Not Even COVID-19
Stops the Easter Bunny

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. Pighetti and UMass Memorial LifeFlight Paramedic Nicholas North. Among the towns and firms participating were Bellingham, Blackstone, Community EMS, Douglas, Holliston, Hopkinton, Franklin, LifeFlight, Medway, Mendon, Milford, Mills, Millville, Northbridge, Upton and Uxbridge. Jim Calarese Town Crier photo

Property Tax and Exemption Deadlines Extended to June 1

By Kevin Rudden
Staff Reporter/Columnist

The Board of Selectmen unanimously voted on April 13 to push back the deadlines for paying property taxes from May 1 to June 1 and the deadlines for applying for property tax exemptions from April 1 to June 1. Recently passed state legislation enabled the board to take such action because of the COVID-19 coronavirus public health emergency.

This is “very fair to our residents and taxpayers, given what everyone’s dealing with right now,” Selectman William Kingkade said. mentioning the large numbers of people being laid off due to the virus-related economic slowdown. “In a time like this, we as elected officials have to do the right thing,” Selectman Michael Walsh said. The board’s action also delays penalties and interest on late property taxes from being imposed until June 1. Also, penalties and interest on any excise taxes, betterment taxes or sewer bills due after March 10 will not take effect until June 30.

Selectmen Ask Moderator to Change Date for Town Meeting

By Kevin Rudden
Staff Reporter/Columnist

The Board of Selectmen voted unanimously on April 13 to ask Town Moderator Michael Noferi to change the date of the Annual Town Meeting from May 18 to up to 30 days later. The request was made to ensure the meeting would not mean a large gathering of people taking place during the COVID-19 coronavirus public health emergency. Selectmen and Town Moderator Richard Villani said the moderator has the ability, under state law, to recess the Annual Town Meeting to another date after first consulting with the Police and Fire chiefs and the Board of Health. Noferi cannot do that until the selectmen approve and post a warrant with at least one article on it, Villani explained. Once the date change is made, Health Officer Jacquelyn Murphy will have to notify the state Attorney General’s office about the reasons for the delay, he added.

Selectmen: Use Stabilization to Offset Cuts in State Aid

By Kevin Rudden
Staff Reporter/Columnist

The Board of Selectmen unanimously endorsed a plan put forth by Chairman William Buckley on April 13 to use the town’s $26.7 million in Stabilization Funds to prevent any cuts in state aid in the next fiscal year from causing the town’s tax rate to increase. Last week, the state legislature heard projections that the state may lose as much as $6 billion in tax revenues as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Stabilization to offset cuts p 10
Weekly Adult Paint Nights will be back after this crisis!!

I miss you my Happy Painters!

more fun painting experiences!

But once we have all made it through this, we will continue with parties or teach at your private event.

during this crazy time Christin’s Gallery cannot host paint nights,

GALLERY CLOSED DURING PANDEMIC

During this crazy time Christin’s Gallery cannot host paint nights, parties or teach at your private event.

But once we have all made it through this, we will continue with more fun painting experiences!

I miss you my Happy Painters!

Subscribe, Like, and Listen for FREE!

www.youtube.com/channel/UCWeKgLMCrXi8duY0KgyT71g

Some of you may need an escape,

so I have created one.

Join my travels through Australia. Listen to the reading of my book on my YouTube channel.

Search YouTube for Christin Barnett or use this link:

Recent Actions by Milford Selectmen

By Kevin Ruddien Staff Reporter/Columnist
• Continued until April 27 a public hearing on transferring the All-Alcoholic Beverages liquor license and Common Victualler license held by Sky Buffet on East Main St. (Rt. 16). (April 13)
• Approved a change of manager for the Retail Package Wine and Malt Liquor license held by Route 85 Mobil at 134 Cedar St. (Rt. 85) from Roger Roy to David Roy. (April 13)
• Town Administrator Richard Villani reported that the state Department of Revenue has approved The town’s Schedule A annual financial report closing out Fiscal Year 2019, which ended last June 30. (April 13)
• Villani reported that Consigli Construction donated installing a new dance floor in the Milford Youth Center. Chairman William Buckley requested a “thank you” letter be sent to the company for its many contributions to the Youth Center. (April 13)
• Granted Milford Special Olympics permission to change the date of its annual road race from September 26 – previously approved on March 30 – to Sunday, September 27 at Milford High School. (April 13)
• Accepted a $100 gift from the Birch Hill Condominium Association to the Milford Fire Department. (April 13)
Blackstone Heritage Corridor 2021 Calendar Photo Contest

Calling all photographers to enter the Blackstone Heritage Corridor 2021 Calendar Photo Contest. The 2021 theme is Historical Landmarks & Artifacts: Focus on the Famous and Not-So-Famous. Capture images of some of the historical landmarks within the 25 communities of the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor. While visiting the sites, look for something hidden—a gear, a spool, or even a glass bottle. Snap of photo of the famous part of the landmark and the not so famous and send in the discovery to the 2021 photo contest.

Entries must be original color photography submitted in high resolution (300 dpi minimum), horizontal (JPG format, 10 inches wide by 8 inches high). No black and white or altered images. Six free calendars will be the prize for each photographer featured for the individual months. To enter download an entry form at BlackstoneHeritageCorridor.org or calling 508-234-4242. There is no limit to the number of entries, but each photo must be accompanied by a signed entry form. The contest deadline is August 14. Winners announced in September.

The Unitarian Church in Mendon is one of the many Historical Landmarks in the Blackstone Heritage Corridor that photographers can take a picture of to enter into the 2021 Calendar Photo Contest. Jane Bigda photo

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I Hate Change

I hate change. I know that seems like a strong statement, but I really do. I like tradition and status-quo. I like when the same thing happens day after day, week after week, year after year. When eating out at favorite restaurants, I always order the same meal on the menu. The one time I didn’t was disappointed, so why would I order anything else? I don’t like to venture too far out of my comfort zone for choosing things like clothing or hair styles, because if I look ridiculous and it can’t be undone? Standing in the same place while I watch the annual Memorial Day of Santa Parades in Milford is a must, knowing I don’t, the pictures that I take won’t be quite right.

I know I am not alone. That there are people out there like me who treasure loyalty and longevity while admiring from afar people who easily “adapt” and “go-with-the-flow.”

But one thing that I have realized during this time of social-isolation is that change happens no matter how much you fight it. That it doesn’t have to be something to be scared of, but should be something to embrace.

Yes, we all may not have been able to eat Easter dinner with our extended family this year, but I am sure many of us have learned how to have a virtual meal with them through Zoom.

Those of us who were never a “take-a-walk-through-the-neighborhood” type of individuals, have come to meet some of the nicest people (from 6’ away) that you wouldn’t have met otherwise.

That even trying new foods while trying to support local restaurants through take-out is not only tolerable, but that maybe you found your new favorite meal. Change is hard in the best of circumstances, but maybe the best of qualities can be mastered in the worst of times.

And although my tolerance to change may have gotten a little better over the past few weeks, one change that will still be tough for me is that I will be soon signing off as a reporter for The Town Crier.

I have truly enjoyed the past 10-plus years covering the school related and feature events happening in Milford, Mendon and Upton. The people that I have met have inspired me with their stories and have, without a doubt, made me a better person.

It will be bittersweet for me to read the words of another reporter as he/she covers a school budget issue or writes about the annual Special Olympic School Day Games that each year, without fail, has me wiping away a tear.

But I know that this change was the best for me. And also for my editor who may now actually get articles submitted to her by their due date!

ADVERTISING IN THE TOWN CRIER MAKES GOOD BUSINESS SENSE...

WE DIRECT MAIL TO OVER 20,000 ADDRESSES!!!
Covid-19 Precautions for the U.S. Mail

To the Editor,

During these challenging times, postal employees are working hard to ensure residents stay connected with their world through the mail. Whether it's medications, a package, a paycheck, benefits or pension check, a bill or letter from a family member, postal workers understand that every piece of mail is important. While service like this is nothing new to us, we need our communities' help with social distancing. For everyone's safety, our employees are following the social distancing precautions recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and local health officials. We are asking people not to approach our carriers to accept delivery. Let the carrier approach a postal vehicle or carrier. If the carrier knocks on the door, open the door but do not approach the carrier.

Our workers understand that every piece of mail is important. While it's no secret that the mail is a lifeline for many, coronavirus is being spread through the mail.

With social distancing, we can keep the mail moving while keeping our employees, and the public, safe.

Mike Rakes
District Manager
U.S. Postal Service – Greater Boston District

MONTHLY COMMUNITY MEALS

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

Latest COVID-19 Updates from Milford Regional Medical Center

Milford Regional Medical Center (MRMC) continues to respond to changes with the coronavirus outbreak by adjusting services as needed.

Drive-thru Testing

Drive-thru COVID-19 testing is available, once again, at Milford Regional Medical Center (MRMC) for Milford Regional Physician Group patients, Tri-River Family Health Center patients, Edward M. Kennedy Community Health Center patients and Milford Regional physicians and employees. Patients should contact their primary care provider to determine if they meet Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) criteria. Patients that meet MDPH criteria must have a physician order to have the test; an appointment will be scheduled. The testing center is at the MRMC main entrance, 14 Prospect St., Milford. Milford Regional encourages symptomatic patients that do not qualify for testing to self-quarantine at home until they have had no fever for 72 hours and symptoms have improved and at least seven days have passed since symptom onset. Patients should monitor their symptoms and take their temperature daily. Anyone who develops any worrying symptoms such as increasing shortness of breath, chest tightness, lethargy, periods of confusion, or worsening fever, should contact their primary care provider or go to the emergency department for evaluation immediately.

X-Ray, Mammography and Ultrasound

Effective Monday, April 6, MRMC's diagnostic imaging area in the Cancer Center (Dana-Farber/Brigham and Women's Cancer Center) is providing X-ray services to patients without respiratory or COVID-19 symptoms. Off-site X-ray services remain open for walk-in patients at MRMC urgent care locations in Milford, Franklin, and Northbridge. Mammography services at Milford Regional in Franklin and Northbridge are suspended, as they have suspended ultrasound services at both Milford Regional in Franklin and Milford Regional in the Blackstone Valley. All emergency studies are performed at the hospital. Imaging services at the Women's Pavilion, located on the fourth floor of the Hill Building, will only be opened on Thursdays for emergency cases.

Urgent Care Sites

Milford Regional's Franklin (1280 West Central St.) and Northbridge (100 Commerce Dr.) Urgent Care sites are now open for patients exhibiting respiratory illnesses, such as fever, cough, mild shortness of breath, wheezing, sore throat, muscle aches, or loss of sense of taste or smell. The hospital’s Hopkinton Urgent Care site is temporarily closed. Patients with other urgent health issues should access the Milford Urgent Care site, 129 South Main St., Milford.

Labs

Temporary lab closures include 229 East Main St. Milford, 117 Water St. Milford (inside McGrath Medical Associates); and 74 Main St., Medway (inside Family Medicine Associates) plus the Milford Regional Urgent Care in Hopkinton lab and radiology services. Two lab locations open for healthy, non-COVID-19 symptomatic patients for all routine, non-respiratory illness related lab work, are 17 Uxbridge Rd. (Rt. 16), Mendon and 215 West St., Milford. The labs within Franklin, Milford and Northbridge urgent care sites are open as is the Hill Health Center lab at the hospital. Although all lab orders will be honored at each site, healthy, non-COVID-19 symptomatic patients are asked to use the Mendon or 215 West St., Milford locations to help control the spread of coronavirus. To stay up to date on the MetroWest region’s response to COVID-19, visit MilfordRegional.org.

Go Online and Be Counted; the 2020 Census is Underway

The U.S. Census counts every person in the country every 10 years. The data is used to determine how much federal funding our communities receive. The census is used to decide how much each community get in state and federal money for things like public health, education and assistance for senior citizens. The census is quick, easy, and important, and all answers are confidential.

The 2020 Census got underway when 140 million households received invitations to respond in mid-March. The invitation included an overview of the census, a description of language assistance in English plus 12 non-English languages and a census ID number linked to their household address. For the first time, nearly everyone will be invited rather than choosing to respond. The bill will maintain a safe distance, and instead of asking for a signature on their mobile device, they'll ask for the resident's name. The carrier will leave the mail or package in a safe place for retrieval.

We are proud of the role all our employees play in processing, transporting, and delivering mail and packages for the American public. The CDC, World Health Organization, as well as the Surgeon General indicate there is currently no evidence that COVID-19 is being spread through the mail.

With social distancing, we can keep the mail moving while keeping our employees, and the public, safe.

Mike Rakes
District Manager
U.S. Postal Service – Greater Boston District

The Advertiser’s Club Directory

The Advertiser’s Club Directory is a listing of those businesses that have contracted to advertise at least 12 times a year in The Milford Town Crier. Features include a listing in this directory, discounts and a feature article about your business (size and frequency requirements apply).
Girl Scouts Share the Love

Milford Girl Scouts and their families decorated the town in early April with signs of appreciation and love for essential workers. While following social distancing guidelines, girls in grades K-12 created heartfelt messages and delivered to the homes of health care workers, as well as posting signs at grocery stores, leaving notes at nursing homes, and even decorating mailboxes for mail carriers. Girls also created supportive messages in chalk on driveways, front doors, and yards for all to see.

One recipient, Becky Annis said, “After a very long week, the note from Girl Scouts in my mailbox really touched my heart. Thank you for caring and supporting this sister who is fighting the good fight against COVID-19 in long-term care. Feeling the love girls.” Many other recipients expressed similar sentiments when they arrived home to messages of appreciation. As an attribute of the Girl Scout Law states to be “considerate and caring,” Milford Girl Scouts certainly displayed an abundance of these qualities. Milford Girl Scouts thank all the essential workers during this ongoing pandemic. To view a video compilation from their Share the Love campaign, check out the Milford (MA) Girl Scouts on Facebook.

Citizens for Milford Hosting Four Candidate Forums

Citizens for Milford is hosting a series of four Candidate Forums one for each of the contested races. Each of the forums will be conducted using the video conferencing software ZOOM and will be live streamed on Milford TV and its other platforms. The forums will occur at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, April 28 for the Library Board of Trustees candidates, Thursday, April 30 for Board of Selectmen candidates, Tuesday, May 5 for School Committee candidates, and Thursday, May 7 for Highway Surveyor candidates.

Citizens for Milford member José Costa will be the moderator. Each forum begins with a two-minute opening statement from each candidate followed by an exchange of challenge questions between the opponents. The moderator will then pose questions to the candidates which have been submitted by the public. Milford residents are invited to submit questions during each forum by either calling a phone number displayed on the TV screen or posting messages to the Citizens for Milford Facebook page. Also, residents are encouraged to send questions in advance by posting on Facebook or emailing CitizensforMilford@gmail.com. As many voter questions as possible will be posed to the candidates.

Citizens for Milford Chairman Steve Trettel said, “Providing information to voters during our Town Election season is an ongoing commitment for Citizens for Milford. With the Town Election postponed to June 16, we are pleased to modify our typical forum format for these challenging times and urge all voters to tune in and participate by sending questions for the candidates.”

The Town Crier newspaper is once again Citizens for Milford’s media partner for the Candidate Forums. “As Milford’s local newspaper, delivered to all homes and businesses in town, The Town Crier strongly believes in encouraging citizen participation in Milford’s town government,” said Publisher Alfred Holman. Milford TV’s live stream platforms include the following: Comcast TV Channel 8, Verizon TV Channel 38, MilfordTV.net; VOD; ROKU; Twitter: @Milford_TV; Facebook: @MilfordTV; and Instagram: milfordtv.

All four forums will be video recorded and broadcast in the days leading up to the election on Tuesday, June 16. Milford TV will also have the videos available on its website, MilfordTV.net/vod. When available, Citizens for Milford will provide links to each video on its website and Facebook page.

More information about the forums is available at CitizensforMilford.com.
Caring for Emotional Health During COVID-19

Counselors urge seniors and all residents to take care of their emotional health during this stressful time. Fear, anxiety, isolation, sleep problems, stress and loneliness can all affect a person’s emotional and physical well-being. To deal with the stresses from the current pandemic, Wellness Support Group moderator, Gail Bourassa, LMHC, suggests the following coping strategies:

- Look for good/ beautiful/ funny things every day.
- Consciously take deep breaths. This process reassures the brain that all is well.
- When practicing social distancing, turn off the news and watch an entertaining show, play a game, enjoy a hobby listen to music, read a book, take a walk or do a few exercises; they can all transport us to another place.
- Mindfulness. Turn off the news and watch an entertaining show, play a game, enjoy a hobby listen to music, read a book, take a walk or do a few exercises; they can all transport us to another place.

Milford Managing Social Distancing Well, Chief Says

By Chris Villani
Staff Reporter/Columnist

Milford residents and businesses have been largely compliant in following social distancing guidelines set forth by state and local governments, according to Police Chief Michael Pighetti as he assessed an unprecedented situation for the town.

"We are trying to keep our people safe and others safe. We work in an environment to the extent that we can. " he said. "And I am happy about that."

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APRIL 24, 2020

Milford Town Crier

Town Expands Coverage for First Responders

By Kevin Rudden
Staff Reporter/Columnist

After several of the town’s first responders in the Police and Fire departments had to be quarantined after being exposed to people tested “positive” for the COVID-19 coronavirus, the Board of Selectmen took steps to ensure the employees would not be able to make an appointment and should delay their visit to a Service Center at this time.

Milford Town Crier

PMV 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.

These additional extensions reduce the need for customers to physically visit an RMV Service Center or one of its business partners’ facilities, allowing for ‘social-distancing’ by decreasing non-essential travel and customer volume.

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 and do not need to be renewed at this time.

The RMV recently introduced an online renewal option for CDL holders if they are self-certified in the Non-Excepted 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 expire until June 30, 2020 and do not need to be renewed at this time.

Exemptions 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. Customers seeking to do so in person will not be able to make an appointment and should delay their visit to a Service Center at this time.

Professional Credentials

Professional credentials for School Bus Certificates, School Pupil Transport Licenses (T1D), Inspector Licenses, Inspection Station Licenses, Driving Instructor Licenses and Driving School Licenses that expired or expired in March 2020 will now expire in July 2020 and do not need to be renewed at this time.

For the most up-to-date information on RMV extensions and other service and COVID-19 response measures, visit https://www.mass.gov/info-details/rmv-covid-19-information.

Love your local shops!
Support them through this crisis. Phone and online orders and buying gift cards are some ideas to keep them going.

Coping with Emotional Health During COVID-19

By Kevin Rudden
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**Thank You!!**

To those of you on the front-line of the Covid-19 pandemic:

Thank You!

Milford is fortunate to have some of the best doctors, nurses, medical support staff, police officers, firefighters and paramedics who serve the residents of Milford. While their jobs are so much more difficult during this present medical crisis, their commitment has been exceptional. Having served as a Chief of Police for 33 years, I salute each of you and I offer my personal thanks.

**ON TUESDAY, JUNE 16th, VOTE FOR PROVEN LEADERSHIP, VOTE FOR TOM O’LOUGHLIN**

Paid for by the Committee to Elect Tom O’Loughlin

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**Home Improvement**

Snow Showers Cover April Flowers

After an almost snowless winter, an April 18 snowstorm left about four inches of the white stuff in the local area. Here a blooming forsythia bush in the Milford backyard is festooned with snow. Jim Calarese Town Crier photo

The clash of seasons was also captured in Mendon as snow adorned a PJM rhododendron in full bloom. John Trainer photo

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**Elect Tom O’Loughlin Selectman**

Thank You!!

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Paid for by the Committee to Elect Tom O’Loughlin
April Flowers

During these past few weeks, I have seen how strong this community can be. I am proud of who we are as a town and proud of each and every person that has worked hard to make a difference. When this pandemic is behind us, there will be some hard work ahead of us.

I have guided my business through many hard times, and have had to make some tough decisions. Each time we were faced with adversity, my business came out stronger, and my experience grew. I will use that experience to help our town move past this unprecedented time.

I am committed to helping Milford and its citizens move past this very difficult time. By using a small portion of our stabilization fund, we would not have to raise taxes, and Milford could keep all of our municipal employees working. Stabilization was always looked at as our rainy day fund. It has never rained harder than it is raining right now. Milford needs to take care of all our residents and employees in these tough times.

I ask for your vote on June 17th to help me Move Milford Forward!

JOSH LIOCE
For Selectman

www.LioceForSelectman.com

Paid for the Committee to elect Josh Lioce
coronavirus-associated economic slump. Buckley said his goals in using what he termed the town’s “emergency fund” were to raise the rate because of the many business and employees being hurt by the economic downturn. A secondary goal would be maintaining services and employee levels. “I want to see if there’s a consensus going in this direction,” he noted.

The town had $20,671,960 in its long-term Stabilization Fund and $5,946,246 in short-term fund as of March 31, according to Town Treasurer Christopher Pilla. The Massachusetts Department of Revenue defines a stabilization fund as “A fund designed to accumulate amounts for capital and future service spending purposes although it may be appropriated for any lawful purpose.”

All kinds of state taxes – such as meals and hotel taxes and hotel occupancy taxes – are expected to be much lower, which will most likely mean that Governor Charles Baker and the state legislature will be sprinkling their plans for the state’s Fiscal Year 2021 budget, Buckley said. The resulting loss in state aid for Milford could be several million dollars, he noted.

Rather than cut town services and lay off employees, Buckley said, the town should go forward with its plans for the new budget year – which starts on July 1 by sticking “as closely as we can” to the state’s original aid projections Baker said earlier this year. Any drop in that aid figure should then be made up using the town’s savings, Buckley said. “This seems to be the best thing to do,” he added.

Buckley called for working with the Finance Committee and the Finance and the Committee to develop a new “plan A” for the next budget year, rather than coming up with a “Plan B.” Only the week before, Finance Director Zachary Taylor voiced the same concerns about decreasing state aid to the Finance Committee, saying he was going to ask all town departments head to develop alternative “Plan B” budgets for next year in case state aid decreases.

“We have millions of dollars and millions of dollars in reserve,” Selectman William Kingkade said. “Before we tax to the levy limit” or reduce services and staff, “We need to look at these accounts,” he added. “ Something like this is exactly what that money is for,” he continued. “All of the years of conserving spending has made available to us a storm weather like this.”

As Selectman Kingkade explained, the most important thing is that we try not to let anybody lose their job; Selectman Michael Walsh commented. “We’re sitting on a pretty good nest egg.”

Selectmen: What about COVID-19 in Senior Care Facilities?

By Kevin Rudden
Staff Reporter/Columnist

Seventy-one Milford residents have tested “positive” for the COVID-19 coronavirus as of April 15, the date on which the state Department of Public Health (DPH) began to publicly release the numbers of “positive” cases on a community-by-community basis. The DPH noted that the numbers be updated each week – are for “reported cases” only.

The DPH also began to publicize cases reported by the Milford Regional Medical Center on April 14, with Milford Regional Medical Center listing 47 suspected or confirmed COVID-19 patients, including nine in the Intensive Care Unit.

“We’ll emerge from this as strong a community” as Milford was before the pandemic, Buckley said, “Only if we make the right motions now.”

For example, the chairman said, the town could reduce or eliminate its annual contribution to the Stabilization Fund in the next fiscal year’s budget. And requests for new personnel can be looked at in terms of whether other positions are needed, he said.

Stabilization Fund monies are “what the taxpayers have already paid for and put in the bank,” Buckley said. “I want to take away much of the anxiety for the taxpayers and the department heads.”
Milford BOH, Police Warn of COVID Scams

By Chris Villani  
Staff Reporter/Columnist

The Milford Board of Health and police are warning residents to beware of scams tied to the novel coronavirus which have begun to emerge locally and have already raised alarms in other places around the world. In a bulletin sent to residents Monday signed by Director of Public Health Jacquelyn Murphy and Police Chief Michael Pighetti, residents are notified of several coronavirus-related schemes that are becoming common amid the pandemic. Among the schemes are the ask for personal information while posing as health care institutions like banks will also never ask for personal information un front of the phone or ask for an up-front payment. All of them are fake, the latter notes, stressing that residents should never give out personal information.

People are falling victim to these things and we don’t want to see our people fall victim to them,” Pighetti told the Town Crier Monday. “We haven’t had too many incidents want to see our people fall victim to them,” Pighetti told the Town Crier Monday. “We haven’t had too many incidents because people will be victimized, there is no question. ”

The letter urges Milford residents to stay vigilant and remain skeptical, reminding them that there are no at-home test kits currently approved and it is impossible to “inspect” someone’s home for the coronavirus. Legitimate institutions like banks will also never ask for personal information un front of the phone.

“That is a big red flag,” Pighetti said. “That’s a pure sign of a scam.”

Eva Velazquez, the CEO of the Identity Theft Resource Center, said COVID-19 scams began emerging at the same time as the virus itself. Most scams, she said, are prepackaged and simply waiting for some sort of crisis to add as a “hook.” Many schemes are anchored by local events, like a natural disaster. But the global reach of the coronavirus and its omnipresent nature in the headlines means COVID-19 fraud could potentially reach an unprecedented scale, not unlike the virus itself, Velazquez said.

The flyer instructs Milford citizens to call either the police or the board of health if they believe they have encouraged a COVID-19 scam or notice related suspicious behavior.

“We are constantly reminding people not to give out any personal identifying information over the phone or email, as we all shouldn’t be doing right now,” Pighetti said. “But people are human and they can forget, especially when we get into a situation that is uncomfortable and out of the norm.”

Milford Shows Higher COVID-19 Rate Than Neighbors

By Chris Villani  
Staff Reporter/Columnist

The data from April 14 is the start of a recurring data set from the Department of Public Health that will be updated every Wednesday afternoon on the state website. The report is scheduled to be updated April 22, after the publication deadline for the Town Crier.

Medway is second in the area in both total number of cases and the rate of cases, with 27 and 206 per 100,000 people respectively. Hopkinton had 21 COVID-19 cases as of the April 14 report, while Holliston showed 18. Upton, 11, Mendon nine and Hopedale seven.

Chelsea is the municipality with the state’s highest rate of COVID-19 cases, 1,890 per 100,000 people. Brockton is second with a rate of 1,223 infections per 100,000 people. Randolph had 367 recorded cases and a rate of 1,073 per 100,000 people. Williamstown has 1,004 cases per 100,000 people and Lawrence showed 93 cases per 100,000 people.

As Massachusetts experiences its surge in the number of infections and deaths tied to the global pandemic, the state also for the first time revealed the respective COVID-19 case loads for hospitals. The hospital census showed 27 confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19 being treated at Milford Regional Medical Center, including nine in the intensive care unit.

According to the state’s data, 10 hospitals were treating at least 100 COVID-19 patients as of April 16, the date the survey was done. Boston’s Massachusetts General Hospital had 409 cases and 153 in ICU, the most in the state. Massachusetts has emerged as a hotspot for the virus nationwide, in part due to the large number of tests the state has done on a daily basis. The state ranks sixth in deaths per 100,000 residents, and is third in total number of confirmed cases, trailing only New York and New Jersey.

The number is less than half of the statewide ratio of 487 cases per 100,000 people. That number is tied to the global pandemic, the state also for the first time revealed the respective COVID-19 case loads for hospitals. The hospital census showed 27 confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19 being treated at Milford Regional Medical Center, including nine in the intensive care unit.

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BVT Announces End of Massachusetts School Year

By Chris Villani

The Blackstone Valley Vocational Regional District School Committee held its regularly scheduled meeting remotely on Thursday, April 16, marking the first time in the school's history that the Committee has met virtually.

On the agenda, the Distance Learning Plan (DLP), which is going well, according to Assistant Superintendent-Principal, Anthony E. Steele II. In response to an outpouring of positive support of their DLP and feedback from all involved, BVT chose to respond with continued remote learning throughout the April vacation.

Although the District’s first inclination was to follow the posted school calendar with a vacation from April 20 through April 24, the School Committee opted to reverse that plan.

The majority favored working through April vacation since distance learning is gaining momentum, and the timing of a spring break representing an unnecessary break in continuity. Boosted by the positive feedback and impact of the District’s DLP, the School Committee was asked to amend the school calendar to continue remote learning throughout the April vacation. The Teachers Association and school administration agreed with the key aspect in forgoing the break beyond the Presidents’ Day holiday of keeping the continuity of present instruction so students remain engaged with home-based instruction.

As a vocational-technical system, the credentialing process required for certification within many of the trades is another factor that comes into play during this unique time. While BVT is collaborating with several licensing agencies regarding flexibility in attaining the required competency for shop classes, remote learning has raised new questions. The ability of their students to earn additional hours during which would have been the April week is beneficial to those students who could potentially graduate before May. The District’s DLP seeks to return to their traditional classrooms. The District School Committee vote unanimously modified the original school calendar to include distance learning for Tuesday, April 21 through Friday, April 24.

“We understand and recognize that this is an example of a local decision, and some might prefer a step back from the unique pressures caused by the pandemic,” said Superintendent-Principal, Michael F. Fitzpatrick. “For our students to earn credit toward their trade licenses, now will prove more significant than ever. Meanwhile, BVT staffs close to their schools for the remainder of the year. Nevertheless, I am proud of our staff and students for their continued willingness to pursue learning at every opportunity.”

BVT Amends School Calendar

Submitted by Elise Bogdan

Blackstone Valley Tech

School News

Teacher of the Year Award Cancelled

The Senator Louis P. Bertonazzi Foundation’s Board of Directors has voted to cancel its annual Teacher of the Year Award for 2020. The prize has been given for the past 22 years and is considered the most prestigious honor given to a Milford teacher each year.

Dr. Carl J. DiGregorio, Chairman of the Board, said, “It is with regret that the Board takes this action. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has compelled us to interrupt our annual recognition ceremony for this year only. We could not reliably start and complete the months-long processes related to the award, from the nominating methods, to presentations of teachers in their classrooms, to the decision-making task of the selection committee. These numerous gatherings were impossible to schedule in light of the COVID-19 guidelines put in place by state and local officials to protect Milford citizens, which included separation of teachers and students and closure of schools. The Foundation’s Board realizes that the Teacher of the Year award is a highlight of the initial meeting for the entire teaching staff of the Milford Public Schools and will be missed. In lieu of this, a presentation will be made in recognition of every hard-working, dedicated Milford teacher. The monetary part of the prize of $1000 will be donated to Milford Regional Medical Center in the name of the Milford Teachers’ Association, to be used for the protection of the hospital’s front-line staff, who labor under dangerous life-threatening circumstances, to treat the afflicted and keep the community healthy and safe during this unprecedented pandemic. A certificate commemorating this donation will be presented to the President of the Milford Teachers’ Association by the Foundation.”

Former State Senator Louis Bertonazzi said, “We are disappointed that circumstances prevent us from honoring a Teacher of the Year in 2020. We will however, start the process as the new year unfolds. Meanwhile, we hope that Milfordians stay safe, remain healthy and help each other get through this frightful pandemic with the concern and spirit of cooperation that Milfordians have always exhibited in difficult times.”

The Bertonazzi Foundation’s board members are Dr. Carl J. DiGregorio, Chairman, Gail Crimilda, Janice Guerriere, Julie Kizziar, Anthony E. Steele II, Brian Coon, Andrew Dioso, Treasurer and Attorney David Bertonazzi, clerk. Sen. Bertonazzi is ex officio.

Dean’s List

The following Milford students were named to the Dean’s List at their respective schools for the 2019-2020 school year:

Savannah College of Art and Design, Savannah: Adonis Gilbert Deking

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School News

APRIL 24, 2020
Milford Town Crier

2020 MCAS Tests Cancelled

Compiled by Melissa Orff
Staff Reporter/Columnist

The Milford School Committee held a virtual meeting on April 16 where updates were given on MCAS, the Student Opportunity Act, remote learning, and budgets for the Milford Public Schools.

With schools heading into their second month of having to educate students remotely, questions have been raised about the Spring MCAS exam. After receiving a federal waiver, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education announced on April 10 that MCAS exams will be cancelled this year due to the relief of many administrators and teachers.

“Since we know about MCAS now, we have the opportunity to think of teaching and learning in a different way,” said Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Craig Consigli.

Remote Learning Updates

Consigli and Superintendent of Schools Dr. Kevin McIntyre updated the Committee on Milford’s remote learning platforms which is now in its third week of operation. Teachers have been very thoughtful about the ways they have put lessons together, the different ways they can meet up with students,” said Consigli. “They are trying very hard (to replicate) the [school] experience."

The district is trying to reach out to students in a variety of ways, said McIntyre, including hosting weekly one hour shows on Milford Access TV including a program about mental health presented by SEL Director Lisa Kingkade and a program for families on how to support their children with literacy and math. Future topics will include parent to parent, language teachers and guest authors doing readings.

Just as important as teaching and learning, said Consigli, is trying to find ways to keep a connection with all students, especially those with the greatest needs. “We constantly think about how we can continue to make distance learning engaging and equitable,” he said. “It’s on the minds of all of us.”

Meal Program

The district is also making sure that students and their families have access to nutritious meals while school buildings are shut down. McIntyre said that as of mid-April, the district has provided close to 4,000 meals to Milford families and thanked a number of organizations for awarding grants to help provide meals including the EOS Foundation, Foundation for Metrowest, the Metrowest Health Foundation, the Doug Flutie Jr Foundation, the American Student Assistance (ASA), and the New England GrassRoots Environment Fund.

Fiscal 2021 Budget

Discussion turned to budgets for FY21, which school officials say are very much up in the air with the current crisis. Although the district will see significant savings in the transportation and short-term substitute line items for this year (FY20), next year is shaping up to be a very difficult budget year for schools across the Commonwealth.

“Zach [Milford’s Finance Director Zachary Taylor] sent out a notification to all department heads that we are, of course, in a financial crisis,” said Assistant Superintendent for Business & Human Resources Kathleen Perry. “We will stay in that status until we hear more from our state and local governments.” “We will probably get a little more clarity over the next few weeks,” commented McIntyre, who said the only indications were that it was “not a great outlook” for FY21 budgets.

St. Jude Provides Tools to Help Kids Better Understand the Coronavirus

Using their years of expertise helping families and children navigate illness and diagnoses, psychologists and child life specialists at St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital have developed a suite of tools available in multiple languages (currently in English, Spanish, French and Arabic) for utilization by parents and caregivers to help children better understand the current COVID-19 pandemic. Visit Together.StJude.org/en-us/care-support/ talking-about-coronavirus-covid-19.html to view all of the St. Jude coronavirus resources, which are free and easily downloadable for the general public to utilize during this global health pandemic.

“During challenging times, it’s natural to want to protect our children from anything unpleasant, but kids are incredibly observant,” said Dr. Valerie Crabtree, Chief of Psychosocial Services at St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital. “Even if it looks like they are not paying attention, they watch their parents and other family members and adults to figure out what is going on. The COVID-19 tools we have developed are resources for every family, regardless of if they are St. Jude families or not. We saw a need in our community and wanted to do our part to help parents and families have the tools they need at this difficult time to have honest, developmentally-appropriate conversations with each other about what our country and world are experiencing.” The suite of coronavirus-related tools include the Learn About the Coronavirus Coloring Book developed for children ages 5-9 (curiously being translated into nine additional languages, as well as the Learn About the Coronavirus Activity Book geared more toward younger ages, 2-5, or less. Additionally, the St. Jude Together website has an entire set of resources for parents including information developed by the St. Jude experts on “how to talk to your children about coronavirus and COVID-19” to tips and frequently asked questions children may ask about the virus. Tips include asking a child what he or she learned in school about the disease, what they are feeling, being open and honest, helping a child feel safe, offering reassurance and continuing normal activities. The St. Jude psychosocial team has long developed illustrated brochures, activity books and comic book-like resources for patients and families to better understand and talk about difficult diagnoses, such as pediatric cancer.

Milford Summer Meals Program Responds to Federal Budget

The Milford Summer Meals Program, which provides both breakfast and lunch, has been activated during the school closure due to the coronavirus. The Milford Area Humanitarian Coalition, the Hockomock YMCA and the Milford Public Schools have teamed up again to address this unprecedented issue presented to the community. The alliance was called to arms to address the immediate need of providing breakfast and lunch to students. Currently, a school closure due to the coronavirus is drive up or walk to Memorial Elementary School, Walnut St. and be handed a meal without entering the building. Monday through Friday, breakfast is served from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. and lunch is served from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. During the first two weeks of distribution, a total of 4,440 meals were served.

Weekend meals designed to fill in the gap between lunch on Friday and breakfast on Monday is ongoing. Many contributions have been donated but more are still needed. Checks maybe made out to the Milford Area Humanitarian Coalition and mailed to the Law Office of Michael M. Kaplan, 291 Main St., Milford 01757. All of the donations go directly to the program, none are used for administrative costs.
Sport

Milford’s Hanna Helped Colby to Tourney, Scored 1,000th

By Chris Villani
Sports Reporter/Columnist

Milford native Matt Hanna put together a standout junior campaign at Colby College, helping the basketball team to a spot in the NCAA tournament and scoring his 1,000th point along the way. “It was a lot of fun,” Hanna said. “Coming off of the previous year, we had a pretty good team and we knew we had the chance to be really good. We started in the fall and ramped up our conditioning and workouts and got closer as a team. I think that propelled us into having the season we had.”

The Mules finished the season 24-4. They started the campaign winning 17 straight games and rose in the national rankings. Colby lost a thriller in double over-time against Tufts in the NESCAC Championship game and fell in the first round of the NCAA tournament, but Hanna was still grateful for the chance to dance. "As a kid, you’re always watching the Division 1 March Madness but the past couple of years I have been following the Division III tournament," he said. “It was a lot of fun traveling down to New Jersey with my teammates and getting to experience that. “It was a lot of fun traveling down to New Jersey with my teammates and getting to experience that.

Hanna attended Catholic Memorial High School before spending a prep year at Vermont Academy. The five-foot-nine guard averaged around 15 points per game in each of the past two seasons and reached the 1,000-point mark in a game against Tufts.

He said he was happy to reach the milestone in Massachusetts since a lot of his friends and family were in attendance. Hanna entered the day with 997 points and, early in the first half, caught a pass in transition and rose for a left-wing three-pointer. “It went down and it was a great feeling,” he said.

The Milfordian landed at the Waterville, Maine college after connecting with the basketball coach while Hanna was in high school. He worked through the process, learning more about the educational and athletic opportunities the school could offer. “I am really close with my coaches, they trust me and what I do on the court,” Hanna said. “It’s a great school academically and the best DIII conference in the country.”

Hanna is majoring in education at Colby and has been a starter on the basketball team since he stepped onto campus. After a stellar junior campaign, he has his sights set high for senior year. “There hasn’t been a day that I haven’t thought about that last game at Tufts," Hanna said, referring to the NESCAC title loss. “Colby has not won a NESCAC tourney so that’s the number one goal and getting back to the NCAA Tournament is right there with it.”

Scarlet Hawk Athletes

Getting Active During Crisis

By Chris Villani
Sports Reporter/Columnist

With spring sports on hold, Milford High athletes were responding to the challenge to get out and get active as they hoped and waited for a start to their respective seasons. Those hopes were dashed on April 21, when Governor Charlie Baker cancelled school for the rest of the year, Milford Athletic Director Peter Boucher said in response to the announcement, “Definitely not an unexpected update unfortunately. The Gov. is looking out for the best interest of all. Nonetheless, I am still sad and distressed for our spring student-athletes and coaches, especially our seniors. These are uncharted waters but Milford is a strong community and we’ll persevere and find a way to have a positive outcome when this quarantine is completed.”

Even though they had not had time practicing together Milford High athletes participated in a fitness challenge during what would have been April vacation. They did crunches on Friday, wall sits on Saturday, push-ups on Wednesday, planks on Tuesday and a Monday mile walk or run to honor what would have been the day of the Boston Marathon.

The idea was sparked by Milford’s “Spring Fling,” where coaches encouraged athletes to put on some Scarlet Hawks gear and get out and practice. “We had a lot of pictures sent to us of people out there with their families,” said Milford Athletic Director Peter Boucher. “It was really positive and you could feel the energy in the kids come back around.”

Each team, girls’ lacrosse, boys’ volleyball, and so on, is competing as a team against the others at MHS and the challenges were completed during a two-hour window each afternoon over what would have been April vacation week. Boucher held a Zoom meeting with the captains to tell them about the idea. But the biggest excitement came when the Milford coaches decided to get involved with a team of their own. “There really got things going,” Boucher said. “We have a lot of retired has-beens and every single coach was on board. When I pitched it to the team captains, they went ballistic.”

Boucher will tally the totals and see which team comes out on top. But he said the Milford athletes are just happy to be competing and getting some friendly rivalries going. “It’s been a really positive vibe in a really difficult time,” Boucher said. “Kids are getting out and they have a reason to get out, it’s been awesome.”

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Milford & Hockomock
Committed to Maximum Spring Slate

By Chris Villani
Sports Reporter/Columnist

Milford High School and the Hockomock League in which the Scarlet Hawks compete are committed to delivering the maximum spring schedule possible for their athletes, even if that whittles down to a single weekend.

MHS Athletic Director Peter Boucher said the league has already discussed a number of contingency plans for the season already delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic. As of Monday, the school year was scheduled to start May 4 which would move the start of athletic competition to May 11.

The state tournaments have already been canceled and any form of postseason play is in jeopardy should the school year resume any later, but Boucher said the Hockomock League has talked about what to do if the season gets started a week later, two weeks later, or even if school returns to buildings only briefly in June.

One plan would involve a weekend “festival” of sorts when teams played games on Friday followed by doubleheaders at different sites on Saturday and Sunday.

“Really, I think the heavy emphasis is on the seniors,” Boucher said. “A lot of us played in high school or played in college. I can’t imagine what my response would be if somebody said to me ‘hey you’re not going to be competing in the spring as a senior’.”

“I could process it as an underclassman and I understand this situation is life or death,” the AD added. “But I would have trouble thinking I would not be able to suit up one more time.”

Run batters and all other athletic directors in the area are staying “cautiously optimistic” that Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker will not nix the entire school year. If that were to happen, spring sports would, of course, not begin at all.

The MIAA has made a number of adjustments due to the pandemic in an effort to protect a spring sports experience when and if school comes back. Canceling the state tournament and extending the deadline to complete tournament play to June 28 would permit a regular season of around eight to 12 contests in most team sports.

Boucher said the league is not ready to release proposed alternate “schedules” if the season is further delayed, but said the planning is in place to give athletes even the most fleeting of chances to compete.

“Milford is going to try to do everything we can to get these kids to put the red and white on and compete one more time before they head off to college or to work or the military,” he said. “We owe them that opportunity and we are going to do everything we can to give it to them.”

Comisky Pursue Medical Field Studies, Run at Merrimack

By Chris Villani
Sports Reporter/Columnist

Milford High School senior Sara Comisky has long wanted to go to a school with whichever we need to do to make sure everyone is safe.”

“I want to be good at my job. If someone is hurt, I am excited to one-day help make a change for people,” Comisky said. “I have always felt like I wanted to make a difference and help people, that’s always been a desire of mine.”

“The ongoing pandemic has strengthened that, “Comisky said. “Now when you see hundreds of thousands of people hurt, I am excited to one-day help make a change for people.”

The MHS distance runner said the COVID-19 crisis changed her perspective about her desired field. She got a bit of a late start on the college search process, she said, but is now happy with where she ended up.

When she decided she wanted to stay in state, the North Andover college became the perfect landing spot.

“I was able to go on a tour with the track and field coaches and another student and everyone was so great and welcoming,” Comisky said. “Not only did I want to go to Merrimack and I think it felt like the school for me.”

She said her parents Stephanie and John have been incredibly supportive during her search. Comisky said her father loved the idea of sending her to Merrimack.

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Sports Reporter/Columnist

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Milford Track Athletes Compete Virtually

By Chris Villani
Sports Reporter/Columnist

Milford High's track and field athletes, like those who compete in all spring sports, have been left waiting for their season to begin. But a handful chose to compete in a pair of virtual meets, giving them a goal to work towards and the chance to compete against competition from in and out of the state.

A total of 17 MHS runners competed in a virtual 4x1 mile relay as part of the annual Knights of Columbus Relays that normally take place in Rhode Island. This year, amid social distancing, the runners had to complete a GPS-measured mile on their own and submit their times.

The large volume of runners allowed the Scarlet Hawks to submit both “A” and “B” teams for the boys and the girls.

â€œIt’s a good thing to keep people focused,“ said Glenn O’Connor, the Scarlet Hawks’ boys’ track and field head coach. “Some of the kids are getting frustrated, especially the seniors, and this is something that might get them out the door. If you have to run a mile on a Sunday, then you’re more likely to get some runs in Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday.”

O’Connor said the Milford runners were able to post strong times. Juniors Kerry O’Connor, Alyssa Monahan and Emma Lawrence competed for the girls’ “A” team along with senior Maddie Boyle. Sydney Kall, Stephanie Goutel, Brittany Silverman, Haley Jansons and Anna Peveiling also competed for Milford.

On the boys’ side, seniors Max Manor and Liam Bennett were joined by sophomore James Comisky and freshman Mark Butters on the “A” team. Gabe Pardo Cota, Andrew Weber, Jack Jansons and James Lynch ran for Milford as well, with each runner posting a time near or below six minutes.

The Scarlet Hawks were also well represented this past weekend in a virtual “border war” against runners from Rhode Island, running either an 800 meter or one-mile distance. O’Connor and Lawrence each finished in the top-10. O’Connor was second in Massachusetts and fourth overall in the 800, while Lawrence checked in fourth in the state and seventh in the competition.

Maren Haplun ran the 800 along with Silverman and Peveiling. Butters was the lone MHS boy to compete in the 800, while Jansons represented Milford in the girls’ mile.

For all the athletes, O’Connor said it was good to be able to compete.

â€œThere has been no carrot out in front of the stick,“ he said. “This will be over someday and we will try to stay positive.”

Adopting Maverick, a pandemic puppy, is an unexpected bonus of the coronavirus for reporter Chris Villani and his fiancée.

My fiancée and I have known we wanted a puppy for a while now, but the time was never right. We were supposed to spend this spring traveling ahead of our wedding and more travel afterward. When coronavirus hit, it suddenly became the best time to get a puppy, but we weren’t scheduled to take one home for months.

Two weeks ago, we received a call from the breeder. Due to the pandemic, a couple slated to take a puppy home this month could not. Two days later, we drove Maverick – a 12lb. Australian cobber dog named for the brand name of my golf clubs and my dad’s first car — from Northborough to his new home in Watertown.

The first two weeks have been, in a word, challenging. Maverick lives up to his name. He’s a free spirit who is constantly on the hunt for something to chew, a place to nap, or a spot to relieve himself. We’ve made some steady improvement with crate training and... well, hopefully. But that’s all he can do, all he knows how to do, is take it one day and one moment at a time and put his trust and affection in the hands of those who love him.

A puppy is more than just a distraction from the difficulties of a sad time. It’s a years-long commitment to care for another life. But in calming Maverick’s anxieties and fears about his strange new surroundings, it’s easy to let us own our slip away, even temporarily.

The first weeks with a puppy are the hardest. And for all of us, these next weeks will be incredibly difficult on a far more serious scale. I hope as many people as possible get through it with love and health, and I hope we do right by Maverick.

Because, without even trying, he’s given us smiles and joy we’ve sorely needed.