporters felt was animal cruelty as a result of the animals being subjected to long and exhaustive transports, in some cases beaten to perform, chained for long periods of time, and can be a danger to the public, and can cause disease. The bylaw passed by a lopsided vote of 79 to 36. Carnovale was on the March 24 conference call and asked the Select Board if the Zerbini Family Circus was aware of the new bylaw passed. Select Board member Lawney Tinio stated representatives from the circus had been made aware of the new bylaw change. "They called to get the list of animals to see what is not permitted," said Tinio.

Resident Lisa Hilton questioned if anyone will be in attendance at the circus to make sure the bylaw is enforced to which Board member Mark Reil said the Select Board, Lion's Club, and police enforce the bylaw. Carnovale also asked if it was possible to communicate with members of the Lion's Club to make certain everyone was on the same page concerning the bylaw. "I did speak to (Lion's Club member) Dick Ferrucci at length," said Tinio. "They've been given a copy of the bylaw; they planned for this. They do know what is allowed and what is not.

Lions Club Toll Road
The Select Board also approved a request for the Lion's Club to hold a Toll Road at the intersection of Rt. 16 and North Ave. on Saturday, May 9 from 8:30 a.m. to noon. Reil stated he'd heard from a resident urging the Board not approve the event due to coronavirus concerns. However, Reil stated the event should still move forward and can be reassessed at a later date if need be.

Closings Will Affect Nonessential, Part-Timers Town Workers’ Pay

By Michelle Sanford
Staff Reporter

Because municipal buildings, including the Taft Public Library, Senior Center, and Town Hall are closed to the public, the Mendon Select Board made the decision that nonessential, part time employees who are not working will not be paid. The decision was made during a March 24 meeting held via conference call. The decision comes as town officials continue to prepare for the financial difficulties the community could face amid a possible recession as well as continued talks of a school overhaul. The topic of part time pay had been discussed at a previous meeting but was brought up again during the March 24 meeting.

"We just want to express how difficult the situation is right now. I'm approving part time work on an on-call basis working with the department heads," said Town Administrator Kim Newman. "However, there can't be any expectations that part time work will continue in this fiscal environment.

Parks Director Dan Byer said he agreed with Newman that the town is facing a difficult financial future but asked the Board, "For the immediate one to two weeks, I feel like we should at least give our part timers some sort of notice that this coming down the road and we'll take care of you this week. A lot of businesses are doing this. I feel like we should have given people more time than, 'you're done and we can't pay you any further.' A letter from the Taft Public Library Trustees was sent to the Select Board stating the Trustees, acting on the recommendation of the Massachusetts Library Association and the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners, urged the Select Board to continue to pay all members of the Taft Public Library their regular wages for the duration of the library's closure as a result of the coronavirus.

Library Director Andrew Jenrich said he has been asking other area libraries what they've been doing concerning pay. "It seems to me if they are paying part time staff—they are paying them for a one to two-week period and then reassessing," Jenrich said he does have some projects his staff could work on from home.

"I get the situation is in flux and we're not sure where this is going and those employees that are part time may have difficulty finding jobs to do at home and there's a push to pay them anyway," said Select Board member Mark Reil. "I really feel strongly if we're going to have people working from home, they have to be working. I have a hard time using taxpayer funds to not have something productive going on and pay wages to someone... Our revenue stream is going to be smaller than anticipated through the remainder of this budget year." Tinio agreed. "If there's no work, you should not be paid. This is no different no matter where you work." When Select Board Chair Chris Burke inquired about nonessential, part time employees being given special work projects at home, Newman explained those are mostly employees who work less than 12 hours a week whose jobs are primarily customer service based. She said, "Finding additional work for them to do at home when they're deemed nonessential anyway seems like a lot of work when we need to be prioritizing other things." "This is affecting everybody," said Burke. "We have a responsibility to manage the town and protect our citizens going forward; financially protecting them and the well-being of our community.

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APRIL 3, 2020

Upton, Mendon Town Crier

**Contact our Customer Care Team to request authorization**
Mendon News

Memorial Flag Program

The Mendon Brothers of the Bruch Association offer an opportunity to honor a friend or loved one who has served, or is serving, in U.S. armed forces by participating in the Memorial Flag Program. Any interested Mendon resident should complete the Flag Purchase Form and mail it in, along with the $200 fee, to P.O. Box 551, Mendon, MA 01756. Forms are available at MendonBrothersoftheBruch.org. Senior Center, or Town Hall. All forms must be received by April 3 and participation will be on a first come, first serve basis. Questions may be sent to mendonbruch@gmail.com or call Flag Committee chairman Rich Schofield. 508-958-2938.

HELP WANTED

Town Crier Reporter Needed

The Town Crier is looking for:
• a part-time, freelance reporter
• to cover education in Mendon, Milford and Upton, Massachusetts.

Required:
• Strong writing and research skills,
• computer access (including Internet)
• ability to file stories by weekly deadline
• ability to take and send photos from an event

Familiarity with the communities of Mendon, Milford and Upton preferred.

Submit writing samples and resume to Jane Bigda, Town Crier Editor, via email: TownCrierEditor@gmail.com.

Some Companies Are Hiring

While many businesses have had to lay off workers due to the novel coronavirus, a few are hiring.

Domino's Pizza has posted an announcement that it is seeking 500 new team members. The positions include delivery drivers, customer service representatives, assistant managers and managers. Anyone interested should visit Jobs.Dominos.com.

Amazon is looking about 100,000 warehouse and delivery workers while Walmart needs about 150,000 in the next month or so to staff stores, clubs, warehouses and fulfillment centers. Visit AmazonDelivers.com for jobs with that company while Walmart information is available at Careers.walmart.com.

With increased remote working and learning, technology companies like ZOOM and Slack are adding more help. Visit their online sites for more information.

Some supermarkets are also looking for additional employees. Visit the corporate websites of local markets to see if they are hiring. Drugstore chain CVS, based out of Woonsocket, is adding employees and paying current workers bonuses.

Many of the positions that are now being advertised as a result of COVID-19 will be temporary but a few could turn into more full-time positions depending on how the economy works following the end of coronavirus restrictions.

Mendon Lions Club Scholarship Application Extended

The Mendon Lions Club is extending the date for applications related to their scholarship program. Mailed applications will now be accepted up to June 1. Applications can be mailed to Mendon Lions, P. O. Box 218, Mendon, 01756. The scholarship packages include paperwork that is completed by Student Offices and Guidance Departments. This may present a problem for some because of the uncertainty when schools will reopen. As a result, applications will be accepted with or without this information being completed. The Mendon Lions wishes all the best to senior students this year knowing it's a difficult time for students and their families.

4-3-2020

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Upton, Mendon Town Crier

2020
School Committee Reviews Changes Resulting from Pandemic

By Melissa Orff
Staff Reporter/Columnist

The Mendon Upton Regional School Committee met virtually on March 25 as they held their first virtual meeting.

Due to the COVID-19 crisis resulting in schools closing across the country, and with state officials encouraging people to practice social distancing, the School Committee Meetings will be held online for the foreseeable future.

Topics of this week's meeting surrounded the coronavirus, and the educational considerations for students who will now be out of school until at least Monday, May 4 per a mandate from Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker.

"Every family is in a different situation," said Superintendent of Schools Dr. Joseph Maruszczak during the meeting on the online platform Zoom. "I am sure there is plenty of anxiety in all of our kids' homes right now."

Maruszczak informed the Committee that the focus for the first two weeks while the school buildings were closed was on connecting with kids and reinforcing of previously learned skills. Now that the school buildings will be closed for at least another month, the administration and teachers are finalizing how to deliver instruction and services to students during this time. In order to do that, the district first needed to ensure that students without computers or internet in their homes were given materials so they could connect with their teachers.

"We delivered 30 devices and mobile hot spots for families without high speed internet in their homes," said Maruszczak. "This might be the new normal, at least for the 2019/2020 school year. We have to be prepared."

Maruszczak said that they are working on a plan to provide students with "a blending of real-time and asynchronous learning."

"Teachers can support students through Zoom and connect with them through other apps," she said. "We want the work to be reasonable, not overwhelming, and also take into account the set of circumstances and the flexibility we need to have for our students, families, and our teaching staff."

Budget Considerations FY20 and FY21

Maruszczak also spoke to the School Committee on how the COVID-19 crisis is affecting the current school year's budget.

"Any contract that is still ongoing as of March 9 at $38,961,161; a budget that is a 6.99 percent, or $2,546,229, increase over this current year."

"The best thing we can hope for in a few weeks is a greater sense of all of the financial impact," he said.

Additional Items

Maruszczak took questions from some of the 72 people who had logged into the live meeting, answering questions about MCAS and AP testing, the support given to special needs students, and what activities they can expect will be cancelled for seniors and 8th graders moving on to new schools.

Answers to frequently asked questions can be found on the district's website mund.org/mursdextension.

The next virtual meeting will be held on April 6, where discussions will continue on online learning, budgets, and an update will be given on the Principals' Book for Memorial Elementary School for next school year.
By Melissa Orff
Staff Reporter/Columnist

Administrators, teachers, and students are now forced to rethink teaching and learning on a broader scale after the Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker announced that school buildings will be closed until at least early May.

During the prior closing through April 7, schools were scrambling to provide enrichment and reinforcement activities for students, which the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), considered "optional," they could not be considered for a grade due to equity issues of students who did not have the means or the support at home to complete activities.

That guidance has changed after the school closing date was extended to May. School officials are to shift to an online distance learning program that will count towards promotion and graduation. "Although the method and approach is undefined, the guidance from DESE includes that the student experience should be approximately half of the normal school day, or in our case, three hours a day total (homework, projects, and interaction with teachers combined)," said Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School Assistant Superintendent/Director/ Principal Anthony E. Steele in a March 28 letter addressed to staff and families.

Steele added school districts are urged to work with staff to develop a distance learning model that could be operational for the first weeks of April. The Mendon Upton Regional School District is also adapting to the delivering instruction strictly through online means. In a March 29 letter to parents, Superintendent of Schools Dr. Joseph Maruszczak said they are developing a remote learning plan for all district students.

"As you may imagine, there are several complex issues to resolve, including taking into account a range of home circumstances, delivery of services to students with disabilities, the provision of assessments and grading in a remote educational learning system, etc.," he wrote. "I am confident that we will develop a plan that will effectively meet the academic and social emotional needs of our students."

This is not the first time that the students of Mendon Upton participated in online learning, though it will certainly be the longest. For the past several years, the district has been an "ALS" (Alternative Structured Learning) district. On snow days, when schools were forced to close due to weather, the Superintendent had the option of calling an ALS day with students completing assignments online at home.

"The day would then not have to be added on to the end of the year."

But these next few weeks are no snow day. Maruszczak, who codesigned reports on students in the visiting each other's homes.

"I would like to reiterate the simple notion of everyone staying home," he stated. "As we have not yet seen the apex of this crisis, and I am concerned about the potential effects in our community."

Maruszczak continued, "We are small but we are strong, please do your part in your community to flatten the curve" to ensure the health and well-being of everyone.

A Senior Year Like Any Other

By Melissa Orff
Staff Reporter/Columnist

The COVID-19 pandemic is disrupting the lives of people across the globe, with millions of people self-isolating, businesses closing their doors, and families not knowing when life will return to normal again.

But another group that is feeling the effect of this unprecedented event are high school seniors, whose final year of their secondary education career may be over without the traditional pomp and circumstance.

Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker announced last week that the school buildings will be closed through the end of April at a minimum. With other states already closing school through the end of the school year, students in the Mendon Upton Regional School District could be looking at the possibility that they have already had their last day of school for the 2019/2020 school year.

"Prior to their crisis, Nipmuc Regional High School's senior class would have been cruising through their last few months of school, getting ready for prom, taking the field for their final spring sports season, flying to international destinations for April vacation, rehearsing for spring concerts, and turning to each other for support, as seniors especially rights of passage for the past four years," said Laurence, who is also a member of the Class of 2020.

Laurence said that mental health professionals agree that seniors especially will feel the loss of this school year acutely.

"We need to give them the space to mourn," she said.

Seniors have been trying to stay positive and turning to each other for support, said the class officers, keeping lines of communication open and trying to keep each other's spirits up during this difficult time.

"There is no manual for this," said Class of 2020 Treasurer Mikki Pisani. "We are all just trying to figure this out together."

Dean's List

The following local students have been named to the Dean's List at their respective schools for the fall 2019 semester.

Saint Anselm College

"I was looking forward to spending time with my classmates," said Class of 2020 Vice President Taylor Johnson about what seniors most look forward to in the last half of the school year. "To spend those last few moments together."

Certified School Psychologist Kelly Laurence, who is also a member of the Mendon Upton Regional School Committee, said that seniors stuck inside during this quarantine are not just sulking, but are actually grieving a loss.

"They will go through the traditional stages of grief," said Laurence. "They will be angry, sad, in shock…"

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Massachusetts US Veterans Motorcycle Club Scholarships

The Massachusetts Chapter of the US Veterans Motorcycle Club annually awards at least one $500 scholarship to a local high school student who will be continuing their education and who are related to veterans. Each year we have been awarding Scholarships to students in local schools that are related to veterans. The number of scholarships awarded and the dollar amount are based on funds at hand. Last year five, $500 scholarships were awarded. A candidate must be a relative of a member of the US Veterans Motorcycle Club. Applications are available at the guidance departments at Uxbridge, Valley Tech and Nipmuc Regional High Schools.

MURSD Shredding Health Records

Mendon Upton Regional School District will be shredding unclaimed school health records dated prior to 2013. Please contact the school nurse at the last school you attended to see if you have a record on file. These records will be shredded after May 15, 2020.

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The Blackstone Valley Vocational Regional School District is well-prepared with cleaning and medical supplies. With school closed, the District wants to ensure that these essential items are available to the medical staff and healthcare providers at Milford Regional Medical Center in Milford, who are on the front line caring for those in the Blackstone Valley. “Given the current need for certain items, we looked to see what supplies we could donate to Milford Hospital,” said Superintendent-Director Dr. Michael F. Fitzpatrick. “Given our advanced preparation, we were in a position to assist others. Our Facilities Manager, James Brochu, places orders well in advance to ensure that our school does not run short.”

Members of the school District gathered on Saturday preparing and packaging supplies. The items included: 35,400 gloves, 500 ear loop masks, 350 N95 masks, 550 wipes, 75 N95 masks, 48 disposable cover-ups, 28 goggles, and 24 face shields. With the school closure, these items are currently not needed at the school and will best serve the greater good of the community at the hospital.

“Coming together to care for our community by donating what we can during challenging times such as these is the kind of example we want to set for our students,” said Assistant Superintendent-Director/Principal, Anthony E. Steele II. “These are extraordinary times, we are in this together, and we will prevail together.”

Blackstone Valley Superintendent-Director Dr. Michael F. Fitzpatrick standing next to some of the items donated to by school to Milford Regional Medical Center in response to the coronavirus pandemic. BVT photo.

**School News**

**BVT Donates Supplies to Milford Regional Medical Center**

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Blackstone Valley Superintendent-Director Dr. Michael F. Fitzpatrick standing next to some of the items donated to by school to Milford Regional Medical Center in response to the coronavirus pandemic. BVT photo.

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**End Vaping in the Valley**

One of the many ways young people learn is often through conversation, whether it is a discussion with their peers or older students. The sixth-grade students at Misscoe Hill Middle School in Mendon recently had an opportunity to converse with the BVT SkillsUSA Community Service Team about the harmfulness of vaping, and the importance of making healthy choices.

Carissa and Kyle Penta of Blackstone, and Renata Santiago of Milford, members of the BVT SkillsUSA Community Service Team, will represent their high school, Blackstone Valley Tech, at the SkillsUSA Massachusetts State Competition with their community service project titled, ‘End Vaping in the Valley’. The team hopes to put an end to vaping through their awareness campaign, which includes interactive presentations with local sixth-graders about how vaping negatively impacts teenagers and ends with students signing a No Smoking/Vaping Pledge.

“We decided to present to sixth-graders because we want to bring our message to that age group. If young people are informed with the facts and made aware of the harmful effects of vaping at an earlier age, they will be less likely to try vaping,” explained Renata Santiago.

In addition to presenting at local middle schools, the team plans to attend area Home & Community Expo. Carissa Penta said, “We’ve created posters and made labels for water bottles that have anti-vaping facts that we sold in our school cafeteria to promote and share our message to curb vaping within the Blackstone Valley.”

“Through this community service project, I have learned skills like how to network and other communication skills,” said Kyle Penta. “It is great to be able to give back to my community in such an impactful way.”

The team will ultimately bring their End Vaping in the Valley campaign to the SkillsUSA State Competition with the hope of advancing on to the national competition held in Louisville, Ky.

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**On Line Learning at Touchstone**

At Touchstone Community School, Sally Kent, the Head of School, was preparing for virtual learning since March 2 when the first COVID19 cases came to Massachusetts. Her goal from the beginning was: “if we have to close school, I want our children to stay engaged with one another and to continue to learn.” In their planning, a parent trained teachers on using Zoom, and the teachers and staff created an inventory of at home technology needs to support online learning. Touchstone Tech integrator, Mary Brochu, ensured that we had a device for every child.

Kent notified parents on March 12 that it would be happening, and on March 16 they rolled out a three-day plan: Day-1, teachers report without students and created packets and kits for children, Day-2 the teachers stayed home and a limited administrative staff came to school so that parents could pick up their child’s kits and their room schedule at any time during normal school hours. Also on Day-2, teachers had their first short introduction with Zoom and their classes. On Day-3 teachers began with a virtual morning meeting, attendance, and classes. It has been a huge learning curve for everyone. Touchstone regularly holds formative assessments. This is a process that teachers reflect on how their lessons are maximizing learning experiences for each of their students and adjusting the lesson to improve. Teaching virtually is one more example of how these teachers are learning, reflecting, and collaborating with one another. “I am so proud of the work our teachers are doing and the support from the families. It has been and will be a difficult time, we want to keep our children connected and to keep school a reality,” said Kent. Touchstone is an independent, not-for-profit school in Grafton, serving students Pre-K-grade 8 (ages 2 years and nine months to 15 year olds) from Worcester and Middlesex communities.
Four BVT Players Picked for CMass All-Star Football Game

By Chris Villani
Sports Reporter/Columnist

Four members of the Blackstone Valley Tech football team were named to the Central Mass. All-Star game this year, though head coach Jim Archibald said he was impressed with their ability to lead the team through a difficult time as he was their ability on the gridiron.

"They really stepped into the leadership role for us," Archibald said. "It's been well-documented that we had a tumultuous year with Tony getting sick and ultimately passing away. These kids were there for everybody, on the field, in the school, and in the community."

Archibald said the quarterback helped spearhead fundraisers and were there for Pena's family. They also made sure the team stayed focused during games and sparked a nine-win campaign.

"They took on this role without being prompted," the coach said. "That's standing out to me more than their athletic ability and they are all really good athletes."

All four made a huge impact on the field for the Beavers last fall. Antaya rushed for more than 1,500 yards during his senior campaign, largely being the blocking of Carnaroli and Nasuti on the left side of the line. Loiselle, a three-year starter, always had a knack for being in the right place on the field, Archibald said. In fact, all four players acted as de-facto coaches when they were out there.

BVT has sent multiple players to the All-Star game in each of the last three years. Archibald praised the game's organizers for making sure to include players from all divisions and not giving an undue edge to the area's larger schools.

Scheduled for June in Shrewsbury, it is unclear whether the game will take due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Having strong representation in this game is another bellwether for the strength of the Valley Tech football program.

Last year, BVT's Aidan Fitzgerald served as a captain for the Central Mass. tournament during his junior campaign. His point total is still the most all-time at Nipmuc, and he said it's a challenge to think back and sort through all of the big games to pick out the ones that stand out the most.

Brochu did recall, fondly, Nipmuc's win over Sutton in the districts right after Sutton had claimed the Clark Tourney title. He remembered scoring more than 30 points against St. Mary's in a district tournament game, and the final game at the old Wilho Frigard gym, which he said was a win over Sutton to claim the DVC title.

"I loved playing at that gym, it was such a memorable place to play," Brochu said. "The fans made that place pretty special. A reported told me once the first time he walked in there, it was like walking back in time to the Hoosiers movie."

When he is officially inducted in the fall, Brochu said he will thank all of his coaches, including Chad O'Donnell and John McDonald. But first on his mind is Grant, who gave him the chance to play right away.

"When his varsity career began, Brochu said he wasn't intimidated by playing against older players or being thrust into a starting role. The Warriors graduated all but one starter from the previous year's team and needed talented players to step in right away and Brochu was happy to take advantage of the chance."

"He gave me a great opportunity to play at such a young age," Brochu said referring to Grant. "It was right with me through the whole journey."

Nipmuc Hall of Fame Spotlight: Matt Brochu

By Chris Villani
Sports Reporter/Columnist

Matt Brochu played against older competition for most of his career, a big reason why Nipmuc basketball coach Jim Grant trusted him to join the JV team when he was in the seventh grade and inserted him into the varsity starting lineup when he was in the eighth grade.

Five varsity letters, a district title, and 1,791 points later, Brochu put together a career that landed him in the inaugural class of the Nipmuc Hall of Fame.

"I was extremely grateful and thankful to Nipmuc AD Chris Schmid for putting this Hall of Fame together and acknowledging the tradition of Nipmuc athletics," Brochu said. "I grew up watching my sisters and my cousins play, so playing for Nipmuc for something I aspired to do and being honored in this year means a lot."

Brochu, a 1998 graduate, was part of a Warriors' team that won the Clark Tournament, the Dual Valley Conference, and the Central Mass. district championship during his junior campaign. His point total is still the most all-time at Nipmuc, and he said it's a challenge to think back and sort through all of the big games to pick out the ones that stand out the most.

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Porter Picks Fitchburg to Continue Soccer Career

By Chris Villani
Sports Reporter/Columnist

The road to the college soccer ranks has not always been a smooth one for Ashley Porter. The Nipmuc senior had to bounce back from breaking two bones in her spine during her junior year. But she pushed through, putting together a strong senior campaign and earning an opportunity to continue her athletic and academic pursuits at Fitchburg State.

"A lot of it came down to the academic side of things, I want to go into nursing," Porter said. "I knew I wanted to play a sport, but I also wanted to make sure I was getting a good education while getting to play a sport. Fitchburg allows me to do that."

Porter has benefitted from the support of medical professionals through her athletic career. During a game against Holy Name in September of 2018, she collided with another player and suffered a transverse process fracture in her L2 and L3 vertebrae.

She missed six weeks of action. For the first four weeks, she could not do any soccer-related activity. But Porter was able to return for the Central Mass. tournament during her junior year and put together a strong senior season and earn Dual Valley Conference all-star recognition.

During her recovery, Porter also leaned on her parents Richard and Sherry. "I can't tell you how much they have supported me," Porter said. "My dad has been a huge part of my soccer career and my mom has been there for the motivational support as well. Especially through my injury, they have been right there to help me."

Porter said she will likely play midfield in college and may have the chance to start right away.

Fitchburg is going through a rebuilding process, she said, and she is part of a deep freshman class. During her high school career, Porter was part of a pair of DVC title teams and has played significant minutes...
Nipmuc Hall of Fame Spotlight: Valerie Dugas

Nipmuc Hall of Fame Spotlight: Shelley Grant

Valerie Sumner (née Dugas) welcomed Rolf Rhodes is scheduled to introduce Grant at the banquet and he told her he remembered playing for Jim Grant when Shelley was only about six years old. "He said you always had a ball in your hands or on your feet," she said. "We were brought up that way. It's really special that we all go in together in the introductory class." Grant said that, other than being inducted with her family, the best part about going into the Hall of Fame is getting the chance to reminisce about her high school career and some of the great moments she experienced. Grant remembered playing in Draper Gym in Hopedale, which filled up well before tip-off. She also remembers playing soccer under the lights at Foley Field in Worcester and the long bus rides and stopping for pizza on the way back from Western Mass. after becoming the first Nipmuc softball team to earn a win in the district tournament. Grant also has fond memories of scoring her 100th goal against St. Mary's during her senior year. "I still have the ball," Grant said. "There are so many memories." Grant graduated from Nipmuc in 1991 as one of the most accomplished athletes in school history. She earned a total of seven Dual Valley Conference all-star honors in her three sports, soccer, basketball and softball. Grant was also a three-time all-state soccer player and finished her career with 101 goals. She went on to play both soccer and basketball at Babson College.

Christian Moss will be playing lacrosse for UMass Lowell next year following graduation from Nipmuc this spring.
Upton, Mendon Town Crier

MIAA Cutting Hope Alive for Spring Season, Playoffs

By Chris Villani
Sports Reporter/Columnist

The Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association, the governing body for high school sports in the state, is keeping alive the possibility of having some form of a modified spring sports season despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

During an MIAA board meeting Monday, the organization voted to shorten the start of days required between the start of the season and the first game from 11 days to 7.

“Teams would play a shortened schedule, the MIAA said, and have some sort of postseason ending no later than June 27. In order to qualify for the postseason, teams would have to play a minimum of eight games and would not play more than 12. Golf would only need three days before it could begin competition and rugby would have to wait nine days, still fewer than the typical 11.

The MIAA also said any junior varsity or freshman teams could continue playing games all the way up until the final day of the year, June 27.

It was unclear whether a full state tournament would be possible or whether teams would just engage in sectional tournament play. The MIAA executive board said it hoped to wait a couple of weeks for additional guidance.

The coronavirus has torpedoed sports throughout the world. Professional leagues have shuttered and colleges sent students home and canceled both the winter season’s championship events and the entirety of the spring sports schedule.

Whereas college athletes have been granted additional years of eligibility to continue their interrupted athletic and academic pursuits, high school offers no equivalent option, particularly for seniors set to graduate in the winter season’s championship events and the entirety of the spring season.

DuringOTT’s freshman season, Nipmuc went to the district final, or beyond, every year he was on the team. DuringOTT’s sophomore year, Nipmuc went to the state title game and lost. A year later, the Warriors claimed the championship.

During his sophomore year, Ott scored 15 goals and added 25 assists. During his junior year, he became the first Nipmuc player to claim the all-New England award.

His talents earned him the chance to play at UMass Lowell next fall.

“I had a good relationship with their coach and I was interested in staying local,” Ott said. “The Lowell coach was my club coach for the past two years and we had spoken about playing at Lowell for a while. In the end, it was where I decided I wanted to spend the next four years and study.”

It is unclear exactly what Ott’s role will be with his college team, but he said he will look to earn playing time at a forward position once he learns the system. His progress towards getting ready for college and for the college to be ready for him has been ongoing. It was snatched during this school year due to a broken foot, but he said he is working on recovering and staying healthy.

Ott will go to the business school at UMass Lowell next year and said he wants to pursue business administration. He said is grateful for the support of his family and the fact that his parents, Garrett and Alissa, will be able to continue to come to his games on a regular basis.

“My family has been great, they didn’t push me or suggest I go anywhere I didn’t want to go,” he said. “They let me make my own decisions and they are happy with what I chose. They will be at the games and hopefully I will be playing.”