



**HAPPY HAFEYS:** Jackson Hafey is joined by his mother Melissa Hafey and father Steve Hafey during the recent Eagle Scout Court of Honor ceremony.



**MARK'S MARK:** Troop 20 Eagle Scout Mark Renzi enjoys a happy moment with his mother Donna Renzi and father Mark Renzi. (*Sun Rise* photos by Pete Fontaine)



**SUPER SCOUT:** David Dilorio enjoys his recent Eagle Scout award with his mother Vicky Dilorio and father Joe Dilorio.

## 3 earn honor of Eagle Scout during Troop 20 ceremony

By PETE FONTAINE

Add the names David DiIorio, Mark Renzi and Jackson Hafey to the list of teenagers who have earned the highest honor in the Boy Scouts of America.

On a day when pomp and circumstance took

center stage inside St. Robert Bellarmine Church in Johnston, the highly decorated three young role models received the prestigious Eagle Scout award during an impressive ceremony. Former Johnston state Rep. Stephen Ucci, who received the same honor back in

1987, emceed the day's events.

"The awarding of the Eagle badge is an important and serious matter," Ucci told a small yet appreciative audience made up of parents, family friends and dignitaries such as Rhode Island Secretary of State Nellie

Gorbea. "It is an occasion of both pride and joy, and a time for serious contemplation. It is also the culmination of the various leaders of these Scouts."

Ucci was referring to current Troop 20 Scoutmaster Robert N. Simons Jr. and David Curtin, the highly respected former

scoutmaster who actually performed the official induction of DiIorio, Renzi and Scuncio into the prestigious Eagle Court of Honor.

Because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, which canceled the 2020 induction ceremony, the invitation list was cut

considerably short yet included a special visit from Johnston Police Chief Joseph P. Razza, who remembered his younger years as a member of the Boy Scouts of America.

"I consider it a privilege to be invited and witness

■ SCOUTS - PAGE 5



**SUPER SMILE:** Johnston native Jen Burns is excited about taking on the challenge as sales director at ultra-modern independent and assisting living facility that will be known as the Preserve. (*Sun Rise* photo by Pete Fontaine)

## Burns heads to The Preserve as new sales director

By PETE FONTAINE

It's the "little niceties," as well as incomparable caring and compassion, that have made Jen Burns a highly popular and successful executive in the ever-changing long-term care industry.

Even Jon Pistacchio, a lieutenant in the Johnston Fire Department, remembered Burns – his childhood classmate at St. Rocco School – as "tough as nails and extremely smart" and he knew she would be very successful in life.

Other professionals such as Our Lady of Grace pastor Rev. Peter J. Gower, JPD Chief Joseph P. Razza and JFD Battalion Chief Richard Boehm this week heaped words of praise upon a woman who is considered a step above when it comes to caring about others.

■ BURNS - PAGE 11

## Polisena: Relief aid going to COVID expenses

By JACOB MARROCCO

Johnston Mayor Joseph Polisena said he doesn't know yet how much aid is in store for the town as part of President Joseph Biden's \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan, but he has an idea where those funds will be allocated once they arrive.

He said some of the expenses incurred because of the coronavirus pandemic can be addressed by the incoming cash, notably police and fire overtime working vaccination clinics and responding to case calls.

Polisena noted that he would have to explore the parameters of how the money can be spent, but

he would like to purchase a new fire truck and rescue vehicle if possible.

"Our fire apparatus is constantly on the road, a lot of COVID calls," Polisena said, adding that the Johnston Fire Department was once responding to a dozen positive cases every day. "The money will be used for

COVID-related expenses. If they give us more leeway, we'll have to see what we're going to do with it. I don't plan on having a tax increase this year anyway because we have reserves put aside. COVID money will replace that."

■ RELIEF - PAGE 11

## Graduation committee proposes options for June ceremony

By JACOB MARROCCO

The Johnston School Committee heard three proposals for graduation during its meeting Tuesday night as the district aims to prepare for another outdoor ceremony to accommodate COVID-19 protocols.

Graduation Committee chair Melissa Patrone first requested a change in date from Thursday, June 17, to Saturday, June 19, in the event that the selected graduation format requires multiple ceremonies. The proposed rain date would be Sunday,

June 20.

Patrone said each plan would allow seniors to have the "traditional ceremonial graduation experience" and "give them the best experience we can allow." The first would be a full ceremony on the high school football field, with live-streaming capabilities for those unable to attend and each student permitted one or two guests as well.

The second option is a similar proposal, but with staggered graduation sessions "depending on numbers" to still provide a unique experience for the

students. The final possibility was a similar setup to last year's ceremony, which hosted seniors at the North Woods parking lot as they watched a pre-recorded video with their loved ones.

One feature that is likely to remain no matter which path is taken would be the pre-graduation parade. Patrone proposed that the procession happen on Friday, June 18, so students can have the event all to themselves. It would likely run in reverse to last year, starting at North Woods and continuing toward the high school.

"[We] would allow floats if we were able to do that," Patrone said. "Traditional homecoming floats, we'd like to have this incorporated into the parade. Most important [was] to get in front of you to share the students' concerns ... We have started to work out some of the logistics. There is more in-depth research once we get your opinion and approval."

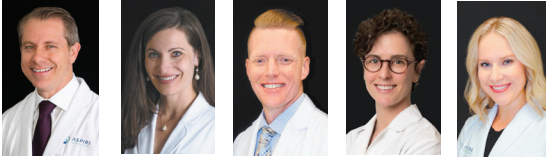
Chair Bob LaFazia requested a breakdown in writing from Patrone so the board could review

■ GRAD - PAGE 4



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# POLICE LOG

The Police Log is a digest of reports provided by the Johnston Police, Rhode Island State Police and other departments.

## FELONY LARCENY

Patrolmen Cody Weaver and Michael Martufi responded to Rhode Island Superior Court on the afternoon of Feb. 4 to take custody of Mark Pine, 51, 26 Clarion St., Cranston, who was wanted on a warrant issued from the Johnston Police Department on charges of felony larceny and misdemeanor vandalism.

Pine's arrest stemmed from an alleged incident that occurred the morning of April 6, 2020, when Patrolman Matthew Winsor responded to a call for larceny and vandalism. The reporting party told Winsor that some time in the past day, an unknown suspect - later identified as Pine - broke the rear passenger-side window and stole all four rims and tires from a vehicle. Winsor was also told that the suspect had broken the rear driver's side window of another car. The rims and tires were valued at \$2,000 each, while the broken windows totaled \$125 apiece.

Winsor said that, while on scene, he saw a possible fingerprint directly below the broken rear passenger window on the first vehicle. He said he also saw what appeared to be several small drops of blood on the rear passenger and driver's side door of the vehicle.

## ELUDING A POLICE OFFICER

Patrolman Michael Martufi Jr. was on a fixed traffic post at the intersection of Simmonsville and Atwood avenues on the morning of Feb. 17 when he observed a vehicle traveling at a high rate of speed with its lights off.

Martufi activated his emergency lights and sirens when the vehicle drove by, and quickly positioned himself behind the car but the driver refused to stop. He looked down at his speedometer at one

point to see he was driving 72 miles per hour, but the car continued to drive faster to elude him.

The car took a quick right turn into the driveway of 282 Simmonsville Ave., and Martufi knew from prior police experience that the driveway is long and narrow leading to a dead-end parking space. He posted at the top of the driveway and waited for additional police units to assist. Within seconds, three other officers arrived and proceeded up the driveway. Martufi noticed that the hood was still hot to the touch, despite the outside temperature being 27 degrees, confirming it was the vehicle trying to elude him.

He and the other officers checked for footprints in the snow and found none, indicating the suspect stayed on the dry pavement when he fled his vehicle and did not run in to the surrounding woods. He discovered the snow in front of the door to 282B Simmonsville Ave. was recently disturbed, even though identifiable print was left.

Martufi knocked on the door several times with no answer. He ran the registration plate to discover it belonged to Rocky Leslie, 31, 12 Geneva St., Providence. He was able to confirm he was the driver who passed him by viewing his license photo. The registration had expired as of July 2020. A tow truck was requested, and as soon as it pulled up, Leslie emerged and asked, "What's going on here?" while trying to film the officers with his phone. Leslie was arrested for eluding a police officer, and he was complaint and did not resist arrest.

In the presence of another officer, Martufi asked Leslie if he wanted to discuss why he eluded his pursuit. Leslie replied, "I wish to remain silent."

Leslie was later released with a Third Division District Court summons to appear, and Martufi noted that failure to appear would result in a warrant for his

arrest.

## VANDALISM

Patrolman Adam Parkinson and several other officers responded to a disturbance in progress the morning of Feb. 14.

Upon arrival, he met with an unidentified Uber driver. He said he pulled his vehicle into the driveway, at which point the female rider entered the vehicle. Seconds later, the suspect - identified as Jakob Hendrix, 28, 195 Calvis St., Newport - was chasing after her and yelling.

The driver advised that an attempt was made to open the passenger side door. He believed he was going to physically remove the woman from the car. He locked the vehicle, at which time Hendrix allegedly began punching the windows and kicking the doors. The driver advised that he contacted police as Hendrix was yelling profanities and threatening him.

While attempting to speak with Hendrix, Parkinson said he smelled an alcohol beverage. Hendrix appeared to be unsteady on his feet and slurring his speech as well. Parkinson said Hendrix was verbally combative and he appeared to be attempting to goad all officers on scene into a fight by swearing and using insulting remarks.

After he was cuffed, Parkinson noticed that Hendrix has managed to slide the locked cuffs from behind his back to in front of him and was now using his phone to film all parties. Parkinson grabbed the phone and attempted to check his pockets for keys when he began to scratch his left hand, which began to bleed.

He was arrested and charged with vandalism/malicious injury to property and disorderly conduct.

## WARRANT

Patrolmen Cody Weaver and Michael Martufi responded to a report of dispersal of an unwanted party the af-

ternoon of Feb. 5.

Upon arrival, Weaver said he met with someone who explained that Michael Adolfo, 33, 216 Maple St., Newport, had been knocking on the door for several moments, but had left the scene without incident just prior to police arrival. Warrant checks on Adolfo showed that he had two warrants issued by Rhode Island Superior Court for failure to appear for arraignment. He and Martufi checked the surrounding streets for Adolfo and moments later was discovered standing next to 169 Greenville Ave. Weaver approached him and, upon confirming his identity, placed him under arrest.

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Patrolman Thomas Pederzani and Arthur Petteruti were on a fixed post at 775 Hartford Ave. on the afternoon of Feb. 5 when they saw a vehicle traveling past them with no front registration plate.

Pederzani conducted a stop down the road and spoke with the operator Nicholas Lopes, 27, 12 Calumet Ave., Johnston. A procedural check revealed Lopes had an active warrant out of the Warwick Police Department on a charge of possession of fentanyl.

Lopes was placed under arrest and taken back to JPD headquarters, where Warwick Police eventually took custody of him.

## EXPIRED LICENSE

Patrolman Charles Psilopoulos detained a vehicle in the area of 2071 Plainfield St. the morning of Feb. 10.

Procedural checks revealed that the driver - identified as Matthew Parenteau, 35, 308 Norwood Ave., Warwick - had an expired permit and this was his third offense. He was arrested on a charge of driving with an expired license or without a license, and he was released on scene with a Third Division District Court summons for June 7.

# Gas prices up 26 cents in one month

Rhode Island's average gas price is up five cents from last week, averaging \$2.69 per gallon. Monday's price is 26 cents higher than a month ago and 26 cents higher than March 8, 2020. Rhode Island's average gas price is 8 cents lower than the national average.

Pump prices are increasing as refinery uti-

lization is at an all-time low and crude oil prices surged by more than \$2 to \$66 a barrel on Friday, the highest price in nearly two years. The jump in crude followed the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries' and their allies', collectively known as OPEC+, surprise decision to minimize increase production in April.

"With crude oil prices back on the rise, we could see the national average climb towards \$2.90 this spring with some relief by early summer," said Lloyd Albert, Senior Vice President of Public and Government Affairs for AAA Northeast. "The last time we saw the national average flirt with \$3 was nearly three years ago in May

2018. At that time, crude was averaging about \$71 per barrel."

AAA Northeast's March 8 survey of fuel prices found the current national average to be 5 cents higher than last week, averaging \$2.77 a gallon. Today's national average price is 31 cents higher than a month ago, and 39 cents higher than this day last year.



# JPD continuing to seek public feedback on accreditation

Members of the community are encouraged to offer their comments about the Johnston Police Department's review for national accreditation during a public information session to be held at 6:30 p.m. on Monday, March 15, at the Johnston Municipal Court.

The hearing will provide interested citizens an opportunity to address an assessment team concerning all aspects of the town's police department.

"We encourage and look forward to members of the community providing us with feedback at this public comment session," Johnston Police Chief Joseph Razza said. "This level of transparency will allow the dedicated men and women of the Johnston Police Department the ability to provide our citizens with a higher level of dedication and police services to the community we proudly serve."

The Johnston Police

Department earned state accreditation in 2015, followed by accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc. (CALEA), a national accrediting body, in 2017. CALEA accreditation remains in effect for four years.

CALEA is a credentialing authority composed of associations such as the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives, the National Sheriffs' Association, and the Police Executive Research Forum.

Accreditation from the commission is highly sought after by police departments across the country. It is a continuous process and requires all department files to remain updated and ready for annual compliance reviews.

"Accreditation is a voluntary self-assessment and management tool that holds police depart-

ments accountable for established, industry recognized, standards of best practice," Capt. Matthew Benson said. "I am extremely proud of the commitment our town's leadership has made to this process while recognizing the value of accreditation and how it positively impacts the community."

Social distancing and mask guidelines will be followed during the hearing. Public comments addressing the agency's ability to comply with CALEA standards are limited to 10 minutes per person.

Those who cannot attend the public information session, but would like to provide feedback may do so by phone at 401-680-2136 on Tuesday, March 16 between the hours of 1 p.m. and 3 p.m., or by writing to the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc. (CALEA), 13575 Heathcote Blvd., Suite 320, Gainesville, Virginia, 20155.



**PREPARING FOR ACCREDITATION:** Captain Matthew Benson, Chief Joseph Razza and Deputy Chief Mark Vieira review files in preparation for Monday's public information forum. (Submitted photo)

# The realignment of RI's political tectonic plates

## TALKING POLITICS



by  
IAN  
DONNIS

Gina Raimondo may one day look back on last week as the time when everything changed.

Raimondo has a shiny new high-profile gig as Commerce secretary in the Biden administration, where she'll be involved in everything from the Census and salmon management to boosting broadband and navigating nettlesome telecom issues with China.

"My first order of business is doing everything I can to get Americans back to work," Raimondo told MSNBC's Stephanie Ruhle, in her first interview in her new role.

On her way out, with an eye to her legacy, Raimondo unveiled a glossy 34-page overview of her tenure as governor.

Looking ahead, it's clear that that her political trajectory has entered a new phase, with the ultimate destination still to be determined. While Raimondo's profile has long been on the rise in national Democratic circles, it's certainly a different ballgame when the POTUS is tweeting about you.

### McKee's big boost

If the mantra of real estate is location, location, location, there's little doubt that good timing is a precious

political commodity. In this sense, Dan McKee could be in the catbird seat.

McKee arrived at the top job in Rhode Island politics this week at age 69, after a circuitous path that included barely scraping by to win re-election as lieutenant governor in 2018. Now, though, the future is wide open. Will he be dispatched by a fellow Democrat in the gubernatorial primary next year, or go on to serve long into the future?

With his ceremonial swearing on Sunday outside the State House, McKee now has an opportunity to make an impression on Rhode Islanders. This comes as states are gradually reopening their economies. At the same time, Democrats' plan to include billions for states would have a transformative effect on Rhode Island's budget outlook.

There are 18 months until the September 2022 primary, and McKee just got a big boost.

### Fung joins the Yang Gang

Former GOP Cranston Mayor Allan Fung is crossing partisan lines to serve as a co-host for a March 7 virtual fundraiser for Andrew Yang, the former Democratic presidential candidate-turned-mayoral candidate in New York City.

Fung said he met Yang when they sat at the same table during a Boston event for the Brown alum's presidential bid. Fung said he's backing Yang in part due to their shared Chinese ancestry, and since Chinese parents have generally not encouraged their children to pursue politics in the U.S. Fung, who recently

started a new job as a partner at Johnston-based Pannone Lopes Devereaux & O'Gara, said he likes Yang's chances in the mayoral race and believes the run will help encourage more Asian Americans to run for political office.

### Housing's heightened profile

While Rhode Island remains an affordable alternative (for some) to the white-hot real estate market in Massachusetts, the Ocean State has long had its own housing crisis.

Voters last week approved Question 3, which directs \$65 million to develop affordable housing. And House Speaker Joe Shekarchi unveiled a push on housing with a series of proposals, including bills to study housing, to allow tiny houses to be used as accessory units/considered affordable housing, and to create a deputy secretary of commerce and housing.

For now, though, a dedicated funding stream for affordable housing – like that discussed in recent years by Gov. Raimondo – has remained elusive.

### McKee staffs up

With a new governor comes new staff. Gov. McKee unveiled a series of moves this week, retaining such holdovers as Claire Richards (executive counsel), Kim Ahern (policy director and senior counsel), Brenna McCabe (senior advisor), Ron Desiderato (special assistant) and Rico Vota (deputy director of legislative and intergovernmental relations) ... For now, most state department

heads appear to be staying put ... Consensus smart move in hiring state government veteran Thomas Mullaney as a senior advisor ... As I reported previously, Kevin Horan is the pick for legislative director ... The comms team is led by Andrea Palagi as comms director, with Lexi Kriss as her deputy, and Alana Cerrone as press secretary ... Tony Silva is chief of staff ... Joseph Polisenia Jr. is deputy counsel on policy and Antonio Afonso is senior deputy chief of staff ... Chris Farrell, part of the extended Cumberland gang and someone who was encouraged to go to law school by a prominent person in Barack Obama's life, is senior adviser.

### One to watch: McKee and progressives

The relationship between Gov. McKee and legislative progressives is something worth watching. A case in point is the push to raise taxes on people who earn more than \$475,000 a year. While progressives and Senate Majority Leader Michael McCaffrey describe this as a matter of equity, McKee – like Speaker Shekarchi – appears cooler about the concept and more concerned about a potentially adverse effect on the state's perceived business climate.

### Local media vs. big tech

The U.S. House Subcommittee on Antitrust, Commercial and Administrative Law, chaired by Rep. David Cicilline, is slated to hold a hearing next Friday, March 12, on proposals to foster local media amid the overwhelming dominance

of Google and Facebook.

Cicilline last week told CNN's Brian Stelter that his "Journalism Competition and Preservation Act" would have much the same effect of a new Australian law requiring publishers to pay for news content.

"The day of self-regulation is over," for tech giants like FB and Google, Cicilline said. He pointed to the closing of newspapers and the mass layoff of reporters in calling for this new approach.

Cicilline said he expects what he called "real reform" in the current Congress.

Back in Rhode Island, the state still has a fairly robust journalistic landscape, thanks in part to the staffing up of such outfits as the Boston Globe and WPRI (and we continue to add staff at The Public's Radio), although the days when a statewide daily newspaper offered town-by-town coverage aren't coming back.

### Technology vs. privacy

Lawmakers including House Minority Leader Blake Filippi (R-New Shoreham) have expressed concern about license plate readers and other forms of creeping surveillance. So it's worth noting how Massachusetts has been credited with writing rules allowing police to use facial recognition technology while guarding against false arrests.

Via the NYT: "If you ask lawmakers in the state how they pulled it off, they will frequently refer you to one person: Kade Crockford, an activist at the ACLU of Massachusetts. 'One of

my concerns was that we would wake up one day in a world resembling that depicted in the Philip K. Dick novel 'Minority Report,' where everywhere you go, your body is tracked; your physical movements, habits, activities and locations are secretly compiled and tracked in a searchable database available to god knows who,' Mx. Crockford said."

### Why disinformation is here to stay

Why online disinformation isn't going away, via NPR's Miles Parks: "About 1 in 5 Americans say they primarily got their political news from social media in 2020, according to the Pew Research Center. Those who got their information that way were found to engage with conspiracy theories more often than other Americans, while also voicing less concern about the detrimental effects of unreliable information. The problem is more pronounced for younger Americans, who have grown up with the platforms. Of those Americans who relied most on social media for their information about the election, half were under 30 years old. This week's Election Integrity Partnership report detailed how claims about voting fraud went viral in conservative circles, and subsequent fact checks garnered only a fraction of the same traction."

*Ian Donnis is the political reporter for The Public's Radio. He can be reached at [idonnis@ripr.org](mailto:idonnis@ripr.org). For more of his coverage, visit [thepublicsradio.org](http://thepublicsradio.org) and follow him on Twitter (@IanDon).*



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# As vaccine supply increases, COVID-19 advisory group urges transparency

By JACOB MARROCCO

The latest meeting of Gov. Dan McKee's COVID-19 advisory group Monday provided insight into vaccine transparency, reopening schools and staving off a potential spike in cases.

McKee, one day before announcing his plan to inoculate teachers by the end of March, said that more than 90 percent of residents 75 years or older have received at least one shot, while the figure is in the mid-60s for those 65 and older. He said vaccinations will be opened up to those between 60 and 64 "shortly."

Dr. John Stoukides, who co-chairs the committee along with Johnston Mayor Joseph Polisena, said the vaccination subcommittee proposed a few recommendations after its latest gathering. The first was to continue the strong community engagement and increasing local distribution to get residents vaccinated. The group also encouraged the involvement of the primary care physician community. He said that they don't have the ability to store the vaccine at those offices currently, but they could help the state get shots in arms when an increase in supply does happen.

He said the one-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine also provides the opportunity for hospitals and emergency rooms to

administer shots, since patients don't have to schedule follow-up appointments.

"One of the committee members brought up that we should develop a more open process for reporting vaccine supply," Stoukides said. "A more transparent setup to advertise how many setups there are in the state, how many have not been given so far, so people have a good idea of what's been happening with vaccine distribution."

That committee member was Barrington Town Manager Jim Cunha, who urged the state to "build confidence with the public" through a more transparent process.

"Beat back any doubt the people might have of the validity of what we're trying to do," Cunha said.

Polisena said in his remarks earlier that the state needs to "spread the word that the vaccines are safe, especially in communities of color."

"We don't want to miss any populations, the 39 cities and towns, those citizens are cared for, it's important for the governor to meet the needs of those who want to get the shots," Polisena said. "[McKee] is working round the clock to get the shots in arms of teachers, get the students back in the classrooms and get the businesses back in business."

Dr. Ashish Jha, dean of the Brown University School of Public Health, said Rhode Island has

done a "remarkable job" in the past seven to 10 days in ramping up its vaccinations.

The state has previously been low in the New York Times distribution tracker, ranking toward the bottom a few weeks ago as rollout remained sluggish. However, as of March 9, the publication has Rhode Island sixth among states in at least one shot being given, though its fully vaccinated total - 8.9 percent - is a bit less than 1 percent below the national average of 9.7 percent.

"This is the right time to be doing it," Jha said. "It's particularly important because right now is the time period where the variants you hear about - we have one job and one job only, which is to vaccinate, vaccinate, vaccinate."

He noted that the particularly worrisome B.1.1.7 variant, which was first reported in the United Kingdom, likely accounts for 40 percent of cases in Florida and upwards of 20 percent in Massachusetts. He said the next two to three weeks remain "super critical" in warding off a spike in cases with continued inoculations.

He said "all the evidence" points to all three available vaccines working "fabulously well" against variants.

"We have some [cases] in Rhode Island, it's doubling both every 10 days," he said. "So over the next couple weeks, it will become the dominant force."

I'm hopeful we're going to avoid [a spike] ... The progress we've made over the past couple of weeks is going to make a huge difference. Just have to keep going. The more high-risk people we can vaccinate, the bigger impact it will have."

He added: "Local leaders, regional leaders, people [that] people look up to and trust, have to be evangelists for this ... At the end of the day message is important, but the messenger is maybe even more so."

Jha said that vaccine supply will continue to increase throughout March and into April, recommending the state not hold back as supply chains look strong. He said that with every shipment, there must be a plan to distribute the shots.

Toward the end of his remarks, Jha offered four protocols for returning schools to some level of normalcy. The usual guidelines were advised - such as mask-wearing and "reasonable ventilation" in every classroom - but he also supported increased testing in schools to catch outbreaks before they happen. Vaccinating school staff and educators is also essential, Jha said.

He pointed out that he did not mention deep cleaning or wiping surfaces, saying there is "not much data that that makes a big difference [and] these are things we get distracted by."

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**Watch Your MOUTH**  
by Rochelle Rhodes, D.M.D. and David McFarland, D.D.S.  
**WHY BABY TEETH ARE IMPORTANT**  
Since our primary set of teeth (usually called "baby teeth") have all fallen out by puberty, it is easy to think that they don't really matter in terms of life-long dental health; however, that is simply not the case. Primary teeth are essentially place holders for adult teeth and their job is to guide our permanent teeth into place. When a baby tooth is lost prematurely because of tooth decay or trauma, the teeth around it can move or tilt into that open space, leaving less room for the new tooth to grow in. This can block the adult tooth or cause it to come in crooked. It also may make the process uncomfortable if not painful. Scheduling visits to the dentist early on is one of the best ways to keep an eye on how tooth development is progressing. When it's time for their first visit, satisfy your children's natural curiosity by telling them that the dentist is first going to count their teeth, then take their picture, clean them, and see that they are healthy. At DENTAL ARTS GROUP, we believe that a healthy smile is important at any age. Our office is located at 1136 Hartford Ave., Johnston. Call us at 401-521-3661 for an appointment. Most insurance plans accepted. P.S. Cavities left untreated in primary teeth may cause an infection that can damage permanent teeth and alter their development.  
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## ■ Grad

(Continued from page 1)

each option. Vice Chair Joseph Rotella thanked Patrone and committee for their work, saying the proposals were a "really good basis."

"Hopefully we can make this thing as spectacular as last year was," he said.

**Town to begin teacher, staff vaccinations March 19**

Superintendent of John-

ston Schools Bernard DiLullo said during his report on Tuesday that the town is opening its recreation center pod to teachers and school staff on March 19.

DiLullo said the clinic includes all school department employees such as teacher assistants, custodial staff and office workers as the town follows the state's lead on inoculating educators.

"Everybody who works for Johnston Public Schools will be able to set a vaccination appointment," DiLullo said. "The clinic is held specifically for after school hours. It starts at 1 [p.m.] and goes to 5. It allows teachers to remain in school for the day and make their appointments after school. The enrollment period is open."

**Student Council proposes parking space adoption fundraiser**

Student Council President Nicholas Petrillo provided details to the

committee for a potential fundraiser that would allow seniors every year to adopt a parking spot and paint it with their own unique image.

He said the council would ensure concrete paint is used so that plows don't dig up the art, and Johnston is basing the idea off a similar initiative at Scituate High School. He said students there had some "really creative redesigns."

"We'll make sure everything is kind of uniform in terms of the sizes, students would get frames for designs," Petrillo said. "We've been wanting to do [it] for quite a few years now. Something the juniors and seniors can look forward to."

Rotella suggested holding the fundraiser at the beginning of the school year so that students can have a full year with their designs before the next class paints over them. Petrillo was amenable to that idea, adding that it would be easy

to cover the previous design.

District 5 representative Sue Mansolillo expressed some concern over students staking claims to the spots they painted and having no way to enforce spot adoption. She said it may "create a problem for the administration." Petrillo said the advertising campaign would make it clear that students shouldn't expect the district to enforce any sort of claim to specific spots.

JHS Principal Donna Pennacchia, who previously worked at Scituate High, said they didn't experience any issues with students parking in one another's spaces.

"I don't really see a big issue with it," she said. "I think they'll respect each other's spaces and hopefully we won't have any issues with that and if we do we'll just have to handle it. It think it's a great fundraiser for the kids, I think it's Panther Pride. I think it's a great idea."

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## ■ Scouts

(Continued from page 1)

these amazing young men be elevated to the rank of Eagle Scout," Razza began. "I'm honored to have been part of their day, especially during these difficult times. I know how proud their families are of them and the commitment and sacrifices they too have made in order to reach this milestone in their young lives."

Razza, who like Gorbea presented special citations to each of the three Eagle Scouts, went on to say: "These individuals are our future leaders of this great nation and are following in the footsteps of other famous Eagle Scouts like Gerald Ford, Hank Aaron and Neil Armstrong. Their futures are truly bright and I wish them all my best in all their endeavors."

The entire ceremony, which featured the lighting of 12 candles, placing of wooden plaques for the various steps in Boy Scouting as well as important ceremonial readings by current Troop 20 Scouts Jaden Mollock, Robert N. Simmons III and Deakin Reyes, further enhanced the 2021 Eagle High Court of Honor.

"We hope that you will all understand that the Eagle award is the highest and most coveted award in all of Scouting," Ucci emphasized. "It is the last major step in the advancement program. Less than 2 percent of all the boys who join Scouting reach Eagle award."

Perhaps the most difficult hurdles that DiIorio,



**SPECIAL SUPPORT STAFF:** Members of the Johnston Boys Scouts Troop 20 Advisory Board who played a major role in the success of the recent Eagle Court of Honor are, from left, Scoutmaster Robert N. Simmons Jr., Committee Chair Mark Damiano, Secretary Tracey Audet and Treasurer Melina Simmons. (Sun Rise photo by Pete Fontaine)

Renzi and Hafey were required to clear before receiving their Eagle Awards was completing their respective Eagle projects. Ucci said they require hours of hard work, commitment and help from various family members.

Simmons, who like Curtin and others has made Troop 20 a family affair, spoke about how proud he is about each of the newly installed Eagle Scouts.

Simmons also explained as well as congratulated the newest Troop 20 Eagle Scouts on their impressive projects that for DiIorio was cleaning and organizing the closets at St. Rocco's Church; for Renzi was cleaning and making

the Wilderness Trail at Johnston War Memorial Park; and for Hafey was making the information boards for the Smithfield Audubon Society's education program.

Moreover, to become an Eagle Scout, they must earn 21 merit badges, including Citizenship in the Community, National and World, Communications, Family Life, Safety, First Aid, Emergency Preparedness or Life Saving, Environmental Science, Personal Management, Personal Fitness or Swimming or Sports and Camping.

In addition to these mental and physical requirements there are other qualifications such as serving actively and be-

coming a Life Scout, planning, developing and carrying out a service project such as the ones Simmons spoke about that are worthy of an Eagle doing his best to live by the Scout Oath and Law and demonstrating High Scout Spirit.

The journey to the Eagle Award, as Ucci emphasized, is long and often grueling as well as requiring the scout's utmost dedication and highest work ethic. As each of the new Eagle Scouts recalled in brief yet moving acceptance speeches, they noted just how important a role people like their mothers and fathers – as well as grandpa and grandma – played en route to the special ceremony that at

times featured tears of joy and heartfelt thanks from DiIorio, Renzi and Hafey.

"Scouting is unique in that it allows young boys and girls to learn skills that are not only crucial to succeeding in life, but are fun, whether it be camping, cooking, tying knots even, it was always fun alongside other boys in the troop," DiIorio said during his acceptance speech. "I'll always have memories of whitewater rafting, zip lining and visiting Washington, D.C., and the White House. I enjoyed Scouts more as time went on as I got to teach younger scouts the skills I developed over the years. It allowed me to become a leader, to become someone that knew kids,

like my brother, could look up to and learn from. I'll never forget anyone from scouting."

Renzi, like the other Eagle Scouts, heaped words of praise upon his parents and family members, Simmons and especially Curtin, who has for years been an icon for what many people have called "the incomparable Troop 20 in Johnston."

He declared he was once scared about campouts and how he grew to love each event. He stated how Scouting helped him see things from other people's points of view and accept everyone in Scouting as a friend and noted, "we even came to see that authorities were kids likes like us and are still the same at heart and how Scouting has always been about leading boys. Thanks again dad for making me keep doing Scouts, and to finish that conversation we had in the car ride home."

Hafey read a tear-jerking acceptance speech explaining that he could never have ever achieved Eagle Scout status without his father, mother, brother and Curtin.

"I'll never forget our other fun trips, either to zipline or white water rafting and all the summers at [Camp] Yawgoog," Hafey noted. "Also, us getting in trouble for some reason or another but we never did anything seriously bad. Fact is, nobody knew how have fun like Troop 20 did and for that we all thank Mr. Curtin. These were some of the best times of my life, and I thank each and every scout and adult who made all of the good

## JHS students seeking to help Rhode Islanders sign up for vaccinations

By TALIA LAFLAMME

Students at Johnston High School will be available to assist anyone who needs help registering for the COVID-19 vaccine.

Pandemic vaccine distribution is brand new for everyone. Vaccinations are currently being provided by

state-run facilities, certain CVS and Walgreen pharmacies, some municipalities and other health care agencies. All of the agencies require that you register for an appointment in advance. Rhode Island citizens aged 65 and older are eligible for the vaccine.

Some people who currently are able to receive the

vaccine did not grow up with the knowledge of technology needed to register for an appointment, and this has made the process difficult for many. Johnston High School has selected a group of students to lend some helping hands. The students will help guide Rhode Island residents through the registration web-

site in order to schedule their vaccination appointments.

Over 125,000 Rhode Islanders have tested positive for the coronavirus with over 2,500 fatalities. Getting as many Rhode Islanders vaccinated as soon as possible will go a long way in stopping this pandemic.

If you need assistance

registering, please contact one of the following: Student Council Advisor Greg Russo - grusso@johnstonschools.org or 401-225-9338; Student Council President Nick Petrillo - 2021npetrillo@johnstonschools.org or 401-830-6363; Student Council Vice President Rebecca Clements - 2022rclements@johnstonschools.org or 401-678-1582; SADD Secretary Charlie Curci - 2023ccurci@johnstonschools.org or 401-440-9746; or Student Council Representative Talia Laflamme - 2023tlaflamme@johnstonschools.org or 401-474-2465.

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**TAKING THE REINS:** Gov. McKee delivers his address to a properly spaced group of invited guests from in front of the State House. (*Sun Rise photos*)



**FEW SPECTATORS:** Unlike prior inauguration ceremonies, the south lawn to the State House had hardly a spectator, although there were a few who took the opportunity to promote their point of view.

# Stronger as a team

Compared to prior inaugurations, it was a “down to business” inaugural ceremony Sunday for Gov. Dan McKee. There was no heavy artillery salute, flyover by National Guard C-130s or performance by big bands. Also, there was no pre- or post-event smooching in the halls or on the steps of the State House. But McKee didn’t need frills to deliver

his message that he will never take his oath of office lightly “because Rhode Island has always been my home.” McKee touched on the challenges of the past year and what the pandemic has done to families and businesses, and he spoke of the resolve of Rhode Islanders and those who have helped us get through these times. “Today, we move forward. Today, is about our future,” he said.

“Together, we’re going to keep Rhode Islanders healthy. We’re going to get us back to work. We’re going to get teachers and students safely back in school. We’re going to get our businesses back in business. And we’re going to make sure that families in all 39 cities and towns not only recover, but come back stronger,” he said.

Citing a fully vaccinated Rhode Island as a priority, he called on Rhode Islanders to work as a team. “We will get through this, together. We are getting through this, together. And we will come out of this crisis a stronger, better Rhode Island,” he said. He said he and his team are prepared to lead and to beat COVID-19.



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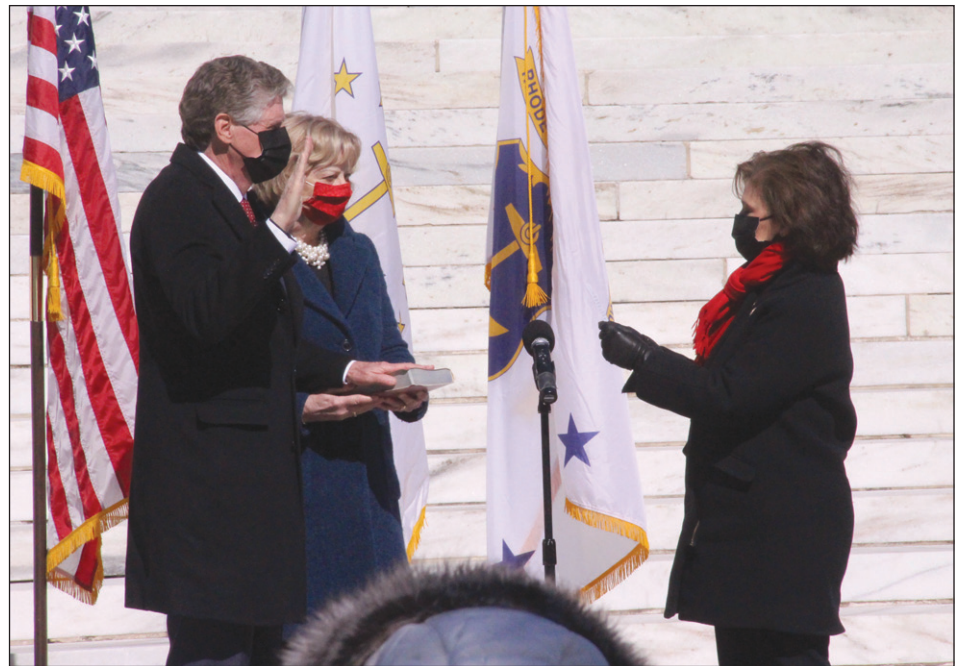
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**THE OATH:** Gov. McKee repeats the oath as administered by Secretary of State Nellie Gorbea. McKee's wife, Susan, holds the Bible.



**APPLAUDING HOPE:** The Rev. Christopher Abuhline of King's Tabernacle Church in Johnston spoke of hope and what it does for us during the invocation.





# Education is McKee's 'North Star'

## Former newspaper publisher talks about longtime acquaintance

By JOHN HOWELL

What's Dan McKee all about?

Tom Ward, who has closely followed McKee since the new governor was a Cumberland Town Council member and worked in his family home heating oil business, used the word "moderate" more than once as he spoke to the Warwick Rotary Club in a Zoom meeting Thursday.

Ward is the founding publisher of the Valley Breeze newspapers, which have roots in Cumberland/Lincoln and have expanded with five newspapers.

"We had to hunt him down," Ward said of McKee, who as Cumberland councilman and then mayor did not actively seek news coverage with staged photo-ops and media events. "He was focused on getting the job done."

Ward said McKee's father started the Cumberland Boys Club and "that's where he [Dan] grew up." Later, he owned a racquetball club where Ward said McKee learned what it takes to own and operate a small business. As a candidate for lieutenant governor and on the job, McKee made small business his platform.

But his "north star," as Ward termed it, "is education."

As mayor of Cumberland, Ward said McKee sought to address the performance of the town's schools. Instead of cooperation, the school department and the teachers union insisted he had no business intruding and told him to butt out and stick to managing town business.

"The silos of schools stuck in his craw," Ward said. It was then that McKee started the mayoral academies, which are charter schools. The academies, the first of which is Blackstone Val-

ley Prep, started with elementary grades, growing each year with an addition of a grade through high school. The first graduating class is this year, said Ward. There are also academies in Woonsocket and Providence.

While Ward said the mayoral academies have been "extremely successful," they have become a target for teacher unions that see them sucking dollars and students out of municipally run schools. For the moment, McKee has the backing of the unions for championing teachers as essential personnel and making the vaccination available to them. Reopening schools is a McKee priority. But Ward doesn't believe teacher backing will carry into the next election cycle, especially as McKee deals with Providence schools that are now being run by the state. Ward called Providence schools "a mess."

Rather than working with McKee, Ward can see the unions "sticking a shiv in his side" and throwing their support to one of the other likely candidates for governor in 2022. Ward, who wrote many editorials for the Breeze newspapers, did not hesitate to suggest that McKee rally support of parents in seeking to right schools.

"He should take the case to the people if he wants to be [elected] governor," Ward said.

Ward said that the difference in the 2018 Democratic primary, in which McKee narrowly beat Aaron Regunberg, is that Regunberg "didn't realize to cultivate the grassroots" where McKee had support.

Ward gave McKee high marks for his handling of Cumberland finances. He said the town was on the verge of bankruptcy due to the unfunded liability

of the police pension when first elected mayor in 2000. In addition, the town had four separate bargaining units, each with its own contract. McKee was able to merge them, streamlining the system and saving the taxpayers. During his tenure as mayor, Ward said the town climbed eight notches in its bond rating and amassed a \$25 million reserve fund.

Ward finds McKee's appointments consistent with his moderate approach and surrounding himself with people he has come to know and trust. He was surprised by his selection of the former head of Black Lives Matter Rhode Island, Corey Jones, as policy adviser, given he is more aligned with progressive Democrats. Yet he said the appointment is emblematic of McKee's approach to understand differing points of view.

"He wants to sit down with people he disagrees with," he said.

Contrary to Gina Raimondo, who Ward sees as "trying to make it to the next level [of political office]," he said McKee is not looking to move on to Washington and if anything finds himself in a position he didn't expect.

When McKee visited the Warwick vaccination clinic a week ago Monday, he was informed that Ward had been invited to address the Rotary Club.

"Ask him about the yellow bag," McKee said, not giving away what that was about.

Ward laughed when the topic was brought up. He explained the newspaper holds a yellow bag day. Five to six hundred bags are handed out for a community-wide cleanup day.

Ward said McKee and his wife, Sue, joined in the drive as mayor and continued to participate during his time as lieu-

**AT BRIEFING:** Gov. McKee addresses questions at last Thursday's weekly COVID-19 press conference. (Sun Rise photo)

tenant governor.

Ward surmised that since McKee brought up the topic, he must be planning to participate now that he's governor.

"That's the kind of guy he is."

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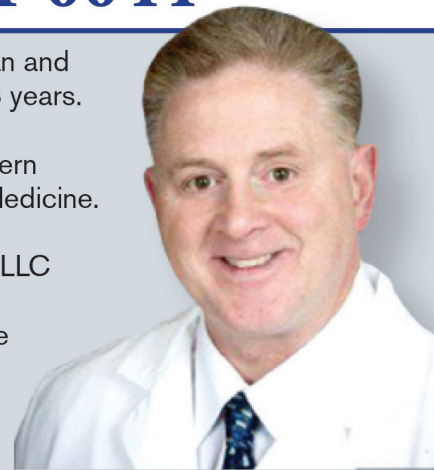
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David Coia, D.O. is a family physician and has been practicing medicine for 18 years.

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# ANIMAL TALK

By Karen Kalunian

Local  Adoptable  Loveable



Photo credit: Erin McGinn

## Baxter

Baxter is like a supermodel kitty! He is always happy to show off his beauty and his playful toy skills! Baxter is the most stunning Tabby around, just look at that face and those amazing eyes!! He is two years old and is looking for an adult only, cat savvy home! Baxter will bring lots of fun adventures into your home for sure! If you think you'd like to share your heart & home with Baxter please email: [provanimalcontrol@gmail.com](mailto:provanimalcontrol@gmail.com) or call 401-243-6040. Baxter will be waiting to meet you at Providence Animal Control.

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Photo credit: Bootsberry Photography



**FAMILY FIRST:** From left to right, Michael Pennacchia, Sue Ruggieri and Paula Montaquila pose with their mother, Marie, for a picture shortly after the parade. (Sun Rise photos by Jacob Marrocco)

## Family, friends surprise Pennacchia with 99th birthday parade

By JACOB MARROCCO

When Marie Pennacchia saw a couple of Cranston fire engines head down her street on Sunday, she had figured there must be an emergency nearby.

Naturally, her concern went to others before realizing what had been orchestrated behind the scenes. Her son Michael, along with his siblings Sue Ruggieri and Paula Montaquila, had planned a surprise birthday parade for Marie's 99th birthday with Marie's granddaughter Meredith Antonizio. Friends and family cruised down her road multiple times to honk their horns and offer well wishes to the longtime city resident.

Michael said a donation was made to the Rhode Island Community Food Bank in Marie's honor. In a press release announcing the parade, Michael said Marie is "loved and cherished by her family and all who she encounters for her positive, can-do attitude, love, empathy, generosity, and amazing cooking." The release called the surprise a "joyous occasion."

"We usually have a big dinner with friends and family on her birthday, and this year, given the pandemic, we were unable to do that, so my niece Meredith thought that we should do a birthday parade," Michael said. "So my siblings and my niece and my nephew, we all go together and we just basically pulled to-

gether all the elements – the balloons, my nephew knew someone at the fire station and we got the fire trucks there. ... [Mom] wasn't too crazy about sitting outside at first, and once she realized what was happening she was very excited and very delighted."

On the second pass, Antonizio rushed up to open car windows and offered homemade cookies. Marie was also presented with an additional gift – a 70-page cookbook entitled "Are ya' hungry? Did you eat?" featuring her classic recipes, family photos and much more. Michael, who wrote and compiled the cookbook, told the Herald during a phone interview Monday that he carefully gathered recipes during visits and phone calls with his mom.

"It was a long process," he said. "I'd sit there and take notes and record her quotes that she would say. She's very funny, she's a very funny woman. She's very sharp for 99, she's got a better memory than I do. Over those three years, I collected 37 recipes from her of things that she bakes, sweets, side dishes, entrees and soups. ... A very good friend of mine, Patricia Huntington, also helped formatting the pages and pushing me along to get it done."

He said that all of the recipes are his favorites, but he singled out her fried eggplant – "It's the best eggplant anybody's ever had" – and her deli-

cious wine biscuits. Her escarole and bean soup stand outs as well, and she makes a "great" gravy.

"Whenever my siblings and I go there, I usually show up with a cooler and she fills it up," Michael said with a laugh. "She loved [the parade], she loved it. ... She had no idea what was going on, she was pretty dazzled by it all and really appreciated all of her family and friends. Her hairdresser was there, some neighbors."

Marie was stunned by the celebration, saying over the phone Monday that she "can't believe what they did for me."

"It was wonderful," she said. "I saw the two fire trucks and I said to Michael, 'Somebody must be sick. Oh my God, there are two big trucks down near the end of the road, somebody must be sick.' All of a sudden I saw them come over and they go beeping their horns and [I saw] one car, two cars, three cars. I couldn't believe it that they came for me to honor me that way. It was wonderful."

Marie, a Cranston resident for more than 55 years, said that she loves the city because of "all the surroundings," including the schools, churches and neighbors. When asked, she offered four simple keys to living a long, happy life.

"My secret in life is hard work, patience, faith and good, homemade cooking," Marie said.



**SWEET TREATS:** Meredith Antonizio offered a package of homemade cookies to each attendee at the parade.

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# Opinion

EDITORIAL

## Warmth, hope and good gatherings ahead

You don't have to be a professional writer to appreciate the poetry of symbolism all around us. And it seems difficult to imagine a time in contemporary history more appropriate to look for deeper meaning in the reality around us than the COVID-19 era we're currently residing in.

So there's something almost magical and definitely hopeful about the simple fact that there are people planning for events in the not so distant future. And not another Zoom-based virtual event where you spend 75 percent of the thing staring at yourself and not paying attention to what's going on – but actual, real life outside events, complete with other people around; you know, like the old days?

It's thanks to people like those who make up the Gaspée Days Committee that we have this hope, and something to look forward to rather than dread. Few things around here symbolize summer, togetherness and, ultimately, freedom like Gaspée Days does. To not have such a storied tradition go on last year was, like all traditions we missed out on last year, a true loss for the community and all those who hold cherished memories of the event throughout its history.

It's poetic that, as the weather mercifully warms up outside and our minds start to allow ourselves to imagine a life spent without being bundled up in heavy coats, the slow but constant acceleration of vaccinations in the state are likewise allowing our minds to imagine a life spent not under the constant threatening cloud of a deadly virus looming above our heads. It serves as a reminder of how simultaneously long we have been under these conditions, but also how frenzied the past year has been and how rapidly it has gone by – much like a fever dream.

We will certainly never take for granted our local traditions after this moment in time has passed. Things like Gaspée Days, the Warwick Neck Parade, car shows at Oakland Beach, concerts at Garden City or any number of PTA-driven fundraisers at our local schools – and all events elsewhere in Rhode Island like Bristol's Fourth of July Parade, Newport's music festivals or any of our numerous fall festivals – these are the things that make our communities special, and they not only bring us together as a state, but as human beings seeking connections and moments worth remembering.

Perhaps this is another positive that can come out of the pandemic, despite all the suffering and devastation it has caused. Keeping firmly in mind how temporary and possibly fleeting our ability to gather together can be, we should never again forget how valuable our local planning committees, organizers and event volunteers are to making our zip codes a proper home, and a proper community. Perhaps seeing how much we have missed being able to enjoy one another's company will encourage us to embrace one another a little more readily and find renewed joy in the little, traditional things in life once more.

Thanks to all of those out there who have given us reason to persevere through this dark moment in history and given us hope that there is light and warmth ahead. We'll see you out in the community soon, mark our words!

WHERE TO WRITE:  
1944 Warwick Avenue  
Warwick, RI 02889  
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OP-ED

## How to make housing more affordable in RI

By BRIAN C. NEWBERRY

Speaker Shekarchi recently held a press conference in which he correctly made affordable housing a top legislative priority. Whether the legislature has a grasp of the real issues remains to be seen. The principle problem with affordable housing in Rhode Island is not a lack of "affordable" housing per se but a lack of housing at all coupled with all kinds of perverse incentives that make the cost of living in Rhode Island artificially high while simultaneously making it extremely hard to build actual housing, affordable or otherwise. Supply and demand are the bedrock of economics and while we have a lot of demand we have precious little supply.

My parents moved here from Connecticut a year ago. They needed a one-story condo in the median price range. There was exactly one on the market statewide. One. Meanwhile their property taxes doubled and their utility costs skyrocketed.

Want to make housing more affordable? Take steps to lower the overall cost of living so people can afford more for actual housing and so that housing need not be so expensive in the first place. Stop enacting policies that subsidize "green energy" projects that artificially escalate our electric costs. Instead of incentivizing solar arrays in open space areas let's use that space, if it's not to be left open, to build housing. Helping

well-connected insiders build a few windmills in Rhode Island may make some people feel like they are "doing something" but that is not going to save the planet while China continues to pump CO2 into the air at massive rates.

Let's forego the virtue signaling and focus on pocketbook issues for our constituents, something we can actually directly affect.

Why does it take so long to build anything in this state? The Fain Tower is controversial and it isn't affordable housing but the years-long saga of will it or won't it get built showcases our development problems in a microcosm. What developer of anything is going to want to invest in this state when the red tape strangles everything? There are plenty of other places where investment is welcome and it doesn't take years to get an answer.

The Seaport District in Boston has been booming with construction, commercial and residential, for a decade. Meanwhile much of our prime 195 land remains vacant. Why?

Start with the fact the costs to build in Providence match those in Boston but the rents don't. Who would want to build here given the alternative?

Does anyone other than experts in landlord/tenant law have an understanding of just how tenant friendly our laws are, even compared to other states? Who wants to be a landlord when – and this

is a true story – it is practically impossible to evict a guest who overstays their welcome in your own house? No doubt our laws are as lenient as they are because of long ago landlord abuses but a rebalancing is in order. The pendulum needs adjustment.

The State Affordable Housing Act is 30 years old this year. Know how many towns comply with its 10 percent mandate? Six out of 39. Six more are close. Thirteen out of 39 are below 5 percent. While some have excuses, such as the fact mobile homes and in-law apartments don't qualify, or that no development of size will be built where infrastructure, sewers, water and

public transportation are lacking, most of our communities do not. Spare me the social justice rallies and finger wagging about income inequality and racism when your town effectively blocks anyone of modest means from living there.

This is not a simple issue to address but it is one we need to for everyone's sake and it is going to require our policymakers to reimagine a lot of their own preconceived notions.

*Rep. Brian C. Newberry, a Republican, represents District 48 (North Smithfield, Burrillville) in the Rhode Island House of Representatives. He is a former House minority leader.*

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# SUN RISE SCOOPS

By MERI R. KENNEDY

## RI Housing offers loans

RI Housing's Hardest Hit Fund Rhode Island (HHFRI) program is offering zero interest, forgivable loans to eligible Rhode Island homeowners who became unemployed or underemployed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and are struggling to make their mortgage payments.

Loan proceeds may provide eligible homeowners with up to six months of mortgage payment assistance. Learn more about the loan program and eligibility at [rihousing.com/hhfri](http://rihousing.com/hhfri).

## Be Kind RI

Participants can sign-up to receive free text message requests and provide food pick-up and delivery to fight hunger.

During this pandemic, Rhode Islanders have suffered deep losses. We've lost friends, family and neighbors to COVID, and continue to watch as many are still struggling with its lingering effects. We have masked over our smiles, socially distanced ourselves away from hugs, skipped critical rites of passage, and communed through one Zoom too many. Yet this week, Rhode Islanders have a new tool to fight pandemic despair and increase happiness through social connection.

Be Kind RI, a technology platform developed by Nesterly Inc., works similar to a dating site to pair volunteers with

neighbors who need them by utilizing text alerts. Brought to Rhode Island through an innovative partnership between Age Friendly Rhode Island, the Rhode Island Community Food Bank and Family Service of Rhode Island, Be Kind RI is first tackling the hunger crisis in our state, as more than 25 percent of Rhode Islanders experience food insecurity.

Here's how it works: volunteers register, define where and when they can lend a helping hand, and receive a text to pick up groceries for a nearby neighbor in need from a local food pantry or grocery. Be Kind RI allows volunteers to accept the request or take a pass – no hard feelings! Projects that are passed go to the next volunteer on the text/SMS list. Unlike other volunteer programs, this service is 100 percent free to use and hyper-local, so Rhode Islanders can opt to do a service project in their neighborhoods, or a nearby one.

Be Kind RI is currently recruiting 200 volunteers and will launch food assistance support for seniors and others at higher risk for COVID during the week of March 15.

For more information and to register, visit [be-kindri.org](http://be-kindri.org).

## New rental assistance program

A new rental assistance program, RentReliefRI, is scheduled to launch in late March. This program will help eligible Rhode Island renters struggling to pay their rent or utili-

ties due to COVID-19. Visit [RentReliefRI.com](http://RentReliefRI.com) to learn more and sign up to be notified when applications open.

## Activity kits available for children in Johnston

The Mohr Library has free art kits available for pickup. This month the focus is on St. Patrick's Day. Contact Meri@[mohrlibrary.org](mailto:mohrlibrary.org) or call Meri at 231-4980 to reserve yours.

## Johnston Senior Center offers services

If you need any help with heating, housing, etc., during this cold winter or any other time, contact the Johnston Senior Center Social Services Department by calling 944-3343. Madeline or Amy will be happy to help you.

## News from the Mohr Memorial Library

Mohr Library is currently accessible to the public during reduced hours but continues to offer curbside pickup and other services during its regular schedule. Services include curbside delivery; reference help by phone, email or in person; recommendation lists and one-on-one help to explore interests in reading, viewing and listening; printing from home or your device; use of computers and copier; and a free notary public, evenings and Saturdays by appointment.

## Johnston Community Library Book Club

Kids ages 8 to 10 can meet online, by invitation, Thursdays at 3 p.m. to hear readings and discuss books with library trustee and volunteer Denese Carpenter.

Interested in other times or want to suggest a book for discussion? Let them know.

Parents can learn more about sign-up procedures by contacting Library Director Jon Anderson. Email [info@mohrlibrary.org](mailto:info@mohrlibrary.org) or call 401-231-4980, ext. 7.

## Artist applications now open for the Wickford Art Festival

There are new changes to the festival set to bring artists back to Wickford after last year's cancellation due to COVID.

Artist applications are now open for the annual Wickford Art Festival, which is slated for July 10 and 11. Produced by the Wickford Art Asso-

ciation since 1962, this year's festival will aim to feature top artists from the state, region and nationally but will have a new look and feel due to changes since COVID-19 rocked the art and event industry. This year, Wilson Park, located within Wickford Village, will be the base for the festival in order to safely spread-out artists, patrons and adapt to any necessary state guidelines in place come July.

For the first time artists will be able to apply to this year's festival through a new online application. Accepted artists will also be featured on a new virtual festival platform that will be heavily promoted throughout the entire summer through the end of September.

The Wickford Art Festival is a juried fine art show. Work will be judged on originality, workmanship and professional presentation. Jurors also consider total show composition and for the first time will be accepting a limited number of talented artists that create fine functional art pieces – including ceramics, decorative fiber, furniture and jewelry – will be able to apply to the festival. Applications will be open through April 15.

For more information visit the Wickford Art Association website for details on the festival, application instructions and jury information or contact the Festival Director, Ainslie Daly, at [wickfordartfestival@gmail.com](mailto:wickfordartfestival@gmail.com).

For more information on individual exhibits or programs, visit [wickfordart.org](http://wickfordart.org).

## Medical education scholarships

The Chartercare Foundation is now accepting applications for undergraduate and graduate medical education scholarships for the 2021 academic year.

The scholarships will support studies in nursing, pharmacy, dental hygienists, physician assistants, public health, occupational and physical therapy, dieticians, etc. The scholarship is open to Rhode Island residents only, and the application deadline is March 31, 2021.

Please visit [chartercarefoundation.org](http://chartercarefoundation.org) and click on "scholarships."

## ARTS Scholarships available

Applications are now

available at [ppacri.org/artsscholarships](http://ppacri.org/artsscholarships) for the 2021 ARTS Scholarships Program. This year marks the program's 25th anniversary! Since 1996, the program has awarded 700 arts scholarships.

The ARTS Scholarships 2021 program, sponsored by The Textron Charitable Trust and the PPAC Annual Fund Donors with support from WPRI 12, awards up to \$500 in financial assistance to each of the 30 talented Rhode Island students selected as recipients. Qualified students must be age 11-14 by June 1, 2021, and reside in and attend school in Rhode Island.

These scholarships offer young artists an opportunity to participate in local summer arts education programs that will broaden each student's experience in their chosen area of study.

## Support the Johnston Historical Society

The Johnston Historical Society has T-shirts available for sale in sizes small through extra large in slate blue, sand and a few in light green.

The JHS is an all-volunteer organization. Its museum is not staffed, but they are happy to open up by appointment for a tour of the museum, the house, and to purchase T-shirts and copies of books.

Call 231-3380 and leave a message with the color and size you would like.

## Zoom-ba is here

MS Dream Center offers a virtual Chair ZOOM-ba Program sponsored by Maguire Disability Law with the class being instructed by Michelle Calise.

Classes will be offered nationally on Monday's at 1 p.m. and Saturday's at 11 a.m. for people with MS and their loved ones. There is no fee to participate and classes can accommodate up to 100 on a first come first serve basis.

Please contact Anne at [anne@msdreamcenter.org](mailto:anne@msdreamcenter.org) to register for the classes and to complete a signed liability waiver, which is required of all participants.

The MS Dream Center provides a dedicated resource and support facility in which people living with Multiple Sclerosis, and their care partners, may engage in a wide variety of inter-

active social and educational activities, workshops and therapies. The MS Dream Center goal is to bring awareness to the disease and reach out to those living with it, empowering them and offering important respite opportunities for care partners.

## Teen virtual programming during COVID-19

The Mohr Library is currently offering virtual versions of some of its teen programs as well as drop-in chats. They are all invite-only programs, so please contact the teen librarian at [marissa@mohrlibrary.org](mailto:marissa@mohrlibrary.org) to register or if you have any questions.

Art Club meets every Tuesday at 3 p.m. History Club meets monthly on the first Wednesday at 3 p.m. Drop-in chat days differ weekly, so please ask when registering.

## Help make a house a home

The Furniture Bank of RI, a nonprofit corporation, needs bureaus, complete twin or double beds, kitchen sets, mattresses, and other household furniture that you no longer need. To help a less fortunate family through your charitable donation of good used furniture, call 831-5511 to arrange for pick up. All donated articles must be in good condition.

## Did you know?

In 1895, George Hudson, an entomologist from New Zealand, came up with the modern concept of daylight savings time. He proposed a two-hour time shift so he'd have more after-work hours of sunshine to go bug hunting in the summer. This year, Daylight Saving Time will begin at 2 a.m. on Sunday, March 14, so spring forward your clocks this coming weekend! (Source: Facts about Daylight Savings Time)

[SunriseScoops@aol.com](mailto:SunriseScoops@aol.com). Photos in jpg format are accepted and news can include community events, promotions, academic news and nonprofit events as well as virtual events. Email today and see your news in our column in the Johnston Sun Rise. Please include a daytime telephone number in case we require any further information.

# LEGAL NOTICES

## JOHNSTON ZONING BOARD MEETING AGENDA Thursday, March 25th, 2021 at 6:30 PM VIA Video Conference

Via Computer: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81863924073?pwd=ZW9sc25uN2pWb1B0aytldkM4bmlhRzZz09>

Via Telephone: 833 548 0276 or 833 548 0282 or 877 853 5247

Meeting ID: 81863924073

Passcode: 555597

**NOTE:** Please check out the "ACCESS INSTRUCTIONS for e-meetings held via Zoom" on the Town's web page under Meetings & Events. <https://www.townofjohnstonri.com/>

The Johnston Zoning Board of Review will hold its regular monthly meeting on March 25th, 2021 at 6:30 pm, by ZOOM VIDEO CONFERENCE. Persons interested in the following petitions are encouraged to join the Video Conference. If you require accommodations call the Zoning Office 48 hours in advance of the meeting at (401) 731-4000 ext. 4117. Persons utilizing TDD equipment may contact the Town through "Relay Rhode Island" at 1-800-745-6675. The agenda for the evening will be as follows, subject to change:

**Case to be heard at 6:35 PM**  
**File 2021-8 – Petition of Hartford Solar Holdings, LLC** Owner/Applicant for Reservoir Avenue, AP 43/54 Lot 256/30, 59, & 75, zoned B-3 & R-40. The petitioner is seeking a Special Use Permit to construct a ground-mounted solar system.

**Case to be heard at 6:45 PM**  
**File 2021-9 – Petition of Mohamad Yaser & Rhonda Sasa,** Owner/Ap-

licant for 1056 Atwood Avenue, AP 24 Lots 9, zoned R-15. The petitioner is seeking a Dimensional variance to create 2 lots that do not conform to lot requirements and a Use Variance to Construct a Two-Family Dwelling on one of the newly created Lots.

**Case to be heard at 6:55 PM**  
**File 2021-10 – Petition of Richard Delfino Jr. & Debra M., Trustees,** Owner/Applicant for 94 Simmonsville Avenue, AP 29 Lots 19, zoned R-20. The petitioner is seeking a use variance from Section 340-8 subsection 2 Number 4 - Multi-family dwelling and a dimensional variance to Section 340-9 to construct a Triplex Dwelling.

**Case to be heard at 7:05 PM**  
**File 2021-7 – Petition of Justice Realty, LLC,** Owner/Applicant for 985 Hartford Avenue, AP 22 Lots 690, zoned R-15. The petitioner is seeking a Use Variance from Section 340-8 subsection 2 Number 4 multifamily housing, dimensional variance to Section 340-9. Table of Dimensional Regulations and a variance to Section 340-71, Expansion of a non-conforming use to construct two additional units for a total of 12 units.

**NOTE:** If a Case has not been called for a hearing by 10:30 p.m., the Board, at its discretion, may continue the Case to a subsequent or a special meeting.

The Zoning Board Agenda and Minutes are available for review at ClerkBase on the Town's web page or Monday through Friday between 8:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. at the Building Office, 100 Irons Avenue, Johnston.

Per order of the Zoning Board of Review  
Thomas Lopardo, Chairman

3/12, 3/19/21

**Got something to sell?**  
**Advertise in the Classifieds**  
**Call 732-3100 today!**



## ■ Burns

(Continued from page 1)

"Jen Burns is an amazing individual who is always ready to reach out to the community at large in so many different ways," said Father Gower, whose many OLG events have been super successes and included Burns's tireless giving. "She is a very community oriented individual and outreach is so important and that has led to her being a great leader in the community who gives of herself tirelessly."

Boehm, meanwhile, said Burns, "is the type of person that would drop anything she's doing to help out" and "she has always given back to the community. She's been there during the difficult times our department has experienced."

He was speaking about the JFD, for which Burns hosted a breakfast and lunch for the town's first responders and 'she has always helped in the areas fundraising, food and emotions."

Perhaps that's why Raza emphasized: "Jen has always been a strong supporter of all first responders, especially members of the Johnston Police Department and for that, we are so supportive and thankful for her acts of kindness. On behalf of all members of the JPD, I'd like to wish her continued success in her new position at The Preserve!"

Burns was recently hired as sales director at



**VAUNTED VIEW:** Briarcliffe President/CEO Akshay Talwar and Jen Burns, who will serve as sales director at The Preserve, stand outside an apartment that will soon be occupied and offering an extraordinary of the woods and wildlife at the multi-acre facility in Johnston. (Sun Rise photo by Pete Fontaine)

The Preserve, an extraordinary, ultra-modern 66-unit supportive independent and assisted living complex that's nearing completion at the ever-expanding Briarcliffe Campus in Johnston.

Burns being hired came as no surprise to a number of Johnstonians like Pistacchio, who reiterated about Burns: "Fast forward several years, Jen's marketing skills are remarkable; she will definitely be an asset in her new position as sales director at Briarcliffe. As vice president of the JFD union, I truly appreciate Jen's support for first responders, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, Jen has been in

constant contact with us, always asking if there's anything we need. We can't thank her enough for that!"

Perhaps Akshay Talwar, the highly respected president and CEO of Briarcliffe, said it best of his newest hire, offering: "We have a strong, compassionate and caring team here at Briarcliffe and we are pleased to welcome Jen Cardullo Burns to the Briarcliffe family. Jen's experience combined with the fact that she grew up in Johnston and has spent many of her professional years working in town will be a huge benefit to the people she will help. I appreciate Jen's profes-

sionalism and how community involved she is."

To which NW Links Networking co-chair Christine Soave Crum said of Burns, who grew up in the long-term care community as her newly retired parents were assisted living administrators: "Jen is a very caring and dedicated person. Her knowledge and understanding of what her residents need to be happy, healthy and comfortable in their new home is what makes here shine. She cares, and the residents and their families know it!"

"Jen will always go the extra mile to make sure her residents get that they need, even if

that means it's outside of her communities offerings. She is always quick to put the residents first, and will help families connect with exactly what is needed for their comfort and happiness. Jen is a team player in the senior care world, and it puts her in high esteem with her peers. There is nothing more complimentary than that."

It was a few years ago, as Burns explained, "I decided that I wanted to be as well respected as my parents, but I couldn't do that in their shadow, I had to be Jen Burns."

So, she went on to earn an assisted living administrator's license and began her illustrious career at the former Cortland Place, where she worked for four years before making a move to become sales and marketing director at The Bridge at Cherry Hill.

"The Bridge was my home for close to five years," Burns offered. "Last month I was offered the position at Briarcliffe, also in my hometown that I love. I'm deeply seeded in the community. Continuing my career here is very important to me because I have made many lasting relationships in town. I was very excited to accept my new position. I love a challenge ... I have worked for communities that had unique obstacles but this will be my first time

in my career opening a new building."

The Preserve, Burns assessed "is a one-of-a-kind, incomparable facility and the last component to make the Briarcliffe campus a premier Continuing Care Retirement Center (CCRC)."

Thus, her vast experiences with the ABLTC, The Foundation (Alliance for Better Long Term Care) and RIALA (Rhode Island Assisted Living Association as well as a facilitator for the Assisted Living Administrators Training Program, all make Burns the perfect fit as Sales Director at The Preserve.

Moreover, as Burns explained: "I am super passionate about helping older adults find the right living situation for their needs. I know the life I want for myself one day - and I love being able to help facilitate that for people who are transitioning right now."

So, while this month is popular for countless college basketball tournaments, it's March Madness MVP at The Preserve, where Burns and Briarcliffe Marketing Manager Stefany Reed will be conducting private preview tours inside the extraordinary Preserve that will have, as people predict, as many amenities as one would expect to find in a Five Star Hotel.

For more information, please call Burns at 401-529-6854 or Reed at 401-935-0935.

## ■ Relief

(Continued from page 1)

Polisena said the town devoted resources to air purifiers, masks, gloves, gowns and other personal protective equipment, or PPE. The COVID relief funds will likely offset those expenditures.

He said department heads are currently getting their budgets in to Finance Director Joseph Chiodo and Chief of Staff Doug Jeffery, with whom Polisena sits down to go through wish lists with "three or four big erasers."

"I plan on going a fifth year this year with no tax increase," he said. "We're watching our money. I watch every dollar that comes in, every dollar that comes out. We've

been very frugal with the money we get from our taxpayers. Our development we have in town has helped and that stabilized the taxes. I'm leaning toward going a fifth year in a row with no tax increase. ... I'm from the old school. If we don't have it, we don't spend it."

Polisena said the vaccination pod at the indoor recreation center continues to move smoothly, as it opens on March 19 to teachers and school staff in compliance with Gov. Dan McKee's statewide directive to move them up the priority list.

Polisena added that he is trying to secure more vaccines for a pod focused on residents between 65 and 74 years old as well.

The town is approach-

ing the one-year anniversary of Polisena signing an executive order closing several buildings as the coronavirus pandemic took hold in the Ocean State. The mayor reflected on that somber milestone, saying that Johnstonians - and Americans as a whole on the grander scale - have been "resilient" over the past year.

"Nothing can hold us back," Polisena said. "Johnstonians are resilient, they're strong, they're there to help one another and their neighbors, and I've seen that. I saw our elderly come in [to our clinic] and they're talking to people they haven't seen in a long time."

He reiterated that, though some structures in town were closed via

his order, Town Hall operations remained open throughout 2020. He expressed pride in Johnston's refusal to entirely shut down.

"We never closed an hour with COVID," Polisena said. "We remained open, we stayed safe. ... We were cleaning on the hour. We never closed once. ... My employees are soldiers that were hard at work and we never closed."

Polisena said the pandemic has also made residents more aware of PPE, washing their hands consistently and keeping surfaces clean. He even purchased 10 hydrostatic cleaning devices for Town Hall to help the air stay clean.

"If we learn anything from his, we learned we have to be careful,"

Polisena said. "I've had my two vaccinations, and I think people should still wear masks, just as a precaution until we get the all-clear from the CDC. It knocked us on our butts, but we were resilient in this town. We're resilient

in this country.

"We lost some of our residents to COVID and my thoughts and prayers are with them and my thoughts and prayers are with their families. It's an insidious disease," Polisena said.

*Birthday Remembrance*  
MARCH 16, 2002 - AUGUST 11, 2020

### Maryann Vita



I thought of you with love today, but that is nothing new;  
I thought about you yesterday and days before that too;  
I think of you in silence and often call your name;  
But all I have are memories, and your picture in a frame;  
Your memory is my keepsake, with which I will never part;  
God has you in his keeping, I will have you in my heart.

Love,  
Grandma & Grandpa  
Gallucci


*Birthday Remembrance*  
MARCH 16, 2002 - AUGUST 11, 2020

### Maryann Vita



I thought of you with love today, but that is nothing new;  
I thought about you yesterday and days before that too;  
I think of you in silence and often call your name;  
But all I have are memories, and your picture in a frame;  
Your memory is my keepsake, with which I will never part;  
God has you in his keeping, I will have you in my heart.

Love ~  
Mom and Dad,  
and Michael



## Obituaries

In your time of need, the *Johnston Sun Rise* will print your loved one's full obituary for a small charge. The paper also places the obituary on our Web site, [johnstonsunrise.net](http://johnstonsunrise.net).


Should you desire our services, kindly inform your funeral director, or call Sue Howarth at (401) 732-3100 or email [sueh@rhodybeat.com](mailto:sueh@rhodybeat.com) for additional information. Obituary prices start at \$50. You may place the obituary in any of our other newspapers for half price. *Thank you.*

### The Miracle Prayer

Dear Heart of Jesus:  
In the past, I have asked for many favors. This time, I ask you this very special one. Take it, Dear Heart of Jesus, and place it within your own broken heart, where your father sees it. Then, in your merciful eyes, it will become your favor, not mine.

Say this prayer for 3 days, promise publication and your favor will be granted. A.W.

**Maryann Vita**  
*Birthday Remembrance*  
MARCH 16, 2002 - AUGUST 11, 2020



Rest in Peace  
"Little Miss Sunshine"  
Love and miss you,  
Grandpa & Grandma Vita



# spotlight ON BUSINESS

## Briarcliffe Gardens

### A State-of-the-Art Memory Care Assisted Living Residence



**BRIARCLIFFE**  
Memory Care Assisted Living Residence

49 Old Pocasset Road Johnston, RI 401.944.2450  
www.briarcliffegardens.com

**BOOK A VIRTUAL TOUR FROM THE COMFORT OF HOME**

By JENNIFER COATES

At Briarcliffe Gardens Memory Care Assisted Living Residence, nestled on 30 acres just off Central Avenue in Johnston, the vibe is bright, happy, cheerful, and vibrant. Every design decision in both of their memory care residences has been based on thorough research. Each detail, from the amount of light that blankets the common areas to the flooring patterns and colors of the carpeting, has been carefully considered, all with the intent of enhancing the quality of life and the safety of the residents who live in this dynamic home in Johnston.

When taking an online tour of Briarcliffe Gardens and one "walks" through the virtual doors of this one-of-a-kind memory care residence, these research-based design elements are immediately apparent. Observers experience a sort of "sensory journey" while touring the center. There is a refreshing, energizing feeling of spaciousness and openness here, with the vaulted ceilings and sun-bathed rooms, which appeals to all the senses and which dispels the feeling that one is in a secured environment.

Briarcliffe Gardens is built entirely on one floor with dining and living spaces in the center, forming the social core, much like one's own kitchen. This warmly lit great room is where residents gather to enjoy life. The high ceilings and sixteen skylights shine diffused natural light into the space, lifting the mood and improving vision (to name just a few benefits of natural light) while residents participate in crafts, games, or socialization exercises. In adjoining rooms, small groups of residents are gathering, with masks on and social distancing measures in place, to engage in therapeutic activities like seated exercise, reminiscence, and other appropriate cognitive programming.

The single-occupancy bedrooms all have outside windows and line the perimeter of this common center space. At Briarcliffe Gardens, resident bedrooms open to common areas



Residents of Briarcliffe Garden are invited to sink into a comfortable lounge chair while they watch a nostalgic movie on the media room's large flat-screen television. Every effort is made to make the residents here feel happy, joyful, and able to lead fulfilling lives.

with comfortable seating and things to do. The colors, light and air temperatures throughout are all calibrated in a concerted effort to comfort residents who might be prone to agitation or irritability.

As the tour continues, one will find a 24-hour retro-design diner, a movie hall, adapted recumbent bikes, a hair salon/barber, a sunroom for meditation and exercise, an herb and vegetable garden and a courtyard with fruit-producing trees, walking path and patio ~ perfect for the warmer days which surely lay ahead. The staff and administrators of this progressive center have taken into account every dimension of their residents' lives and work diligently to anticipate their

every need.

When family members are considering a possible long-term stay for a loved one who suffers from health concerns like Alzheimers/Dementia, Briarcliffe Gardens offers so much more than exceptional care and a helpful staff. It exemplifies everything that a memory-care residence should be ~and can be ~ in this modern age.

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# Sports



**BIG YEAR:** Hunter Remington takes the ball up the court in a game this season. (Photos by Alex Sponseller)

## Big finish for our local teams

The Beacon Communications coverage area had four teams claim championships over the weekend. What I loved about these four teams is that each had a different storyline. Now, up front, the Bishop Hendricken hockey team's situation is not ideal, which I'll get into, but from strictly an interest standpoint it was intriguing despite it being unfortunate.

### My pitch



by  
ALEX  
SPONSELLER  
SPORTS EDITOR

ALEXS@  
RHODYBEAT.COM

Let's take a look. We might as well start with the Hawks hockey team.

Last Friday just hours before puck drop of game 1 of the Division I Championship series, it was discovered that the Mount. St. Charles team had a positive test which eventually led to the teams deciding to cancel the series and award each club the title of co-champion. First off, I feel horrible for each team. These kids have worked so hard on and off the ice and had to go through so much to begin with. To get the carpet pulled out from under them during the championship series pretty much the worst case scenario.

Not only that, but this series was looking like it was going to be as even as could be. The Hawks were the hottest team in Division I and Mount was the top seed. The Mounties lone blemish in the regular season came at the hands of Hendricken in a tie.

It just seemed like these teams were destined for a three-game series.

I guess the teams can take pride in the fact that they are co-champs. Well of course to make it to the finals is a great accomplishment either way, but I'd assume the kids don't feel totally fulfilled. At the end of the day though, being a co-champion is better than runner up. Congrats to each club on a great season.

Next is the Cranston co-op boys hockey team which won the Division II tournament over North Kingstown in two games.

This is my favorite story in terms of being happy for the athletes.

Cranston had come up short in the previous two years, each in the semifinals. The Falcons always seemed to be the dark horse and on the brink of breaking through, but for one reason or another, just couldn't put it all

PITCH- PAGE 16

# Here to stay

## Panthers wrap up big first year in DII

By ALEX SPONSELLER

Despite getting off to a slow start to begin the winter season, the Johnston boys basketball team emerged as one of the hottest teams in Divi-

sion II and advanced to the quarter-

finals. The Panthers topped Coventry 58-46 in the preliminary round. Hunter Remington led the way with 20 points scored while Thomas Zed-

nik and Derek Salvatore each scored 14.

Johnston went on to fall to un-

PANTHERS- PAGE 14

# RI Hockey HOF unveils 2021 class

FROM STAFF REPORTS

The R.I. Hockey Hall of Fame is pleased to announce the names of four local greats voted into its Class of 2021 - legendary R.I. Reds trainer George Army, U.S. Olympian and two-time Brown All-

American Bob Gaudreau, six-time AHL/NHL champion Art Lesieur, and current New York Rangers coach David Quinn.

Hall of Fame chairman Vincent Cimini noted, "The careers and achievements of our newest class span a period covering 92 of the 128 years of Rhode Island's rich

and illustrious hockey history. We look forward to paying tribute to them for the great honor they have brought to our state and our hockey community."

Formal Enshrinement Ceremonies for the Class of 2021 will be held in August, together with the pandemic-delayed in-

ductions of the Class of 2020. It is undetermined at this time if the event will be held in-person, staged virtually or safely pre-taped for broadcast. Please check RI-

HOF- PAGE 16

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**DEFENSE:** Johnston's Ryan Schino plays defense against Coventry.



**TEAM LEADER:** Johnston's Justin Salvatore looks to pass.

## ■ Panthers

(Continued from page 13)

ereated, top-seeded East Greenwich 50-47 in the following round. The Panthers held a three-point lead in the final two minutes, but the Avengers would storm back and pull off the stunning finish.

Zednik led the Panthers with 15 points scored while Derek Salvatore added 14 and CJ Ragosta nine.

"It was a very enjoyable season. After being in the state championship last year, we set our goals pretty high. We made the playoffs, won a game, beat Coventry by 12 points. Then we faced East Greenwich who was undefeated. We had the game, we were up three with a minute and half. We just had a few errors and they capitalized," said Johnston coach Mark Livingston, who was proud of his team's big year in its first season since moving up from Division III.

"We have a resilient group. These guys have had three coaches in four years. I threw a lot at them in a month and they didn't complain about it, they stuck to the process. I told them all along that they belonged in Division II and could compete. All four losses we had were four points or less so we were in every

single game."

Hard work and selflessness led the group to such a strong start in its new division, according to Livingston.

"We played six kids pretty much, and those guys knew that they could compete. Many of them play AAU and other competitive programs. They knew they belonged. Thomas Zednik was hungry not knowing if he would have football and he had a huge year. The kids came to work every day and didn't make excuses," said Livingston. "We're not going anywhere in Division II. We have three All-Division players coming back in Derek Salvatore, Hunter Remington and CJ Ragosta. We have a young JV core that went 6-1. Our future is bright."

Although the Panthers are returning a nice core next winter, it will be losing two key pieces in Zednik and Justin Salvatore.

"Justin wouldn't wow you with what he put on the stat sheet, but his leadership, intangibles, communication, what he did on defense, this was a testament to him. He was a vital part to everything we did, he was probably the best leader I've had over the past 12 years. Thomas, he and Tyriek Weeks from Pilgrim were the two best big men in the state, he was huge for us too," said Livingston.

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**JUMP SHOT:** Johnston's CJ Ragosta puts up a shot earlier in the season.



# Fish managers seek angler input

By CAPT. DAVE MONTI

These are unprecedented times. We as fishers on the east coast have three fishing Amendments to Fisheries Management Plans (FMP) that will eventually be applied to regulations on striped bass, bluefish, as well as summer flounder, scup and black sea bass. These five species (and tautog) are the most popular targeted by recreational fishers.

The Amendments are highlighted below with information links and input opportunities for anglers. What makes these Amendments even more important to get right are the climate change impacts occurring on habitat and fish in our area. These impacts will likely have to be addressed in the future with Federal legislation to the fishing law of this nation, the Magnuson-Stevens Act or separate climate ready fisheries legislation.

However, for now anglers are encouraged to read-up, educate themselves about some very complex issues, attend informational meetings and weigh in on how they feel about proposed Amendments.

Even if you do not comment on all amendment questions, providing even a minimum amount of input will help our fisheries and give you as an active angler the satisfaction of having provided input into the fishery.

Summer flounder, scup and black sea bass. Anglers have been asked to comment via email by March 16 (see link below). All three species are being treated in one Allocation Amendment to each species' Fisheries Management Plan (FMP). The Amendment is from a joint committee of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission that managers fish in State waters in our area. The Amendment talks about allocation between the commercial and recreational sectors that have been updated by new scientific data.

Rich Hittinger, 1st vice president of the RI Saltwater Anglers Association (RISAA) said, "I feel that this Amendment is a critical move to undo a major injustice that was done to recreational fishing by recent updates made to the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP). These changes

resulted directly in the increase of commercial quotas for fluke by 49 percent in 2019 and for black sea bass in 2020 by 51 percent."

New MRIP estimates increased the recreational landings estimates over the last 25 years by up to double previous estimates. This was without any new fishery data, but just the result of different estimating procedures. The higher landings estimates then led fisheries managers to conclude that there were more fish in the sea than thought, so landings could increase.

Hittinger said, "The catch limits greatly increased commercial pressure on fluke and black sea bass which led to fewer fish for recreational fishers to catch (and fewer fish for commercials too because of greater fishing pressure)."

**RISAA will hold an meeting on the Amendment Monday, March 15, 2021**

6:30 p.m. Both RISAA members and non-members are invited to attend. The Zoom meeting is at <https://zoom.us/j/98339470981?pwd=OG03Q0wzVFZxSXhXa2lxQlA0WTJqdz09>. Meeting ID: 983 3947 0981, Passcode: bsb2021. If by phone call 1. 646. 876. 9923, Meeting ID: 983 3947 0981, Passcode: 6210702.

For background and RISAA positions on the allocation amendment for Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass see Rich Hittinger's article at <https://www.risaa.org/newsletter/0321/Mar2021.pdf>. For Mid-Atlantic Council/Commission information on the amendment and how to make a comment via email by March 16 visit the press release at [http://www.asmfc.org/uploads/file/6001eb69pr01\\_SFSBSB-Allocation-public-hearings.pdf](http://www.asmfc.org/uploads/file/6001eb69pr01_SFSBSB-Allocation-public-hearings.pdf).

Striped Bass. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) issued a request for comment on a Public Information Document (PID) for Amendment 7 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Atlantic striped bass. This comment document will be used to put together an amendment on striped bass that will rewrite its Fisheries Management Plan. Key issues include lowering the bar on biological reference points such as the Spawning Stock

Biomass targets and thresholds that would allow anglers to take more fish. The stock is overfished and overfishing is occurring and a rebuilding plan has been mandated but has not been developed.

The American Saltwater Guides Association (ASGA) is a coalition of recreational fishing guides, small businesses, and conservation-minded anglers who find greater value in long-term stock abundance rather than simply maximizing harvest. I am a member of their board and Peter Jenkins of the Saltwater Edge, Middletown is board chairman.

The ASGA has a great two page summary on Amendment 7. Visit their website at <https://saltwaterguidesassociation.com/a-guide-to-the-striped-bass-amendment-7-public-information-document-your-comments-needed/>.

Tony Friedrich, vice president and national policy director for the ASGA, said, "In principle, we are concerned with the initiation of a comprehensive amendment process when the striped bass fishery has far more urgent needs. The stock was declared overfished nearly two years ago, and while the Commission took action to end overfishing through Addendum VI, there has not yet been any discussion of a rebuilding plan."

Comments are due in writing by April 6. However, anglers are advised to register for the Wednesday, Mar. 17, 2021, 6-8 p.m. public hearing online at <https://register.gotowebinar.com/rt/8168283291056270608>.

RISAA will hold an informational meeting on the bluefish amendment and the striped bass amendment on Monday, March 22, 2021, 6:30 p.m. Members and non-members are invited. The Zoom link is

<https://zoom.us/j/92034994049?pwd=Zk94LzR1Nm0vbnJ5UINSOGdHRUJ5Zz09>. Meeting ID: 920 3499 4049; Passcode: bass2021. Dial in by phone: 1. 646. 876. 9923, Meeting ID: 920 3499 4049, the Passcode: 72154496.

Bluefish. The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission) are seeking public comment on management options under consideration in the

Bluefish Allocation and Rebuilding Amendment. This amendment contains alternatives to revise the Fishery Management Plan for bluefish including allocations, allocation to states and a rebuilding plan.

Comments can be provided at a public hearing on Thursday, April 1, 6-8 p.m. for the states of Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island.

Anglers are encouraged to visit the Council's Bluefish Allocation and Rebuilding Amendment web page at <https://www.mafmc.org/mafmc.org> or the Commission's Public Input web page, where you can read the Public Hearing Document, the Draft Amendment, and watch the public hearing presentation (to be posted by March 12, 2021).

Watch for comments on the bluefish amendment from recreational fishing associations to come in further articles.

**Where's the bite?**

Freshwater. Warm weather and rain may weaken ice in many areas, so be safe and check ice thoroughly before you fish or skate. Tom Giddings of the Tackle Box, Warwick said, "Customers are doing pretty good working the bottom with jigs for largemouth during the prespawn. Any day now Little Pond, Warwick (behind Warwick Vets) should explode with pike fishing. We will just have to wait and see." Bruce Miller of Canal Bait & Tackle, Sagamore, said, "When we had decent ice anglers were doing well at Great Herring Pond, Plymouth, catching white and yellow perch, largemouth and smallmouth bass as well as pickerel."

Cod fishing. Party boats fishing for cod this winter (weather permitting include) the Frances Fleet at [www.francesfleet.com](http://www.francesfleet.com), the Seven B's at [www.sevenbs.com](http://www.sevenbs.com), and the Island Current at [www.islandcurrent.com](http://www.islandcurrent.com).

Dave Monti holds a captain's master license and a charter fishing license. He is a RISAA board member, a member of the RI Party & Charter Boat Association, the American Saltwater Guides Association and the RI Marine Fisheries Council. Forward fishing news and photos to Capt. Dave at [dmontifish@verizon.net](mailto:dmontifish@verizon.net) or visit [www.noflukefishing.com](http://www.noflukefishing.com).

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# HOF

(Continued from page 13)

HHOF.com for details as they become available.

## GEORGE ARMY

Patriarch of one of RI's most famous and accomplished hockey families, George served 35 years as the self-taught and revered trainer for the RI Reds. He famously learned how to stitch by cutting zig-zags in oranges and sewing them back together. Before joining the Reds, George was a talented Triple A baseball catcher and manager who barnstormed with baseball's best, including Babe Ruth. Among the proteges he generously taught his craft to are Tom Woodcock and Pete Demers, both of whom have plaques in the Hockey Hall of Fame in Toronto.

## BOB GAUDREAU

This Providence native and Cranston resident is considered by many to be the greatest to ever have suited up for Brown University. He arrived from nearby Hope High School where he was a 3-time All-State defenseman. He would earn three All-Ivy nods, capture the Walter Brown Award as New England's best U.S.-born college player, and twice be selected a NCAA All-American. In 1965, he led his team to the Final Four held at Meehan Auditorium. This father of former PC great and NHL star, Robbie Gaudreau,

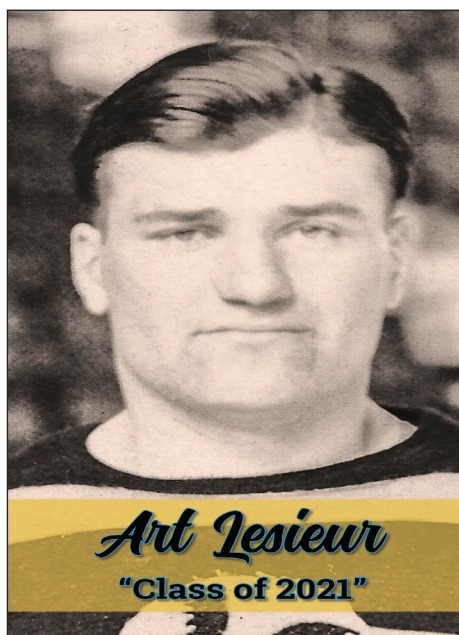
crowned his hockey career as a member of Team USA at the 1968 Olympic Games in Grenoble, France.

## ART LESIEUR

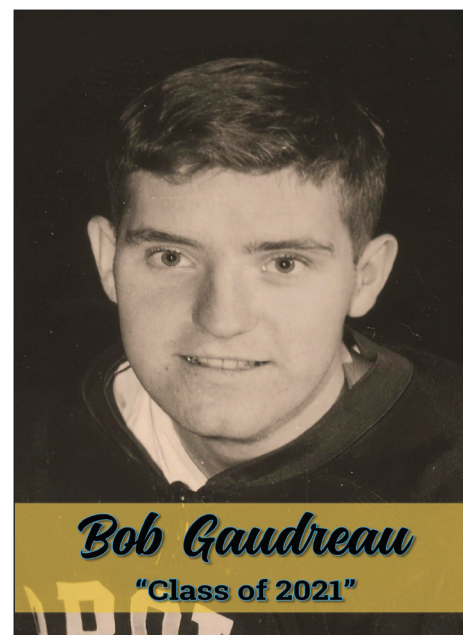
Art lived his entire adult life in RI, mostly in Warwick. In 1929, he became the first U.S.-born player for the Montreal Canadiens to have his name engraved on the Stanley Cup. Over the next decade, Art captained the Reds to 5 league championships. Remarkably, over that period, he also coached Mount St. Charles to 5 RI state titles. During the 1938-39 season, Art negotiated a hat trick of duties playing for the Reds while also coaching both MSC and Brown. Mid-season in 1941, Art became the first U.S.-born professional hockey player to be drafted into the armed forces and served 3+ years in Army combat.

## DAVID QUINN

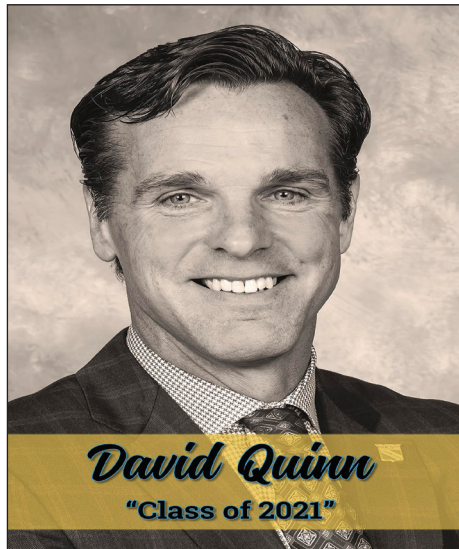
Raised in Cranston, David developed his considerable hockey skills playing in the Edgewood Youth Hockey Association. Following prep school, he became the 13th overall pick in the 1984 NHL draft but opted first to accept a scholarship to Boston University. He later played on two USA National Teams before two pro campaigns and the start of his coaching career as an assistant at Northeastern in 1995. After several years with USA Hockey's development program and head coaching positions in the AHL and at BU, he was named head coach of the NY Rangers in 2018.



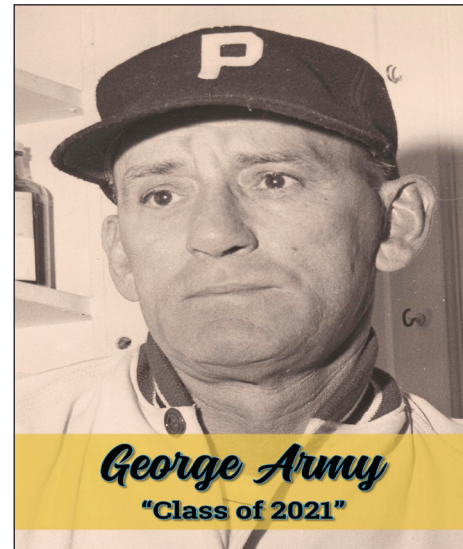
Art Lesieur



Bob Gaudreau

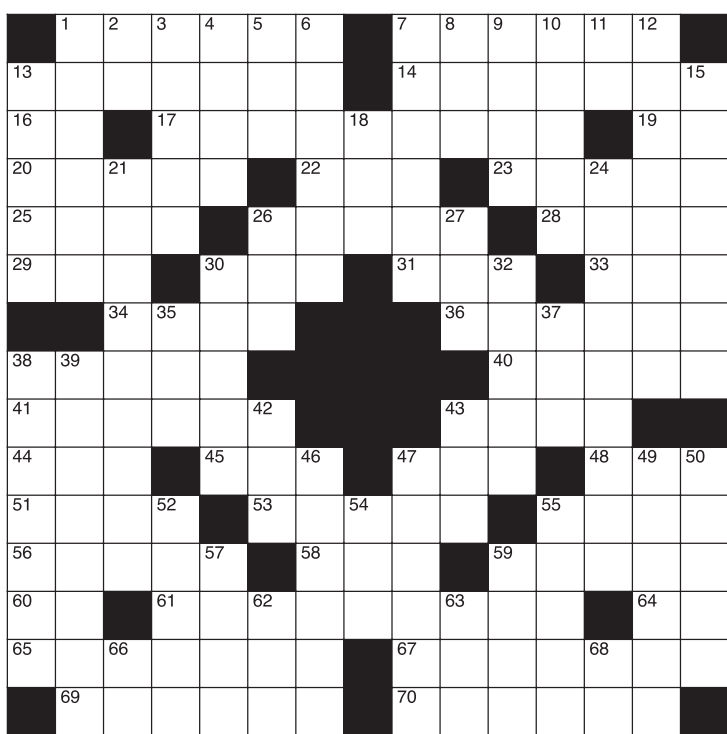


David Quinn



George Army

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### CLUES ACROSS

1. Large dung beetle
7. Representation of a plan
13. In a fervid way
14. The Book of Psalms
16. Morning
17. Exactly the same
19. About
20. Brown and basmati are two
22. Swiss river
23. Philippine island
25. Expressions of surprise
26. An ant
28. Common Japanese surname
29. Deoxyribonucleic acid
30. Car mechanics group
31. A person's brother or sister
33. Ancient pharaoh
34. Quantitative fact
36. Vividly colored bird
38. Your home has one
40. Organic compound
41. Section at the end of a book
43. Flat tableland with steep edges
44. Criticize
45. Split pulses
47. Brief trend
48. Cool!

51. Purposes
53. Brews
55. Skin condition
56. Pops
58. American air travel company
59. Minute bug
60. Anno Domini (in the year of Our Lord)
61. One who rides in your car
64. One of the Gospels
65. City in southern Spain
67. Inquisitive
69. Jean Paul \_\_, author
70. Pop singer Harry

### CLUES DOWN

1. An ape or monkey
2. Chemical element
3. Zodiac sign
4. Removes
5. Brew
6. Nickname
7. Architectural structures
8. Trigonometric function
9. Postmodern architectural building in Vienna
10. Henderson and Fitzgerald are two
11. Mountain (abbr.)
12. Landscaping practice
13. Capacitance unit
15. Redirect
18. Hat for women
21. In a way, dressed down
24. Granny
26. Feed
27. Endpoint
30. Indian instrument
32. Bleated
35. Cablegram (abbr.)
37. Root mean square (abbr.)
38. Jellyfishes
39. Individual TV installations
42. Talk
43. More (Spanish)
46. Leaseholder
47. Monetary units
49. Hostility
50. Work stations
52. Linguistics giant
54. Female sheep
55. Calendar month
57. Seasoning
59. Lofty nest of a bird of prey
62. Single Lens Reflex
63. A way to remove
66. Virginia
68. Old English

## Pitch

(Continued from page 13)

together when it counted most. This season, the kids were hungry and it showed. The top of Division II was a dog fight between Cranston, North Kingstown, Warwick, and a few other teams. The Falcons hung in there and went 4-0 in postseason play.

For those kids, especially the ones that came so close the past two seasons, what a great way to end the year. Being a champion and knowing that you had what it took to get the job done. They probably had enough the previous two seasons, it just did not come to fruition. I must say, the hockey scene in central Rhode Island is the strongest in the state at the moment. I don't know how you can argue otherwise.

Sure, the northern teams like Mount, Burrillville, the Smithfields, they are all worthy of praise and historically are top dogs. But right here, right now, Central RI takes the cake.

Hendricken was a finalist with a 50-50 shot at winning. Cranston won in DII, Warwick was not far off and also had enough to win had the puck bounced in its favor. I had a blast the past few weeks covering these runs and am looking forward to next season to see where these teams pick back up.

On the court, Hendricken repeated as Division I champs with an overtime win over Classical.

The Hawks were the favorites heading into the season, but Classical deserves a ton of credit. The Purple took the top seed into the tournament, beat the Hawks in the regular season and nearly got it done over the weekend.

However, the Hawks experience was just too much in my opinion. Sure, Hendricken's talent and depth was outstanding, it's coaching and system is nearly full-proof, all of that, but experience and poise is what ultimately set these two teams apart.

A few weeks back, I watched the Hawks overcome multiple deficits to tie the score against Barrington with less than 1 second remaining in regulation. In overtime, the Hawks outscored the Eagles 12-2 to take the 10-point victory.

In the semis, La Salle tied the score in the final minute to force overtime. It seemed as though the momentum would be on the Rams side and the Hawks would be on the ropes. Once again though, Hendricken rolled to a lopsided overtime score to reach the finals. By looking at the score alone, you'd never know it went to overtime.

Then in the championship, same old, it was over midway through the four-minute extra period.

The Hawks were the most poised team in the state this season and that stems from their experience in big games. Year after year, Hendricken is in it, and in years like this, it is a huge factor. Like I said, they had everything they needed, but what put them over the top was that seasoning. No deficit was too large, there always seemed to be enough time to turn things around.

We'll see how it goes next winter, I'd say it's pretty safe to assume that the Hawks will be there until the very end, but which team will get the next crack at them to pull off the upset? I'm also looking forward to welcoming back the state-wide tournament. Should be fun.

Lastly, Hendricken swim took home another title. The Hawks have only come up short once in the past 30 years. It is unlike any run I have seen in the high school sports that I've covered.

You can say whatever you want about it being a private school that attracts the top athletes. That's obviously true, there's no denying that. But for this club to win nearly every year for three decades? Something must be in the water (pun intended).

Coach Dave Hanson is a difference maker, how could he not be? Hendricken's clout also attracts the best swimmers. But this is bordering on a phenomenon. I just can't wrap my head around it, especially since there is some great swimming in the state, too.

I hate not being able to offer a true answer, but I can't put my finger on it. Hendricken has plenty of teams, and all are successful, but the success of the swim team is freaky. That is a total compliment by the way.

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## First-Time Home Buying



By **DAVE DeCUBELLIS**  
Senior Vice President of  
Residential Lending  
Navigant Credit Union

As someone who has been working in the residential lending industry for just over 20 years now, guiding individuals and families through the first-time home-buying process is a responsibility I deeply enjoy, and one I take very seriously.

Buying a home – especially buying your *first* home – is huge deal. Sure, it can be a bit overwhelming at times, but – with the right preparation – it doesn't have to be. Here are a few questions to ask yourself in order to make the first-time home-buying process the exciting, momentous occasion it ought to be.

### Is this a good time to buy my first house?

The answer to this question will always be dependent on the prospective home-buyer's individual circumstances, but – generally speaking – the answer is yes, this is as good a time as any to explore homeownership. Interest rates have been trending downward for the better part of the last two decades, and they're currently at historically low levels.

When I first started my career just over 20 years ago, I remember issuing loans with interest rates as high as 13 percent. Today, it's realistic to be approved for rates around – or, in some cases, even *under* – 3 percent. These historically low interest rates are allowing prospective homebuyers to increase their budgets and afford "more house."

### OK, the interest rates are historically low. But the houses themselves seem more expensive than ever. Isn't it a wash?

Well, not necessarily. Yes, the cost of housing inventory is on the higher end right now (for context: those 13 percent rates I remember issuing 20 years ago were back when you could buy a house for \$150,000 or less), but what makes the interest rate such an important piece of this transaction comes down to one word: "fixed."

Buying a home is a long-term investment, and – in most cases – the interest rate you agree to at signing is the rate you're committing to over the entire lifetime of your loan. Locking yourself into a low interest rate protects you from changes in the market, and could save you a good amount of money in the long run. Plus, it gives you a predictable, set monthly payment that you know you'll be able to afford.

### I'm ready to get serious. What's my first step?

The home-buying process starts with you and your family. Before you start attending Open Houses and falling in love with neighborhoods, it's important to take

an honest look at your financial situation and ask yourself if you're ready to take this step. That entails setting and maintaining a budget, tracking your spending and understanding your existing debt and credit history. If you decide you're ready to pursue the goal of homeownership, then it's time to start the process.

#### Gather your financial documents and call a loan originator.

Most lenders require prospective homebuyers to provide a packet of financial information along with their application. At Navigant Credit Union, we typically ask applicants to provide:

- Two most recent pay stubs
- W-2 forms for the most recent two years
- Two most recent monthly bank statements
- Tax returns for the most recent two years, if you are self-employed

#### Think about your down payment.

While there are some mortgage loan products that do not require any up-front cash, first-time homebuyers should typically plan on saving at least 3% to 5% of the total loan to use as a down payment. Depending on your budget, you may decide to increase that down payment in order to decrease your monthly payments.

#### Gather your team of experts.

You'll quickly learn that the homebuying process has a lot of moving parts, and each step requires its own level of expertise. Throughout the transaction, prospective homebuyers will work with real estate agents, lending officers, attorneys, appraisers, inspectors and a host of other professionals. It's important to find a team of experts that you can trust, and who understand your goals and objectives.

#### Don't forget about the "little things."

Remember: The total "price tag" on the house is just one piece of the homebuying transaction. You need to think about (and budget for) items like property taxes, homeowners association fees, insurance, real estate agent commissions and other closing costs.

### I found my dream house. How quickly can I get approved?

As a lender, I need to emphasize that buying a house shouldn't feel like a race. It's a big decision, and big decisions should always be made with patience, preparation and intention.

With that said, the honest answer is that you can be approved for a loan almost immediately after submitting your application. We understand that "dream houses" don't pop up on the market every day, and – assuming your finances are in order and you're eligible for one of our lending products – our team at Navigant Credit Union will work with you to make that dream a reality on any timeline that works for you.



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# Who Really Likes To Talk About Income Taxes?

Not too many people do, however, ignoring this topic could be problematic to your fiscal well-being. Here is the scoop!

The Trump Tax Plan was voted on in 2017 and implemented for the 2018 tax year. The only exception to the tax reduction was the lowest bracket of ten percent which was not lowered, all other brackets were reduced.

Here is the other side of that story, on December 31, 2025, the Trump tax plan will “sunset” back to where the taxes were in 2017. So, every bracket, except the lowest one, will see a tax increase. The second bracket (12%) will see a 25% increase up to 15%! The next bracket (22%) will see a 13.6% increase up to 25%, the next bracket (24%) will see a 16.6% increase up to 28% and the increases continue up to the highest bracket, all getting a tax increase. The top tax bracket now is 37% and that is going up to 39.6% in 2026.

President Biden has indicated that he will not raise taxes on anyone below \$400,000 of income. In time will we find out about the changes that he wants to make to the tax code. The important thing to keep in mind is that the Trump tax plan would keep the current, lower, rates in place through 2025. President Biden could “cherry pick” only the higher income earners for now, but, will he let the tax provisions/law sunset in 2025 as the current law states or will he lobby to keep the current lower taxes for those earners that are under \$400,000 of income? Your guess is as good as mine! So, keep an eye on this topic!

## Strategies to Protect Against Rising Taxes

Due to the likelihood of a future with higher income taxes, one strategy is to put your money away after you have paid taxes on it. This is an especially good idea for younger investors, and one of the most popular vehicles to use for this purpose is the Roth IRA. A Roth IRA is funded by money you’ve already been taxed on (after-tax contributions), and it grows in a tax-deferred manner, meaning there

are no taxes on investment gains as the account is growing. Additionally, assuming you play by the rules, your money and investment gains are not taxed when they are paid out to you, resulting in an income that will be free of income taxes for the rest of your life, based on current tax rules. The two rules that you must comply with to gain this great tax-free benefit are simple: the Roth IRA must be established for at least five years, and you must have reached age fifty-nine and one half.

If you’re currently retired, a Roth IRA can still be strategically valuable in legacy planning as a vehicle to efficiently transfer wealth to your heirs. For example, if you have a big chunk of money in a 401(k) and you know you will not need that money during your lifetime, you may be able to shift those dollars into a Roth IRA and pay the income tax due at today’s lower tax rates.

Currently, you can pass on a Roth IRA to your spouse, and then again to your children and/or grandchildren. The investments continue to grow in a tax-deferred manner and the income can be tax-free as it is paid out to the heirs. It is a cool strategy many people ignore, but probably shouldn’t. It’s a fabulous way to pass money to your heirs on a tax-deferred and tax-free basis.

If you’re fortunate enough to have a retirement plan at work that offers a Roth structure—a 401(k) Roth, for instance—then by all means, take advantage of that. Under current law, you can contribute higher amounts at older ages. You can \$19,500 into those plans regardless of your age, but if you’re age fifty or above, you can contribute an \$6,500 for a total of \$26,000 annually (in 2021).

In Traditional and Roth IRAs, you can currently contribute an additional one thousand dollars per year, if you’re age 50 or older (contributing a maximum of \$7,000 annually, as opposed to \$6,000 for everyone else). There are income qualifications and limitations for IRA contributions, and tax laws may change after the time of this writing, so you’ll want

to utilize a qualified accountant or financial advisor for up-to-date information if these strategies are of interest to you.

## Additional Tax-Advantaged Options

As I’ve mentioned, there are contribution limits to both Roth IRAs and 401(k) Roth plans. However, the insurance industry has another option for you, where there are no limits to the amount of money you contribute each year. If you’re a business owner, this can be a huge way to use after-tax money to build assets on a tax-deferred basis. The insurance product used for this is generally referred to as a cash value life insurance contract, and there are many different types of this plan. The type we tend to prefer for many of our clients is called an indexed universal life insurance contract. There are many different types of life insurance plans out there, so it’s important to have your advisor do the shopping for you and compare the various products to determine the one that is the best fit for your circumstances.

These life insurance policies are structured very differently than traditional life insurance. Most people view life insurance as a bill and want to spend the least amount of money each month and receive the highest possible benefit from it upon death. That is why temporary (“term”) life insurance is so popular. You pay a small amount for a high amount of coverage, but the downside is that term insurance becomes more expensive in your later years, and you don’t build any cash value with the premiums that you pay.

There are IRS regulations requiring a corridor between the cash value and the death benefit. If the cash value gets too close to the death benefit, the IRS could declare that it should be considered an investment instead of an insurance product. If it’s an investment, it could become fully taxable and lose its tax advantages. These policies are typically structured to account for those rules. As the cash value builds up within the policy, if it gets too close to the amount of the death benefit, the company increases the death benefit to comply with IRS rules. If the cash value is too close to the death benefit, the IRS could disqualify the death benefit as income tax free and tax all the growth within the policy. Obviously, that would not be a good outcome! By pushing up the death benefit, the cash value can continue to grow higher.

Tax-deferred growth is the primary reason I like the structure of indexed universal life insurance contracts. In many cases, you have the potential for double-digit rates of growth (assuming the market goes up by double digits), with favorable tax treatment. Additionally, these types of contracts can be designed to offer protection against losses. It’s possible to have an indexed universal life insurance contract with a ten percent cap on annual earnings. In that case, if the S&P 500 Index goes up twelve percent, you hit the cap and ten percent growth is credited into your insurance contract. If the S&P 500 Index gains seven percent the next year, you get all of the seven percent, because it’s within the ten percent cap.

Here is the critically important benefit available within these contracts: your gains are locked in annually. If the market goes down by twenty percent, you earn zero for that year, but you keep all the dollars you’ve gained in previous years.

Think about that. If you never experience a loss, and you share in the gains of the market, do you think you would be doing well over the course of many years? The math proves that answer to be yes. During the decade spanning from 2000 to 2009—the worst decade in the history of the stock market—the S&P 500 Index lost an average of one percent per year. Many people lost a significant amount of their retirement savings. During that worst decade, you would have averaged about a five percent gain per year, by locking in

the gains in the up years and avoiding the losses in the down years. That is the power of not losing money while still having the opportunity to participate and share in the upside of market gains.

Utilizing life insurance products can fulfill two needs. First, we often call it a “self-completing plan” because it accomplishes its goal regardless of how long you live. If you need life insurance to protect your family or business, and you want to have access to the assets you’ve built toward retirement, it works well. If you live to be one hundred years old, you’ll be able to enjoy the income benefits of the insurance product. If you pass away early, however, the death benefit feature of life insurance will complete your financial plan for your family. In that scenario it is a self-completing plan that operates much differently than an IRA or 401(k), where you just get the actual cash balance upon your death. In this type of life insurance contract, the death benefit is much greater than the cash value built up within the policy.

While I’ve given a general overview of how insurance products can be used as part of your financial plan, there is a tremendous amount of detail with these types of contracts, and it is very important for you to receive an illustration from your advisor. Your advisor can show you the historical performance of each insurance product, as well as explain how they might perform in the future.

The National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC) limits the percentage rate that can be used in illustrating potential future gains, to assure that advisors’ projections are realistic and sustainable. I completely agree with that approach.

## Disinherit Your Uncle

With many people agreeing that income taxes will likely be much higher in the future, it makes sense to pay taxes at today’s lower rates. This disinherits your Uncle Sam for the future, and he won’t be able to dig into your pocket when you receive tax-free income from Roth IRAs, 401(k) Roth plans, or life insurance products via the loan provision.

As our country gets deeper into debt, we increase the likelihood of higher income taxes in the future. If taxes do indeed rise significantly, you’d be better off paying today’s lower tax rate on your investments and avoiding the higher taxes of the future.


Tax mitigation is always a key part of a well thought out retirement plan. That is why we advocate that you work with professionals regarding your retirement planning; it’s just way too important to ignore.

For more information contact Massey And Associates, Inc., Retirement Wealth Advisors at (401) 333-8000 and [www.MasseyAndAssociates.com](http://www.MasseyAndAssociates.com). The office is located at 250F Centerville Road in Warwick, RI.

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# Strategies to recession-proof your finances



“Financial planning” is an umbrella term that can be applied to various aspects of money management. Many people associate financial planning with retirement. However, effective financial planning can help people confront today’s challenges just as much as it can help them prepare for their golden years.

The pandemic that spread across the globe throughout 2020 posed numerous challenges, including a recession sparked by widespread job loss and declines in economic activity. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics noted that the unemployment rate in the United States exceeded 10 percent in July 2020, while Statistics Canada reported the Canadian unemployment rate was just under 11 percent in that same month. While each country has since witnessed declines in their respective unemployment rates, tens of millions of workers in both nations remain out of work.

The sudden rise in unemployment and decline in global economic activity underscores the need to plan for recessions, even during those times when economies are thriving. Taking steps to recession-proof your finances is an important component of financial planning that can help

people overcome the stress of living during a downturn.

- **Build up your savings.** A recent poll from the Kaiser Family Foundation found that 45 percent of adults said their mental health had been negatively affected due to stress related to the virus. That poll was conducted in March, shortly after lockdown measures were instituted and the term “social distancing” entered the North American lexicon. As the pandemic wore on through the summer, fall and into the winter, stress remained a big concern for many people. Much of that stress stemmed from the economy, but one way to ease that stress is to have a substantial amount of money in savings. Each person’s financial needs are different, but many planners recommend clients have at least six months’ worth of expenses in their savings as a cushion to help them get through job loss.

- **Pay down debt.** Debt, particularly high-interest debt, can compromise your ability to save. A 2019 survey from Bankrate.com found that 13 percent of Americans admitted that debt was preventing them from saving more money. Pay down debt like credit cards and only make

credit card purchases if you have the money to pay the bill in full when it’s due.

- **Avoid overspending.** Many financial planners recommend a 50-30-20 approach to money management. Such an approach advises people to devote 50 percent of their earnings to needs, 30 percent to their wants and 20 percent to savings. Spending more than 30 percent on wants can make it difficult to build up a savings account to levels that can protect you in the event of a recession.

- **Expect the unexpected.** The American economy was doing historically well as recently as January, only to have the bottom fall out during the pandemic. If you want to recession-proof your finances, do not take your foot off the gas in regard to insulating yourself from the next recession. No matter how strongly the economy is performing, continue to expect the unexpected and prioritize saving so you have a soft landing awaiting you should the economy again take a sudden turn for the worse.

The timing of recessions is unpredictable, but they are inevitable. Effective financial planning can help anyone

overcome the challenges posed by economic downturns. METRO

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# A cerebral celebration



## A brainy week....

### programs in brief

#### Brain Talk: A Lunchtime Series

March 15, 16, 17

Participants in Brain Week represent some of the most esteemed research and educational institutions in Rhode Island. Programs cover subjects such as the brain's functions in memory, sleep and migraine; the impact on the brain of mindfulness and exercise; neuroeconomics and mental illness; and the effect of racism and Covid-19. Specifically, speakers for the lunchtime events include: Judson Brewer, MD, PhD, on mindfulness, whose TED Talk has had more than 16.5 million views; Mary A. Carskadon, PhD is an authority on adolescent sleep and circadian rhythms; John Robinson, PhD, on the benefits of exercise to the brain; Oriol FeldmanHall, PhD, on neuroeconomics--the social, emotional and cognitive factors that shape and ultimately guide our moral choices and decision-making. Storytellers include: Kyri Allison, on the stigma around borderline personality disorder; and Alexis Elizabeth, who lives with migraine disease and is a patient advocate and comedian. See [brainweekri.org/brain-talk/](https://brainweekri.org/brain-talk/)

#### BrainyActs: A Night of (Virtual) Theater

March 18

This innovative program will premier four live, 10-minute plays to Brain Week's 2021 roster of events. Directed by Tyler Dobrowsky, a multi-talented freelance theater director, producer and educator, the plays are inspired by brain science, and based on conversations with local neuroscientists. The topics of these plays explore themes such as consciousness, memory, and epilepsy. The playwrights are Dave Rabinow, Darcie Dennigan, and Gina Rodriguez-Drix & Marcel Mascaro. BrainyActs will be followed by a live Q&A with playwrights and the researchers who helped inspire their work. See <https://brainweekri.org/brainy-acts/>

#### Mindfulness in Practice

March 19

This concluding event, organized by physicians and scientists from the CfNN (VA Medical Center) and Butler Hospital, will explore how mindfulness-based treatments are emerging as additional intervention options for individuals struggling with various psychiatric disorders, such as posttraumatic stress disorder, major depressive disorder, and addiction. In addition, with the day-to-day stress of the COVID-19 pandemic, people are looking for a way to cope with anxiety and grief, and mindful practices may be particularly relevant for this challenging time. The panel will explore the underlying brain mechanisms supporting mindfulness, current research practices, as well as existing and potential future clinical applications of mindfulness techniques. See <https://brainweekri.org/mindfulness-in-practice/>

#### BRAINY Adventures

Ongoing

Education programs provide a BRAINY Adventure Package that includes presentations and videos on Google Slides. Each lesson involves an experiment, with background information, protocols, and discussion topics. Seven teams of neuroscience and psychology students, both post-graduate and graduate, from URI, Brown, Providence College, Bryant and Roger Williams are helping to implement the programs. Rhode Island schools will have the opportunity to meet the scientists through Zoom after completing the experiments. For more information see <https://brainweekri.org/brainy-adventures/>.

Brain Week RI is a communal effort, organized and spearheaded by Cure Alliance for Mental Illness and presented this year by the Rhode Island Department of Health's Violence and Injury Prevention Program. The Glia-level sponsor this year is the George and Anne Ryan Institute at University of Rhode Island and the Synapse-level sponsors include the Center for Neurorestoration and Neurotechnology (CfNN) at the Providence Veterans Administration Medical Center; and the Norman Prince Neurosciences Institute at Lifespan. Several other institutions and universities provided sponsorship at the Axon and Dendrite levels.



**HANDS ON LEARNING:** Kids gaze in wonder at pieces of the brain at the 2019 Brain Week Rhode Island festival. (Submitted photo)

By ARDEN BASTIA



**Dr. Victoria Heimer-McGinn**

"It's only really been in the last half century that we know what we know about the brain. We know about the stars, we know about the physical world around us, but what lies within is still a big mystery," says Dr. Victoria Heimer-McGinn, assistant professor of neuroscience at Roger Williams University and founder and co-chair of Brain Week Rhode Island.

Since its inception in 2016, Brain Week Rhode Island (BWRI) has brought together thousands of parents, children, scientists, educators, artists and community members to discover the wonders of the brain.

This year, from March 15 to 20, BWRI is going virtual, with a week of free online programs to celebrate neuroscience. The events will take place from March 15 to March 20, in conjunction with Brain Awareness Week, a global campaign to increase public awareness of the progress and benefits of brain research.

Dr. Heimer-McGinn said it was a "coincidence" that she ended up in the neuroscience field. In an interview, she explained that she was first interested in science on the molecular level, but then one project led to another as she studied more and more human behavior. Now, Dr. Heimer-McGinn says she "can't get enough of it."

Dr. Heimer-McGinn was inspired to launch Brain Week because of family history with mental illness. "My uncle has schizophrenia, and his illness has spawned three generations of people in my family that are interested in brain science from one angle or another. My grandfather was also a neuroanatomist back in the day, and it really inspired me to go into the neurosciences in the first place," she said during an interview last Friday.

One aspect of neuroscience that particularly fascinates Dr. Heimer-McGinn, is advocating for mental illness. "Society has this idea that mental illness is almost like a moral deficiency, like if you're addicted to alcohol, there's something wrong with you at a personal level and it's not biological."

Dr. Heimer-McGinn spent a large part of her post-graduate work canvassing and campaigning for Congress to increase funding to mental health research.

"People tend to vilify the sciences sometimes, and I want to change that perception," she said. "We want to get people excited instead. Let's just teach people about why brain research is good, and why it's fun and exciting. Let's try to get kids excited to do brain science when they grow up, and inspire adults to learn and know more."

For Dr. Heimer-McGinn, "putting it all in one nutshell" is what distinguishes BWRI from other brain awareness programs. "Rhode Island is the perfect place to do that, because we're such a small state, and we're so interconnected," she said. "We're trying to form a community of brain related, not only scientists, but community partners across the state."

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Heimer-McGinn and other Brain Week RI members would partner with universities, high schools, community centers, and hospitals to put on events and lectures. Previous events include lectures on interpersonal conflict and connection at the Nonviolence Institute, and Brain Fairs at the University of Rhode Island and Brown University.

#### Role models for students

"The brain controls everything, so it literally impacts everything that you do," said Dr. Heimer-McGinn. "There's even neuroeconomics. So even if you're a Rotary Club or some sort of business, there are brain scientists that study what you do."

Dr. Heimer-McGinn believes there is "a lot of opportunity and growth and interconnection" within the state. "And neurosciences is one of the up and coming areas, economically, in Rhode Island. So this is a part of the fabric of budding neuroscience jobs."

During the interview, she explained she sees BWRI as "contributing, not only educationally, but also to the very fabric of the economy."

For both Dr. Heimer-McGinn and her co-chair Dr. Oluwarotimi "Timi" Folorunso, PhD, promoting diversity in science is a key aspect of BWRI.

"I'm from Puerto Rico. And every time I go into a classroom, that's the first thing I say," she said. Growing up in Puerto Rico was an advantage to her scientific career. She described "the privilege of looking around and seeing that everyone, whether doctors or lawyers, was Puerto Rican and looked like me."

It wasn't until she began her academics at the University of Florida did she realize the privilege she experienced as a child, and said she was inspired to use it to help others who "may not feel like they belong at the table".



"Role models are incredibly important. Little kids sometimes grow up to not even consider a career because they don't see people like them in that position. And so it never even occurs to them," she said. "It's really important for us scientists to be able to speak to children and be role models. You don't learn that in graduate school. Timi and I are drawn to this, and we're good at it, but not everybody is."

That's a big part of their job-educating Rhode Island scientists on bring role models.

For Folorunso, educating young students about the possibilities of a career in neuroscience is vitally important. "We want to be a resource for the schools and make sure the students see any kind of neuroscience career, and they've been exposed to those people at least once."

"We have a good team of people that do different parts of research in different parts of neuroscience. But if we can't, we're already connected with universities and hospitals in Rhode Island, so we can find someone that can come and speak to something," he said in an interview.

Folorunso originally hails from Harvard University where he works as a post-doctoral research fellow in the Translational Psychiatry Laboratory at McClean Hospital. He is also the director of McClean's Mental Health Research Summer Program for Black, Indigenous, and underrepresented students of color.

Increasingly accessibility to a field of science that may seem out of reach is "very, very intentional" to Folorunso. "Even though we can't be there in person, we want Brain Week to be something that's very interactive."

Folorunso is most excited about the "bite size" lunchtime lectures, storytelling, and theater. "Even though we're involved in planning the whole thing, I'm curious about the plays," he said. "I'm curious about how the playwright is able to interact with scientists and how they can bring science to life."

The lunchtime series will feature some of the most esteemed research and educational institutions in the state, covering subjects such as the brain's functions in memory, sleep, and migraine, the impact of exercise and mindfulness on the brain, as well as neuroeconomics and mental illness. Pablo Rodriguez, MD, an associate professor of OBGYN at Brown University and a co-founder of Latino

Public Radio, where he hosted a daily radio show in Spanish, will moderate the conversations.

"We're excited for this lineup. We have a diverse lineup in all ways, what they talk about, who they are, you know, everything," Folorunso shared.

**Why neuroscience now?**

"I mean, why not," said Dr. Heimer-McGinn. "Neuroscience is a budding field. There's public interest in it. The brain is used in every single field. There are a lot of misconceptions out there about what brain science is and what it can explain. I think that it is really relevant right now for scientists to be the one to educate the public."

"It is our responsibility to now not be so inward facing, and update people on the advances that we've made," said Folorunso. "We want to give people things to take home with them and to think about. It's a very timely event."

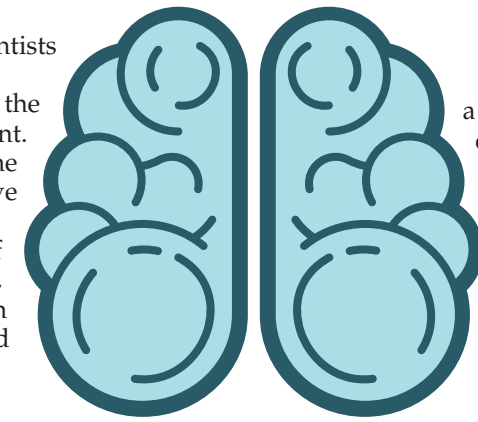
Dispelling brain myths is another key aspect to Brain Week RI.

"This whole argument, myth, that we only use 10 percent of our brain is baffling to me," said Dr. Heimer-McGinn. "Basically, it does everything. If I were to track you throughout the day, at some point in the day, every single part of your brain is going to light up. You get up in the morning, you have to remember where your bathroom is, and you have to walk to the bathroom. The idea of 90 percent of your brain being silent is just absurd. So yes, we use 100 percent of our brains all the time."

For Folorunso, he wants to dispel the myth of the brain's plasticity. "We think that the brain is set in it's ways, that you can't change. But you just have to keep practicing. The brain can change."

As words of advice to future scientists, Dr. Heimer-McGinn wants to encourage representation.

"Science endeavors start with research questions, and a research question comes from something you're curious about in the world," she said. "The more people we have with different insights, the more types of research questions we will have and therefore, the more answers we will get."



**“This whole argument, myth, that we only use 10 percent of our brain is baffling to me,”**

– Dr. Heimer-McGinn



**DANCE FOR MOVEMENT IMPAIRED:** Here, attendees at the 2019 Brain Week Rhode Island take an interactive class to learn about the benefits of dance and movement on the brain. (Submitted photo)



**SMART STUFF:** Attendees to the 2019 URI Brain Fair learn about parts of the brain and spinal cord. (Submitted photo)



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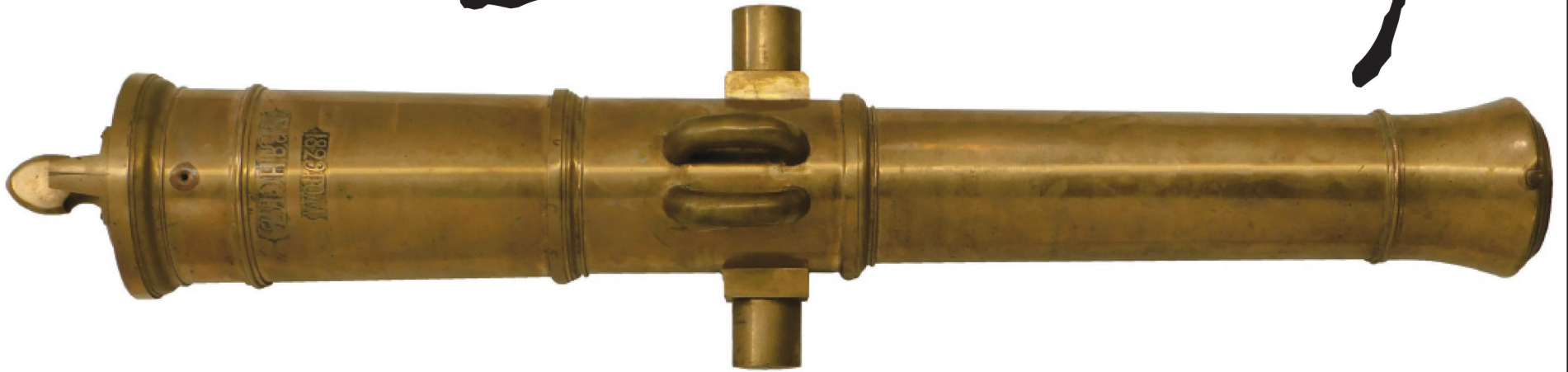






# COLLECTIBLES

## A CANNON with History



A few weeks ago, I wrote about picking up a bronze Russian 12-pound field gun for auction from the Massachusetts Army National Guard. I had walked by it in their museum for years and wondered how a Russian cannon ended up in Massachusetts but did not realize the amazing story it would tell.

During the Crimean War, the Russian army and navy were besieged at Sebastopol. On September 21, 1854, the siege began. In order to keep the English ships from coming into the bay they began to scuttle their ships to block entry. The hulks with their tall masts would keep gunboats and ships from getting too close. When the Russians sank their ships a lot of war material went to the bottom with them, including artillery. Under a heavy bombardment they survived for a year before they had to surrender. Once the war was over, they needed to rebuild and clear the bay to open it for shipping. It was 1855 and how would they attempt



**By Joel Bohy**  
*Historic Arms & Militaria*  
 Bruneau & Co. Auctioneers  
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such a feat?

The Russian government had heard of an engineer who had raised sunken ships before, Lynn, Massachusetts native John E. Gowan. They approached him, an agreement was made, and he began to put together his team and equipment. He had quite the task ahead of him and from 1857 to 1862 he worked tirelessly to complete his

job. If a ship could not be raised the cargo was emptied and anything possible was salvaged, then the hulk blown up. He was paid based on the amount of material he saved as well as how many ships could be brought to the surface for the navy to have rebuilt. Amongst the materials he brought up were cannon, including the one we are going to auction, but how did it get here?

As a prize for his work, the Russian officers in charge of the operation presented Gowan with some gifts, one of them being this bronze beauty. He returned to Lynn with the gun and quite a story. In 1870 Gowan presented the gun to the Lynn Light Infantry, a unit in the Massachusetts Volunteer militia. It sat in their armory for over a hundred years and then moved a few times till it was placed in the museum in Concord. By that time, the history of the gun had vanished till one of the officers in the National Guard found some paperwork that mentioned the gun and its history. It was decided that as it did not relate to the mission of their museum it should go to a new home and the monies raised be put into objects that do relate. Now I get to look at it and study the history before it goes to a new home. It is one of the great parts of my job. I get to handle objects with wonderful stories to tell, share the story, and then look forward to the next historical gem to come along.



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