The Voice of the Garden Begins to Hum

Upton beekeepers are building out new hives or having fun with their spring preparation. Bees are getting busy too when the days are warm gathering nectar. As Elizabeth Lawrence said, “The hum of bees is the voice of the garden.” This photo was taken by local beekeeper, Ewan McCulloch, of a female honey bee drinking water. Ewan McCulloch photo.

Town Officials Continue to Grapple with Logistics of Annual Town Meetings

By Michelle Sanford
Staff Reporter

Since mid-March, town officials throughout the state have been dealing with the effects of the Covid-19 virus, doing their best to keep community’s operating as smoothly as possible. Another conundrum they are now facing is when and where annual town meetings will be held.

Like the majority of municipalities in the state, Mendon and Upton have decided to change the dates of their May town meetings.

Mendon’s meeting was initially changed from May 1 to June 1. However, with the continual uptick of Covid-19 cases being diagnosed in the state, Town Administrator Kim Newman and the Select Board members agreed there’s a possibility that the June 1 date might have to be rescheduled again.

Upton’s Annual Town Meeting was initially scheduled to take place on May 7. In early April, the Board of Selectmen agreed to suspend the meeting and are looking to determine a new date soon.

Mendon and Upton hold their annual town meetings at Miscoe School and Nipmuc Regional High School, respectively. However, now that Governor Baker has closed down the schools for the remainder of the school year, new questions concerning the logistics of town meetings are being brought up by town officials.

During an April 21 remote meeting, Newman questioned if Miscoe School will be available for the town meeting and encouraged the Select Board to meet again the following week to discuss, “Whether or not we can realistically, even feasibly have a town meeting at the school on June 1,” she said.

Newman asked Town Counsel Cindy Amara, who was present at the remote meeting, if she had heard anything new on the matter. “I know that’s a huge issue everywhere,” said Amara. “I have not heard of any resolution. If the school is closed, it’s generally because it’s closed to the public for school purposes. I don’t know that you couldn’t hold a town meeting there if you could meet every guideline that you’re supposed to. I know that where town meetings are going to be held is very much a hot button topic, particularly as we approach May and June.”

The Mendon Select Board plans to meet again remotely on Friday, May 1, at 5 p.m. to discuss the matter further and possibly make some decisions on the town meeting dates and a location. Newman stated by the May 1 date, she expected to have some guidance from the state concerning the May 4 stay at home advisory and therefore certain decisions concerning the town can be made.

Mendon Select Board Adopts New Tax Deadlines

By Michelle Sanford
Staff Reporter

The Mendon Select Board voted to extend tax deadlines during an April 21 remote meeting. The move comes in an effort to help residents who may be affected financially due to the Covid-19 virus.

During an April 15 remote meeting, the Upton Board of Selectmen voted to support extending due dates concerning certain tax deadlines. The move comes in an effort to help residents who may be affected financially due to the Covid-19 virus. “It’s certainly goodwill to extend this option to the taxpayers. I would certainly be in favor of doing this,” said Selectman Chair Stephen Matellian prior to the Board’s discussion and vote on the measure.

Upton Selectmen Extend Tax Due Dates to June 1

By Michelle Sanford
Staff Reporter

During an April 15 remote meeting, the Upton Board of Selectmen voted to support extending due dates concerning certain tax deadlines. The move comes in an effort to help residents who may be affected financially due to the Covid-19 virus.

Local police, fire and EMS personnel from the Greater Milford area participated in a Tribute Train on April 17 with lights flashing and sirens blaring to show support for the work being done by Milford Regional Medical Center employees during the COVID-19 crisis. Milford Regional is grateful for this touching tribute that has been organized by Milford Police Chief Michael A. Fuggetti and UMass Memorial LifeFlight Paramedic Nicholas North. Among the towns and firms participating were Bellingham, Blackstone, Community EMS, Douglas, Holliston, Hopedale, Hopkinton, Franklin, LifeFlight, Medway, Mendon, Milford, Milville, Northbridge, Upton and Uxbridge. Jim Calarrese Town Crier photo.

Honor Those on the Frontline of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Local police, fire and EMS personnel from the Greater Milford area participated in a Tribute Train on April 17 with lights flashing and sirens blaring to show support for the work being done by Milford Regional Medical Center employees during the COVID-19 crisis. Milford Regional is grateful for this touching tribute that has been organized by Milford Police Chief Michael A. Fuggetti and UMass Memorial LifeFlight Paramedic Nicholas North. Among the towns and firms participating were Bellingham, Blackstone, Community EMS, Douglas, Holliston, Hopedale, Hopkinton, Franklin, LifeFlight, Medway, Mendon, Milford, Milville, Northbridge, Upton and Uxbridge. Jim Calarrese Town Crier photo.

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Milford Regional Announces New Chair of Radiology

Milford Regional is pleased to announce the appointment of Jeffrey Brooks, MD, as Chair of Radiology. Dr. Brooks graduated with a degree in medicine from the University of Vermont College of Medicine, Burlington, Vt. in 2006. He completed a diagnostic radiology residency program at Boston University Medical Center, Boston. Dr. Brooks continued his training with a breast imaging fellowship program at Boston University Medical Center. He is board certified in radiology.

“We are extraordinarily pleased that Dr. Brooks is the new Chair of Radiology,” says Leslie Selhovitz, MD, Milford Regional’s Chief Medical Officer and Senior Vice-President for Medical Affairs. “In addition to his fellowship training in breast imaging, Dr. Brooks has been one of the key members of the interdisciplinary Pulmonary Nodale Board dedicated to the early diagnosis and cure of lung cancer, similar to his leadership activities with breast disease. He is a vital member of the Breast Tumor Board at Dana-Farber/Brigham and Women’s Cancer Center at Milford Regional. He and his wife are avid Red Sox fans, and he always enjoys discussing his favorite team.”

RMV Implementing Further Extensions

The Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) announced April 16 further extensions to the renewal timelines for expiring motor vehicle inspection stickers, passenger plate registrations, professional credentials, and licenses and permits, including Commercial Driver’s Licenses and Commercial Driver’s License Permits (CDLs / CLPs).

While the RMV has previously announced 60-day extensions for most credentials, passenger plate registrations and inspection stickers expired or expiring in March and April, the April 16 announcement applies the same 60-day extension to those expiring in May. Those with March 2020 expirations impacted by the first 60-day extension, will have an additional 60-day extension applied.

Non Commercial Driver’s Licenses, ID cards and Learner’s Permits

All non-commercial driver’s licenses, ID cards, and Learner’s Permits expiring in May 2020, will now expire in July 2020. This extension will also apply to those whose expired March 2020 credential was already extended by 60 days. The specific expiration date typically coincides with an individual’s birth date. The specific expiration date typically coincides with an individual’s birth date.

Commercial Driver’s Licenses and License Permits

All Commercial Driver’s Licences (CDL) and Commercial Driver’s License Permits (CLP) expiring in May 2020, will now expire in July 2020. This extension will also apply to those whose expired March 2020 credential was already extended by 60 days. The specific expiration date typically coincides with an individual’s birth date. The RMV recently introduced an online renewal option for CDL holders if they are self-certified in the Non-Exempted Interstate (NI) category for medical certification.

In accordance with the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), all CDL Medical Certificates expiring between March 1 and April 30, 2020, will also now not expire until June 30, 2020. Extensions to CDL Medical Certificates are intended to prevent license downgrades and elective medical visits, as well as alleviate demand on medical providers, during the State of Emergency.

Inspections

The annual motor vehicle safety and emissions inspection stickers expiring May 31, 2020 will now expire on July 31, 2020. This extension will also apply to those whose expired March 2020 inspection sticker was already extended by 60 days.

Registrations

All passenger plate registrations expiring in May 2020, will now expire in July 2020. This extension will also apply to those whose expired March 2020 passenger plate registration was already extended by 60 days. Registration renewals can continue to be performed online at Mass.gov/RMV during this time.

Professional Credentials

Professional credentials for School Bus Certificates, School Pupil Transport Licenses (TDLs), Inspector Licenses, Inspection Station Licenses, Driving Instructor Licenses and Driving School Licenses that expire in May 2020, will also now be extended for 90 days after the State of Emergency is lifted and do not need to be renewed at this time.

For the most up-to-date information on RMV extensions and other service, visit Mass.gov/info-details/RMV-covid-19-information.

Massachusetts Passes 3,000 COVID-19 Deaths

By Chris Villani

Massachusetts passed another dark milestone this week, as the state recorded it’s 3,000th death as a result of COVID-19.

After Monday’s reporting, the state had 3,003 deaths attributed to the disease caused by the novel coronavirus and more than 56,000 cases. Despite the bleak numbers, some statistics supported what Gov. Charlie Baker has been saying during recent daily briefings, that Massachusetts has flattened the pandemic’s curve in the state.

Massachusetts had tested nearly 245,000 people as of Monday, April 27, and seen a sharp increase in daily tests over the previous few days. As the number of positive cases continued to climb, the rate of coronavirus infections began to dip.

Baker added the percentage of all cases currently hospitalized has remained steady at seven percent. Middlesex County showed the lastest Tuesday’s COVID-19 cases, with nearly 13,000 through Monday’s report. Suffolk County had nearly 12,000 cases and Worcester County ranked fifth, slightly ahead of Plymouth with 4,744 cases as of Monday.

The statistics are updated daily on the by the Department of Public Health and posted to the state’s website.

The average age of COVID-19 patients is 54 and the average age of fatalities tied to the virus is 82. Those hospitalized due to the coronavirus average 69 years old. More than half of the state’s fatalities due to the disease have occurred in long term care facilities. Slightly more than 98 percent of all fatalities in which an investigation was done revealed the patient had some sort of underlying health condition, according to the data.

In the Monday, April 27, hospital census, Milford Regional Medical Center showed 50 confirmed or suspected coronavirus cases, including eight patients in intensive care.

The United States has recorded more than 1 million cases of the coronavirus. More than 56,000 patients had died due to the virus and 114,000 recoveries had been reported.

Worldwide, the pandemic has sickened more than 3 million people and killed 211,000.
Nearly Two Dozen COVID-19 Cases in Upton & Mendon

By Chris Villani
Staff Reporter/Columnist

Town-by-town COVID-19 statistics released by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health revealed 13 confirmed cases of the virus in Upton and 10 in Mendon as of April 22.

The breakdown is the second of what will become a weekly update to the state’s coronavirus data, showing both the total number of cases per municipality as well as the how prevalent the disease is relative to the population of the town. In Upton, the 13 cases equals around 143 cases per 100,000 residents. Mendon’s 10 cases equals 172 per 100,000 people.

The numbers are lower than many of the neighboring communities. Milford showed 114 cases as of the April 22 survey, a rate of 389 infections per 100,000 people. Northbridge showed the highest infection rate of neighboring towns, with 90 infections, or 188 per 100,000 people. That is twice the rate of Lawrence, with 45 confirmed cases and a rate of 500 per 100,000 residents.

The statistics were slated to be updated on April 29, after the publication deadline for this issue of the Town Crier. In Hopedale, there were eight confirmed cases and a rate of 141 infections per 100,000 people. Northbridge showed the highest infection rate of neighboring towns, with 90 confirmed cases and a rate of 500 per 100,000 residents.

Statewide as of April 22, 616 people had been infected for every 100,000 residents. Massachusetts, by many measures a hotspot for the disease, passed 50,000 infections last week and more than 2,600 people had died. The average age people who have died in confirmed COVID-19 cases is 82 and 98 percent of those who have died and for whom an investigation has been completed had some sort of underlying health condition. As of last weekend, more than 1,400 coronavirus deaths had been reported in long term facilities.

The number of positive infections per day has risen sharply in recent days, a product of a large increase in testing. Having expansive testing and a strong contact tracing program, along with a sustained contact tracing program, along with a sustained decrease in the rate of infection, have been cited by public health as criteria for beginning to relax social distancing policies. Boston Mayor Marty Walsh, stated recently on WGBH radio, officials would ideally like to have 25 percent of any population tested in order to make an informed decision about reopening. For Massachusetts, with a population of 6.98 million, that would mean having about 1.75 million residents tested. State officials don’t believe the state will reach that ideal testing rate since as of April 25, the DPH reported just under 54,000 tests completed.

The state has also begun to break coronavirus data down by hospital. Milford Regional Medical Center reported 39 patients suffering from the virus, including eight patients in intensive care.

Statewide, COVID-19 hospitalizations ticked down from April 21 to 23 after a sharp increase in mid-April.

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Your Connections While Distancing
NOTES & NOTATIONS
By Jane Bigda

An Example of Good Government in Action

I want to thank the Mendon Board of Health. Almost three months ago, the board passed on a February 6 novel coronavirus fact sheet created by the Massachusetts Department of Health through an email blast. Since I am a resident and a newspaper editor, receive emails for the Mendon Board of Health, this was first local alert I got of the virus. I had realized the virus existed, but thought it was primarily an overseas threat.

The email woke me up. Not only did it start my personal preparations for the virus, but it also started the March 30 list of confirmed, free, nourishing meals offered monthly to all in the local community. Covid-19 directives are scheduled but subject to change based on Health Agent Larry Izzo; and administrator, Missy Doherty. Residents just had to read what was sent, understand the clearly written text and undertake the actions listed.

For a part-time, elected board with just one full-time staff member and a shared health agent, the Mendon Board of Health has done a great job. They have fulfilled their obligation to the voters they elected them and the taxpayers who fund their salaries. We put our trust in them and they repaid that trust with action for the collective good; just what good government should do.

So thank you to the Mendon Board of Health members Andy Fiske, Alan Greenberg and Tom Fitchner; Health Agent Larry Izzo; and administrator, Missy Kakea-Bosworth.

Beating the Boredom

Maja and Lena Barnett are collecting dandelion heads to make syrup. Being on lockdown is so boring! The kids and I agree on that.

But it is a good time to go back to my own childhood and show them what I did at that age. One thing I was making all sorts of delicious goodies with my grandmother. One of which we called ‘dandelion honey’. It’s really a syrup but we called it honey, mainly because of the golden color, and because we kids felt like bees collecting not the nectar, but the whole dandelion heads.

These days I think it was only invented to get rid of children for an hour, because they happily disappear in the yard for a while collecting buckets full of this bright yellow weed. It’s a win, win!

• If you want to get rid of your offspring and get a sweet treat at the end of it do this:
  • Let them collect 0.5lbs of dandelion heads.
  • Remove all the stems or it gets bitter.
  • Cook the dandelion heads for 15 minutes in 1 lbs of water.
  • Pour the ‘dandelion soup’ through a sieve lined with a paper towel and collect the filtered yellow fluid in a pot.
  • Add 1 lbs of sugar to this pot and boil gently for about 60 minutes until it turns to a thick syrup.
  • Pour into jars. Enjoy!

The finished dandelion syrup can be used like any other syrup too. It is delicious with your pancakes or waffles!

Helping the Community One Mask at a Time

To the Editor,

If you’ve bought a fabric face mask or received one for “free”, here’s what you should know.

That fabric has a story. It may have been chosen for a quilt that was never made, or perhaps it’s remnants of a homemade Easter dress. It could have been passed from owner to owner or even bought with express intent to make a cool mask. Either way, the sewist assessed its “mask worthiness” and thought it’d be perfect.

The sewist who made it is tired. She’s been sewing for days, she tears the monotony. She’s pricked her fingers with pins and sliced her knuckles with rotary cutters. Yet she continues to make masks—for you.

It was worth every penny. Whether you bought it for $5 or $15, you paid fair market value for someone’s materials, time and talent. If you received it for free, it has already been paid for with the maker’s charity and hope.

The sewist made it to help but it’s helping her too. She’s decided the best way to work through this situation is to help those who protect all of us.

The maker is being flooded with requests. People who haven’t spoken to her in years are calling to chat and “ask for a mask.” She’s being offered money to make more than she can handle; sometimes it’s enough, sometimes not. If she’s got too many to make, she won’t turn you down because she really wants to help you.

It will make her smile when she sees you wearing it. She’ll remember the fabric, the batch, she may even tell you it was one of her favorite. She’ll smile knowing that she did this small little thing that’s helping you in such a big way. She’ll smile knowing that in the most difficult of times, she has a skill that so many will value.

It should give you hope for a better world. In a situation where members of the community are struggling, others have risen up, offered their time and talents to provide what they can. It means there’s hope for humanity supporting one another and that people truly do care for one another.

Editor’s note: This item was shared by Joyce Gilmore, an accomplished quilter, who has made over 300 masks. Her Gilmore Girls Quilters have made at least 400 more.

Joyce Gilmore

Mendon

MONTHLY COMMUNITY MEALS

The March 30 list of confirmed, free, nourishing meals offered monthly to all in the local community.

Last Wednesday
4:30-6 p.m. Dinner, Trinity Episcopal Church, 17 Congress St., Milford. 508-473-8464 or office@trinitychurcchmilford.org. April meals are scheduled but subject to change based on Covid-19 directives.

Last Thursday
4:30-6 p.m. Dinner, Trinity Episcopal Church, 17 Congress St., Milford, sponsored by First Methodist Church of Milford volunteers. 508-473-8464 or office@trinitychurcchmilford.org. April meals are scheduled but subject to change based on Covid-19 directives.

Last Friday
4:30-6 p.m. Dinner, Trinity Episcopal Church 17 Congress St., Milford. Sponsored by the Hopedale Churches (Unitarian, Sacred Heart and Union Evangelical). 508-473-8464 or office@trinitychurchmilford.org. April meals are scheduled but subject to change based on Covid-19 directives.
COVID-19 Updates for Mendon

According to Massachusetts Department of Health (DPH) data, as of April 22, Mendon has 10 positive test results for COVID-19 with an infection rate of 172.6 per 100,000 residents. DPH is releasing the cumulative number of coronavirus cases for each Massachusetts community weekly on Wednesdays at 4 p.m. at Mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-response-reporting/covid-19-cases-by-city-town. The first DPH data release for Mendon, April 14, showed nine positive COVID-19 cases and an infection rate of 155.36.

Face Coverings
As of April 22, the Mendon Board of Health recommends all residents, age two and older, wear cloth face coverings when they are outside of their homes in outdoor or indoor spaces, public and private, until further notice. This should be done in addition to maintaining the minimum six-foot social distance. The advisory reflects Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidance since COVID-19 can be spread by people with no symptoms but who have the virus. It is especially important to wear cloth face coverings where social distancing is difficult, such as essential trips to grocery stores or pharmacies.

Residents may make masks from bandanas, T-shirts, napkins, and other spare cloth that has been cleaned and aired on high heat. They may be surgical masks or N-95 respirators which should be reserved for healthcare workers and medical first responders. Importantly, please wash hands immediately after removing face coverings, masks, and gloves. Cloth face coverings should not be used by anyone under age two, who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance. Residents are also urged to continue social distancing, proper handwashing, covering the face and mouth when sneezing and coughing and if sick, to stay home.

Town Buildings
Due to COVID-19, all public buildings in Mendon will remain closed to the public until further notice. Residents may contact the appropriate office by phone or email. Visit MendonMA.gov/contacts-directory for more information as needed, contact the Building Department or call in meetings. For additional information contact the Building Department.

Building Department
Building Department/Permitting Office payments and paperwork may be left in the drop-box outside the office in the former Taft Public Library Building. Online permitting is available at MendonMA.gov/permitting.

Trash Service
Normal trash services continue. Trash stickers ordered to the Board of Health Office, 18 Main St., 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.

Mendon News
Charles River Bank Accepting Mendon Food Pantry Donations

Charles River Bank, 1 Hastings St., Mendon, is accepting monetary donations to benefit the Mendon Food Pantry. Checks can be made payable to "Friends of Mendon Elders" with “FBO Food Pantry” written in the memo line. These donations are used to replenish pantry stock and to purchase gift certificates to local grocery stores. Checks can be dropped off at the Mendon branch drive-thru between 8:30 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday through Friday and 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday.

In unprecedented times like these, the need for access to the food and goods supplied by the pantry is growing. The best thing we can do is come together as a community – at a distance of course. We are happy to help facilitate these donations to an organization that is truly essential to our community. Any little bit helps!” said Charles River Bank President and CEO Jack Hamilton.

Donations are tax deductible since the Friends of Mendon Elders is a certified 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation.

Mendon Historical Society Keepsake Community Cookbook

The Mendon Historical Society announces the Mendon Community Cookbook. Society members Norma Phipps Allard and Ruth Hossington O'Grady compiled a collection of classic recipes that were offered in three different cookbooks from the 1950s. These original cookbooks were created by members of the Mendon Unitarian Church, the Mendon Baptist Church and Saint Michael's Catholic Church. In addition to the recipes some of the original advertising has been included. Allard and O'Grady, who are thanked for bringing this project together, have also shared memories of the people who contributed to the original cookbooks. This cookbook is a trip down memory lane and a reflection of the community when dinner was always on the store and church suppers were an important part of the social fabric.

The cookbooks, a unique gift, will be available on Mother’s Day weekend, May 8-10. To preorder contact the Mendon Historical Society by emailing MendonHistoricalSociety@gmail.com or calling 508-488-9620. Pickup and payment will be arranged.

For more information, visit MendonHistoricalSociety.com.

Mendon Lions Club Scholarship Application Extended

The Mendon Lions Club is extending the date for applications related to its scholarship program. March applications are now being 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.
Rep. Murray Helps Secure $25,000 for Feasibility Study on Former Rectory

By Michelle Sanford

At the beginning of 2019, State Rep. Brian Murray, D-Milford, hadn’t received any requests from Mendon for fiscal year 2020 earmarked funds. As a result, he approached Taft Public Library Director Andrew Jenrich regarding any plans for the former rectory building that sits adjacent to the Library, and which the town owns.

Town officials have said they would like to do something with the property in the future but for now, have no plans do so. Consequently, Murray put in a request for a feasibility study to be completed on the rectory to provide options for its future use, which must be completed regardless when plans for it finally move forward. An amount of $25,000 was approved for the study by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners.

During an April 21 remote meeting, Chair of the Taft Public Library Board of Trustees, Amy Fahey, and Jenrich discussed the feasibility study with the Select Board.

“We as a Board don’t have any plans to go forward with any construction project,” explained Fahey. “This is just strictly informational. We have the money, so we want to spend it.”

Fahey stated the Trustees received the funding in January and have until June to spend it, not leaving much time to put together a Request for Quotes document. Still, they were able to put together the RFQ in time and had designers consider three options for the building: demo the rectory and build a new facility for the town, demo the building and construct some type of pavilion for town events, or tear down the building and landscape the space for public use.

Fahey explained that given the ADA requirements that will be needed and the amount of space left over, keeping the building would not be practical.

“We’re not thinking of a big design” said Fahey of possible construction. “We want to keep it simple.”

Initively, the Trustees thought a possible new multi-purpose building would be on one level and hold approximately 75 people for library programs, meeting space, and other types of events. The RFQ was issued to four firms with two responding back; one of which was Abacus Architects, who oversaw the renovations of the Taft Public Library several years ago and who have an understanding of the rectory.

The Trustees voted in favor of Abacus completing the feasibility study and were seeking the approval of the Select Board.

Select Board Chair Chris Burke asked if Abacus would be needing anything more than the $25,000 received, to which Fahey said no. “The contract will say it can’t exceed $25,000,” she said.

The Board voted unanimously to award the contract to Abacus Architects.

“I think it’s great we got this $25,000 and have a chance to look at it. Hopefully someday, something will come of it. I’m happy to see it go forward,” said Town Administrator Kim Newman.
Donations in memory of Sharon Cutler, a longtime Mendon resident and former town official who passed away in March, may be made to the Mendon Senior Center Expansion Fund to help build a new facility for the town. Here Cutler is shown in a file photo taken in 2012 when she was named Mendon’s Senior of the Year.

By Michelle Sanford
Staff Reporter

During an April 21 meeting, the Mendon Select Board established a Council on Aging Building Fund and accepted a donation from the family of Sharon (Alberto) Cutler, who passed away recently. Senior Center Director Amy Wilson Kent said the new fund was set up by the Cutler’s family in her memory to benefit the Senior Center.

Cutler, who was born in Milford but had lived in Mendon since she was six years old, died on March 22 at the age of 73. She was the wife of Donald J. Cutler and the mother of Timothy Cutler of Attleboro and Mark Cutler of Mendon. A strong believer of giving back to the community, she had served the Town of Mendon since 1978. Cutler was a member of the Select Board, the Fire Department and Police Committee, and the Fire Department and Police Study Committee. In addition, Cutler was a member at large of the Land Use and Planning Board, and served on the Finance Committee, the Zoning Bylaw Review Committee, the Tri-Town School Feasibility Study Committee, the Fire Department and Police Department Study Committee. She was also on the Long Range Finance Committee, Treasurer of the Mendon Historical Commission, and chair of the Friends of the Mendon Police Station.

Cutler was also instrumental in making the Senior Center’s annual book sale a huge success that continues to this day. In 2012, she was named Mendon’s Senior of the Year.

In her obituary, it states that Cutler was known for her honesty, integrity, and tireless dedication. She always put the best interests of the community first. Her family described her as a wonderful woman and a real role model to others.

Select Board Chair Chris Burke reiterated how much Cutler had done for the community and the Senior Center. “Her family didn’t notify us that they were going to do this, so we were surprised when we started getting donations for this purpose,” he said, referring to the Select Board during the meeting. “I think it was very nice of them to want her to be remembered this way.”

Select Board member Lawney Tinio remembered working with Cutler when he first began serving on the Board. “She was great to work with. She did more for this town that just serving the Board, she did,” Tinio said, adding it might be nice for the Board to honor Cutler in some way when the stay at home advisory is over.

Any future donations should be made out to the Town of Mendon and in the memo line write: Senior Center Construction Fund. Donations can be sent to the Senior Center located at 82 Providence St. Mendon, 01756.
**THINK GLOBALLY ACT LOCALLY**
- By Anne Mazar

**A National Park in Your Yard**

Douglas W. Tallamy, award-winning nature writer and a University of Delaware Professor of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology, writes that animals need our yards to connect isolated patches of preserved lands. Animals crawl, lope or fly to find shelter, food and mates, but they struggle with a majority of the country in swaths of roads, buildings and disturbed lands. The Monarch Butterfly population has dropped over 90 percent, the US bird population has plummeted 30 percent and extinctions are exponentially exceeding natural fluctuations. Tallamy explains that our yards planted with native plants could provide needed nourishment for migrating birds and create a vibrant mini-ecosystem that animals and you could enjoy.

Most of the protected land is in the western US, but the majority of the biodiversity is east of the Mississippi River, with 86 percent in private ownership. We can lend a hand. Unfortunately, 80 percent of the plants in most peoples’ yards are non-native and do not benefit, the complex food web required by local critters.

Native plants and animals have evolved together over millennia. Our fauna cannot adapt to plants brought in from other countries quickly enough for survival. For example, the ubiquitous ornamental Asian Bradford Pear tree is a food desert to Massachusetts wildlife, whereas native oak trees provide food for 454 species of caterpillars that turn into pollinating moths and butterflies, which in turn feed our birds and other animals. Tallamy’s essentials to make a “homegrown national park” is to first shrink the lawn. Use fill at the edges of the yard and around trees to create attractive garden beds of natives. This will also...
Next, add native plants such as oaks, birches, hickory and cherry trees that host many species of caterpillars and pollinating bees. This might be a simple matter of not cutting some trees down. Other super pollinator plants include asters, goldenrod and sunflowers. Tallamy points out a misconception; attracting pollinators, does not include asters, goldenrod and sunflowers. Tallamy's second recommendation is to remove non-native, invasive plants. Tallamy also advises to not use pesticides or fertilizers, instead use compost or leaf litter. Learn much more in his excellent book, Nature's Best Hope.
Upton News

Upton Continues COVID-19 Response

According Massachusetts Department of Health (DPH) data, as of April 22, Upton has 13 positive test result for COVID-19 with an infection rate of 43.79 per 100,000 residents. DPH is releasing the cumulative number of coronavirus cases for each Massachusetts community weekly on Wednesdays at 4 p.m. at Mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-response/reporting/covid-19-cases-by-city-town. The first DPH data release for Upton, April 14, showed 11 positive COVID-19 cases and an infection rate of 121.67.

Town Buildings

Upton remains in a local state of emergency with all town buildings closed. Residents may call or email the appropriate office with questions during normal business hours. Visit UptonMa.gov for a contact list.

Neighbor to Neighbor

Upton Selectmen announced the Neighbor to Neighbor assistance program to help townpeople who are in need due to COVID-19 economic and social impacts. The program is a coordinated effort of local community organizations in partnership with the town. The confidential program administered by the Upton Center staff providing assistance with various needs including wellnes, health, grocery and prescription delivery, and assistance with housing, food, utilities, and medical expenses. Trained resource specialists offer connections to an array of social services - emotional health or medical referrals, and information about local, state or federal.

Contact Janice Nowicki, Director of Elder and Social Services at 508-529-4558 or N2N@uptonma.gov.

Upton Center

The Council on Aging-Social Services has staff available via phone, 508-529-4558, to provide assistance. Transportation for medical appointments and grocery shopping is by appointment only. Upton Center is accepting donations for the food pantry. Contact the Center and leave a message to arrange a drop off time.

Inspections

Smoke alarm inspections by the Fire Department have been delayed for 90 days. Code enforcement inspections have been suspended until further notice. Inspections will continue on unoccupied construction projects. Contact Patrick Roche, Building Commissioner, 508-529-2633 during the work week for information.

Real estate inspections by building officials are ongoing. town employees will only inspect the exterior of the building and not the structure. Contact the Assessor’s Office, 508-529-1002, with questions. Also contact the Assessors about abatements and exemptions.

Trash

Trash and recycling will follow the normal schedule. Upton trash bags are required and may be purchased at Honey Farms, Liquor Plus, and Country Club Sooper. Bulk stickers can be purchased either on-line or through the mail.

Payments

Real Estate and personal property taxes are now extended to June 1. Deposit payments by check only in the secure black pedestrian mailbox in the Town Hall parking lot on the Western side of the building. Checks and credit card payments are honored on the date deposited. Or pay online, UptonMA.gov/home/pages/online-payments.

DPW

Visit the Department of Public Works page on the town website UptonMA.gov for service request forms, permitting and information. Town construction projects will continue except for any water projects, since handwashing is vital to helping control the spread of COVID-19.

Upton Town Library

The Upton Town Library is providing a variety of online services for residents. Visit UptonLibrary.org for a complete listing.

Town Clerk

Questions about voting, town census, certificates for birth, marriage or death, marriage licenses, and dog licenses should be directed to Town Clerk Kelly McElreath by visiting the Town Clerk’s page at UptonMA.gov, emailing kmcelreath@uptonma.gov or calling 508-529-3564.

Town Alerts and Information

Upton has created a special COVID-19 webpage and twitter account for the latest information - UptonMA.gov/COVID-19 and Twitter @Uptontown. Updates will be issued via email through Town News and the Town’s social media channels. To receive the emails, subscribe at UptonMA.gov/subscriber. Also Smart911 emergency notifications are being sent out as needed.

Unitarian Universalist Society of Grafton and Upton Scholarship

The Unitarian Universalist Society of Grafton and the Unitarian Universalist Society of Upton have 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 Universalist in Grafton and Upton. 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@wsus.org or at 508-839-2927.
An Upton Easter Tradition Continues

Introducing a New Family Member during COVID-19

For 14 years, the Upton Men’s Club and Upton Police have partnered to sponsor the town’s annual Easter Egg. In order to continue this fun event and maintain social distancing, the Easter Bunny did home deliveries this year! Families who pre-registered on the Upton Men’s Club website were visited by the Easter Bunny on Saturday, April 11. Escorting in a police cruiser and waving out the window to people around town, the Easter Bunny went house to house and delivered 3000 eggs filled with toys and candy. “It’s a scary time for kids right now. We wanted to continue our Easter Egg Hunt tradition and give the kids something fun to do,” said Bob Drainville of the Upton Men’s Club. Shown getting ready to deliver the Easter Eggs are, l-r: Upton Patrolman Matt Rankins, Drainville and the Easter Bunny, aka Police Chief Michael Bradley, Jr. Upton Men’s Club photo

Ryan and Lisa Rooney of Hopedale are celebrating the birth of their new daughter Addy by showing her off to her great grandparents. Here Ryan is with his son Wyatt and daughter Addy, visiting great grandparents, Edward and Sarah Lynch, who are shown looking out the window of their Westborough retirement home. Although everyone enjoyed the visit, social distancing kept the family members apart. Rooney Family photo

Congratulations to Carolyn Usher on Celebrating 101 Years!

Carolyn Usher of Upton celebrated her 101st at her home on April 26. It was a 101 Dalmatians-themed celebration that featured social distancing. Usher Family photo

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May 1, 2020

**Obituaries**

**Hazel I. Sadler**

UPTON—Hazel I. Sadler of Upton passed away on April 17, 2020. A member of United Parish Church of Upton for 75 years, she was born on December 30, 1924 to Guy L. Colcord and Ruth (Cheney) Colcord. She was the stepdaughter to Nils Person of Upton. A graduate of Upton High School, she was a remarkable person who drew people together with her wit and wonderful smile. She taught kindergarten at the First Congregational Church of Upton and for decades at Memorial Elementary School in Upton. Mrs. Sadler passed peacefully at home from non-coronavirus health concerns with her daughter Lynn at her side. A celebration of Mrs. Sadler’s life will be announced at a later date.

**Elizabeth A. (Generazio) Galloway**

NORTHBRIDGE—Elizabeth A. (Generazio) Galloway, 86, of Northbridge and formerly of Upton, died at home on Sunday, April 19, 2020 after a long illness. She was the wife of the late Thomas Galloway.

Born December 6, 1933, in Newton, she graduated from Newton High School in 1951. Along with her husband, she was a co-owner of Mustang Microsystems of Hopkinton, and also worked in accounting for many years. She was an avid quilter, painter, and reader. She is survived by three children: a daughter, Nita Marie Wilding of Northbridge, two sons, Joseph A. Terlizzi of Uxbridge and Louis R. Terlizzi of North Smithfield, R.I.; seven grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren. She was the daughter of the late Liberato and Bernice (DelPecile) Generazio. Due to the current restrictions with public gatherings, Mrs. Galloway’s funeral services will be held privately with her family.

**Gail N. (Wright) Snow**

UPTON—Gail N. (Wright) Snow, 81, a longtime Upton resident, passed away on April 22, 2020.

Born October 20, 1938 to Robert and Maryjorie Wright of Pittsford, VT, she graduated from Pittsford-Barstow High School in 1956, and worked in a supervisory position at New York Telephone Company in Albany, N.Y. until her marriage to Robert Snow in 1962. After they moved to Upton, Gail worked as a service representative for New England Telephone Co in the Milford office.

For many years Gail furnished leadership and guidance to Junior high youth groups at the Upton Congregational Church. She served on the Board of Library Trustees for the Town of Upton and was an active elected member of the Upton Board of Health for 12 years. Chieft among her many successful ventures, she was a gifted crafter of unique hand-thrown pottery work. Many of her creations can be found in New England homes and as far west as Iowa. Gail is survived by her husband, Robert Snow, her sons Justin (Diane J) and Lincoln (Diane M) Snow, grandchildren Kyle (Daniele), Parker, and Jacob, all of Upton; and, Sharon, of Worcester. She is also survived by her sisters Lorna Garrow (Stephen) of Vershire, VT; Roberta Mills (Allen) of Florence, MA; and sister-in-law Lorna Wright (Steven) of Florence, MA. She is predeceased by her son Steven in 2010, her father Albert in 1996, and her mother Pearl in 2015.

Gail’s love for learning and involvement in the community was a driving force for her. She was a member and officer of the Uppingham Book Club, a member of the Friends of the Library, a volunteer for the Upton Garden Club and a member of Upton Healthy Communities. In 2003, Linda survived a near-fatal car accident and in 2017, she contracted a blood infection/sepsis but was healed and survived. She continued to work on strengthening her mobility. Linda enjoyed getting out to attend church and family holidays. Linda was predeceased by her son Steven in 2010, her father Albert in 1996, and her mother Pearl in 2012. She is survived by her son Leonard and daughter Wendy Hensel and her son-in-law Keith Hensel, and granddaughters Sarah and Grace Hensel. She is also survived by her sister Ann Perkins (husband Robert) and brother Arvid Soderberg (wife Leah) as well as her nephew Richard Perkins, niece Deborah Perkins, niece Kara Howard, and niece Christina Newman. She is also survived by her former spouse, Richard Graycek, of Stratford, Conn.

Due to the current health crisis, a service will be announced at a later date. Arrangements are handled by Pishey Funeral Home of Stratford, Conn. Charitable donations can be sent to the JRDF (Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation) at JRDF PO Box 37920, Boone IA 50037-0920.

**Conor Dugas**

UPTON—The Schultz and Oftia families are deeply saddened to announce the passing of their beloved Conor Dugas, 23, of Upton.

He was born in 1996, and passed away peacefully on April 8, 2020 in his home with his sister Erin Schultz, mom Heidi Schultz-Oftia and his loving, and caring stepdad Kenneth Oftia by his side. Although Conor faced a myriad of challenges, he found joy, humor and love in everything he did.

He inspired all that knew him. Conor touched the lives of everyone with his huge smile and spirit. He loved his home nurses as well as the nurses and doctors at Children’s Hospital and truly enjoyed going for them for over two decades.

Our family will always be grateful to everyone who looked beyond Conor’s disabilities and maintained his dignity by treating him like any other kid. We are forever grateful to our community, family, friends, and medical staff who loved and supported Conor for so many years.

Due to the current restrictions on public gatherings, Conor’s memorial Mass will be announced at a future date.

**Dorothy A. Hackenson**

MENDON—Dorothy A. Hackenson, 90, passed away peacefully on Friday April 17, 2020 at her home on Lake Nipmuc. She was married for 66 years to the late Thomas D. Hackenson, who died in 2015.

Dorothy was born in Hope Dale, the daughter of the late George and Dora (Wharton) Charge. She was predeceased by her four sisters Francis Charge, Mary Charge, Helen Hackenson, and Nancy Wagner.

A love of children and teaching inspired Dorothy to open Just-A-Wee Day School in 1961. She later worked at H.P. Clough Elementary School as a kindergarten aide. She always enjoyed spending time with her family and friends, especially by entertaining them at her Cape Cod summer home. She was also a dedicated member of St. Gabriel the Archangel Parish in Upton.

She is survived by two sons, Thomas Hackenson and his wife Kathy and Steven Hackenson and his wife Sharon and her daughters, Mary Hackenson and Nancy Wagner her husband Mike; seven grandchildren, Matt and Nicki Hackenson, Jamie Lee Carlonisi, Molly Moore, John Tycks, Megan Hackenson and Katie Brueckner and two great-grandchildren, Darryt and Gunner.

A memorial Mass will be held at a later date.

**Daniel McGee**

UPTON—Daniel “Ruggy” McGee, 56, of Upton, died in his home surrounded by his loving family on April 21, 2020. Born in Marlborough, on August 22, 1963, Danny was raised in Westboro, and graduated from Assabet Valley Technical High School in 1981. He was a loving and devoted husband, father, and dear friend to many. He is survived by his wife Tammy McGee, and daughters Tanya and Nina McGee of Upton.

Danny owned and operated Side Alley Restoration in Westboro for nearly 35 years. He was a highly respected, and internationally recognized master of classic car restoration and finishing, and a true artist in every sense of the word.

His love for cars was featured in numerous magazines and blogs, and his customer’s proudly displayed their showpiece vehicles at car shows all across the country.

As gifted as Danny was in the shop, he had even greater gifts and talent in his career as a musician. His musical career started at a young age in the late 70s and continued to blossom until his passing. He played in countless bands over the years including The Chousy Mothers, The Ragbutts, Hothouse, Popkool and for the past 25 + years in Thinner with his dear friends Neil Lucey and Craig Wilson. Danny was a special artist with an often uncanny approach to his playing that always checked off all of the “unique” boxes that made him an original like no other. He had instincts that were equal parts amazing and unorthodox, but always Ruggy.

Perhaps Danny’s greatest gift of all was his ability to be the coolest person in the room, while simultaneously being the sweetest, most loving, kind, and humble person. And, he did all of this wearing black clothes and sunglasses every day, and every night. Danny was cool, he was fun, he was loved by everyone that knew him and he didn’t take any of that, or any of us, for granted. He was a one of a kind that lived his life on his own terms, a life that the rest of us should aspire to live.

Danny always sang “leave the light on ’til I get home”, may his light shine in our hearts and minds forever, until we meet again, rest in peace Ruggy!

A Celebration of Danny’s Life will be announced at a later date.
Baker Announces End of Massachusetts School Year

By Chris Villani
Staff Reporter/Columnist

Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker announced Tuesday that public and private schools in the state would remain closed through the end of the academic year, making the Bay State the 34th to shut down in-class education for 2019-2020 amid the COVID-19 pandemic. "It’s the right thing to do considering the facts on the ground,” Baker said during his announcement. "As of this afternoon, there is no authoritative guidance with respect to how to operate schools safely or get kids to and from school safely.”

As of Tuesday, Massachusetts had seen a decline in the number of new COVID-19 cases, but the state by any measure still ranks toward the top of one of the nation’s “hot spots,” said Baker. Baker stressed that this would not be an extended school vacation and remote learning would continue. He acknowledged how this could be “tough” for teachers, parents and students. “We appreciate how challenging it is to be apart from your peers and teachers, ways to keep them motivated and keep them committed to their studies,” the governor said. “We know it is not ideal and we know we are asking a lot.”

Baker said the state school system would work towards “ensuring a strong start for the fall.” The Massachusetts Commissioner of Education said further guidance on remote learning would be released in the coming days. Baker also said non-emergency child care programs would also stay closed until June 29, but programs for the children of essential workers would continue.

"The governor encouraged students to “keep your head up. There will be, because there always are, brighter days ahead.”

FY21 School Budget Will Change; Lunch Program Expanded; and “Live” Graduation Discussed

By Melissa Orff
Staff Reporter

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Joseph Maruszczak presented the survey results during the April 27 School Committee Meeting, which was streamed live via a Zoom session. The survey was sent out during the week April 13 and received 1,312 parent, 330 middle and high school staff, and 175 staff responses in the span of four days. Questions were asked about a range of issues including engagement, quantity of workload, and expectations.

When asked if the teacher was communicating with students on an ongoing basis there were so clear expectations, 88.8 percent of students and 88.6 percent of parents “agreed” or “strongly agreed.” Teachers also felt that students and their parents were engaged in distance learning, with 81 percent agreeing or strongly agreeing that they were responsive to communication.

Although parents and staff agreed or strongly agreed that the workload given to students through distance learning was manageable (83.7 percent of parents and 84.6 percent of staff), only 67.6 percent of the middle and high school students felt the same way.

"Some of the comments that we received from the students was that they thought it was too early to start classes,” said Maruszczak. There was also a discrepancy between parents and staff versus students when it came to questions about the amount of work they are receiving. While 71.6 percent of parents felt the amount of work being given to students was “just right/manageable,” only 56.4 percent of students felt the same way. Although they felt it was too much, teachers said that over 86 percent of students were engaged in the lessons that were being provided to them.

"The survey also gave respondents the opportunity to provide feedback by commenting on the distance learning program. According to the comment of the commentary was super positive”, said Maruszczak. "There was a lot of appreciation for our teachers and administrators.”

Most of the concerns, according to the survey, were about screen time, extra help needed for students, technology supports, and student safety with regards to videoconferencing.

Due to the recent guidance from the Massachusetts Commissioner of Education that all schools must switch to online distance learning for the remainder of the school year, questions started to arise about how the graduating class would be able to take part in traditional celebrations and ceremonies.

“We have been surveying the seniors and their parents to find the best way to celebrate the Class of 2020,” said Maruszczak.

Maruszczak said there is an “intense interest” from seniors and their parents to have a live graduation ceremony versus an online one. Although that will pose some logistical challenges, and most likely could not happen until summer or fall, Maruszczak, Nipmuc Regional High School officials said they have no decisions, returning to the middle and high school students felt the same way. “It underscores how challenging this could be for teachers, parents and students, and determination of our student council,” said Cann. “As an advisor, I am incredibly proud of our students for achieving this accolade for the second year in a row.”

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“Earning the 2020 National Gold Council of Excellence is a testament to the hard work of our Advisors, Executive Board, and the General Council throughout this tremendous school year.”
By Chris Villani
Sports Reporter/Columnist

The college level is so much faster and more intricate than high school, you really have to have a good basketball IQ," she said. "The coach said there is definitely a chance I could be playing right away, but I just need to prove myself." Staying sharp over the next several months could be challenging with the pandemic canceling organized sports. But Russian said she and her dad Ron will be playing some games of one-on-one with friendly wagers, including deciding who will make dinner. With a chuckle, Russian said she usually beats her dad in hoops, but was quick to credit him with being her coach since she was young and helping to put her in AAU programs. Ron and Russian's mother, Donna, have been a huge help to their daughter through the college search process. "My mom has taught me how to take a hit through the years and she will be the one screaming from the stands," Russian said. "She knew I should go to JWU, but she let me figure that out on my own."
Muscatell Hopes to PlayHoops at Worcester State

By Chris Villani
Sports Reporter/Columnist

Gabrielle Muscatell is determined to pursue an aggressive academic career at Worcester State, studying both biotechnology and criminal justice. But she also wants to be part of the Lancers’ basketball program, and will make that happen in any way that also allows her to balance sports and her coursework.

“I wound up at Worcester State because I used to do camps there when I was younger,” Muscatell said. “I grew up with the team and the coach and I figured with the majors they offer, the cost, and how close it is, it would be the best fit for me.”

The Blackstone Valley Tech senior said she plans to try out for the basketball team when she arrives on campus, but the coaching staff told her she could join the program as a team manager at first if it ended up being a better fit and allowed her to pursue her double major.

“I love the game of basketball and I want to be a part of it in any way I can,” Muscatell said.

Muscatell, who played basketball, volleyball and lacrosse with the Beavers, has not ruled out the possibility of joining the team as a player. She cited her leadership and communication on the court as strengths she could bring to the Worcester State team.

Muscatell also wants to bring her high school experience into her studies and professional aspirations. She has spent time working in a nursing home as a certified nursing assistant. Long term care facilities have been hit especially hard by the coronavirus, which led Muscatell to pursue a career that will serve the public good.

“I am really drawn to sciences and especially now with the pandemic going on, the people who are behind the scenes working on vaccines, it’s drawn me to trying to help people in a different way,” she said.

Working collaboratively has been important for Muscatell during her high school sports career. In basketball, she was part of teams that won the state vocational tournament and played for the district title.

“We had great outcomes and great wins and I feel like the wins and even some of the losses shaped us into the team we were,” she said. “We had talent and we were a force to be reckoned with, it was remarkable.”

Her family, including her parents Amy and Jimmy and her sisters Olivia and Grace, have also been a big part of her team, as has the larger Valley Tech community.

“They’ve been amazing,” Muscatell said. “It’s great to see family and friends and alumni at BVT going to games and supporting us.”

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Shortly after Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker announced that schools would not be returning to campuses for the remainder of the school year due to COVID-19, the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA) announced the cancelation of the spring sports season.

The unanimous decision by the MIAA Board of Directors was described as “difficult and disappointing,” but came as little surprise after the governor’s announcement. The MIAA had already taken steps to shorten the regular season and canceled state tournaments in an effort to maximize competition had students been permitted to return to campus this spring.

“Despite this disheartening but unavoidable action, it is paramount to applaud our constituents, principals, athletic directors, coaches and student-athletes for their positive power of example and cooperation during this unprecedented crisis,” the MIAA said in a statement.

Nipmuc Athletic Director Chris Schmidt praised his coaches for the way they handled the news. Schmidt and the seniors would take the time to appreciate what they have been able to accomplish, even though they will be denied a chance to compete this spring.

“Message for them has been to reflect on the three or four years that they have had,” Schmidt said. “If you think back on the past few years, a lot of these kids have had some fantastic experiences, whether it’s playing in sectional championships, playing in a Super Bowl playing in state championships.”

“While losing their spring season is a disappointment,” Schmidt said, “they have had a lot of positives.”

In a statement on its web site, Blackstone Valley Tech announced the cancelation of spring sports “with a heavy heart.”

“We understand this news is devastating for all our student-athletes who have worked all year to prepare for their sports season,” the school said. “It is especially heartbreaking for our senior athletes who were looking forward to their final season as a BVT athlete. We are working on alternative ways in which to honor our senior athletes and will provide additional communication in the coming weeks.”

Both Upton schools would likely have fielded a number of strong teams this spring, but now the focus is on finishing the school year online as strong as possible and looking ahead.

“We want our kids to the opportunity to appreciate what they had and get excited for what the future holds,” Schmidt said. “Most of them are headed to college and some are participating in sports. It’s hard to see at that age what’s ahead of you, but we are trying to send that message.”

**MIAA Cancels Spring Sports Season**