

# THE BILLERICA GREEN



**FREE**

December 2009/January 2010  
Vol.1, No.5

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RESOLUTIONS  
IN 2010

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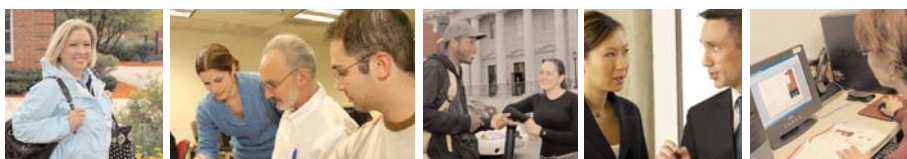
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For more information and assistance in planning your special event, contact  
Maureen Spinney, Director of Historic Homes, at 978-458-3722  
or e-mail: [spinneym@middlesex.mass.edu](mailto:spinneym@middlesex.mass.edu).

Find us online at [www.middlesex.mass.edu/historic](http://www.middlesex.mass.edu/historic)

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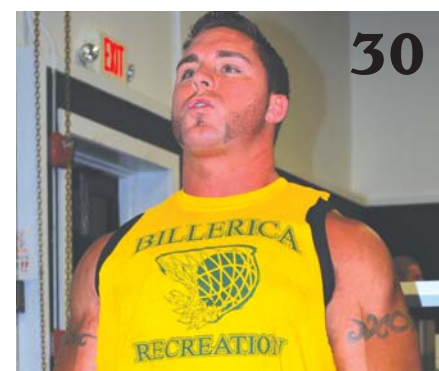
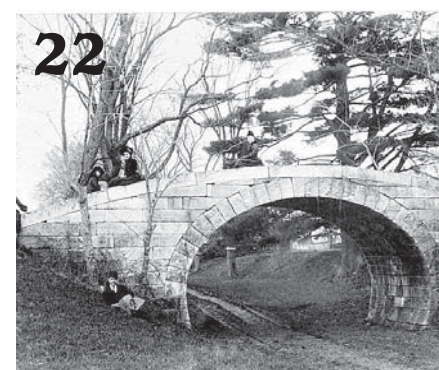
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• By Jenn Gervais



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## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

### HAPPY NEW YEAR, BILLERICA...THE TOWN WITH THE BIGGEST HEART ANYWHERE!

Well, here it comes. 2010. Remember when 2000 came and everyone was freaking out about the Millennium? We made it a whole decade! Oh, wait. That makes me 10 years older. Bummer!

For starters, I want to say how proud I am to be a resident of this town and of all the people who live here. Moms. Dads. Workers. Teachers. Kids. Old. Young. Businesses. Organizations. You all ROCK! This town has to be the most generous with their time, money, and talent. I had the honor of meeting some amazing people along the way this month and I could hardly wait to tell you about them!

First, let's talk about the holiday festival. The tree lighting was awesome. The donations in the library were exorbitant. Elks and Masons and Police Children's Parties. And all the Santa's! Breakfast with Santa. Pizza with Santa. Photos with Santa. Santa in the Bennett library. Santa on the back of the Elks' Fire Engine. They were everywhere!

Then the shows. Children singing in churches. Children dancing for seniors. Add in the renditions of Dicken's Christmas Carol. At the First Parish Church. At Alan Kessler's Karate Studio. So inspiring!

Of course, there were volunteers and charities galore. Raising money for St. Jude's Hospital. Serving Thanksgiving dinner to the seniors at the Elks. Serving Seniors at the COA for the tree lighting. Donations for soldiers from children. Children donating coats or hats or gloves. Thanksgiving baskets. Toys for Tots drop offs overflowing. Volunteers buying gifts for Veteran's families or inmates' families or any families! Knitted hats and gloves for babies and cancer patients. Firefighters visiting burn victims. Elks members dressed up to make handicapped children smile. Forgive me if I forgot any one for I'm sure I am.

Whew! Okay, so now onto New Year's. Oh, the places you will go! For starters, don't forget to ring in 2010 at Family First Night at the Town Hall. The Cat in the Hat

will be there. In talking to folks, we found out how some amazing organizations and businesses are making lives better everyday. We tackled New Year's resolutions--be sure to read all our talented columnists' takes on what the new year means to them. In keeping with that theme, check out some exciting classes and seminars being held for you.

As usual, thank you to my team. We keep growing every month. Tony, my Art Director, keeps us looking spectacular and he'll get to shine even more in January. We're holding a gallery opening of his art work on January 7 at the BATV studios. Stop by and take a look. We would love to meet you!

As usual, please share your feedback with us--good or bad. We want to make The Billerica Green the best it can be. If you want or need news or event coverage, contact us at 978-808-2361 or at [liana@thebillericagreen.com](mailto:liana@thebillericagreen.com). We are still looking for sports writers, senior writers, and kid contributors.

Happy Reading!

*Liana* "

Liana Measmer  
[liana@thebillericagreen.com](mailto:liana@thebillericagreen.com)



Even the Billerica Green Editor took time to enjoy the holiday festival by decorating a cookie with friends at the First Parish Church.



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## THIS FAMILY COLORS YOUR WORLD: BROTHER AND SISTER BUSINESSES GOING GREEN

At a time when every industry is looking for ways to become more health conscious and environmentally savvy, one Billerica family took a closer look at the way they used chemicals in their individual businesses. Specifically colors and paints.

Whether painting cars or coloring hair, Jim Marshall of Marshall's Auto Body Carstar and Laura Carroll of Laura's Hair Design wanted to keep their employees and customers healthier and safer.

Marshall had been reading collision industry trade magazines for some time and researched water based environmentally safe paint products. Although European manufacturers had been using this paint process for 15 years already, the United States was lagging behind in such innovation. He used the BASF paint line and knew they were yielding better color matches.

"It's a better product for the customer, the environment, and it's safer for my employees," said Marshall.

When Marshall shared his ideas about going green with his sister, Carroll agreed it

made sense for her business too. She traded her standard hair color lines for All Nutrient by Sukesha color instead since this organic plant based, American made product is



gentler. To give the hair an even smoother feel, Carroll adds botanical oils and a spray on protein which customers appreciate.

"My customers had complained of irritation on their scalp," said Carroll. "Now my clients like the condition of their hair better."

Going green was an adjustment at first. When Marshall used solvent based paints,

because of evaporation, they would dry more rapidly than water based paints. With the environmentally safer water based paint line and the absence of Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC), his staff noticed a difference. They cleaned up better and were no longer susceptible to chemical exposure. Although more streamlined now, initially the water based paints took longer to dry, increasing the time between applications.

"It slowed down the process," said Marshall.

The advantages to these color lines were the same for both Carroll and for Marshall: Vividness. Marshall found his paints brighter and truer than before. Carroll said since there is such a low level of ammonia in this color line, the hair doesn't dry out as fast and stays brighter and shinier longer.

Both Marshall and Carroll stand behind their innovative products and services, confident that they are offering what's best for their customers and employees.

"This gives us the ability to do our job on a higher level," said Marshall.

## Laura's Hair Design & Day Spa



Jen Jones, Megan McGinnity and Tisha Boose **hair extensions specialist**, formally from Escape Salon and Spa join Laura's Team.

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## DID YOU HEAR WHAT THEY SAID?

"You were right! The newspaper is quite impressive. It came together great. However, I am not surprised one bit that it worked out so well. Kudos to you!"

— Gregory T. Hoffman, Financial Advisor  
Waddell & Reed, Woburn, MA

"Can't thank you enough for all the coverage you are giving to the Club! The info. page on the club itself is fantastic. You are providing a huge resource to the town that helps everyone. Thanks again!"

— Roy Nagy, Executive Director  
Billerica Boys and Girls Club, Billerica

"Great little paper, the Billerica Green!"

— Fr. Michael Parise, Pastor  
St. Andrew Parish, Billerica

"I heard several comments from people about the article. Good sign that people are reading."

— Frank Hynes  
Frank Hynes and Associates, A Metlife Office, Billerica

"We got two new customers redeeming our offer"

— Maureen Grogan, Owner  
N'Ve Skincare, Billerica

"Thanks for your work. The Billerica Green is a great addition to our Town. I look forward to each edition."

— Kay Johnson, President  
Billerica Garden Club, Billerica

"I just finished reading the Billerica Green, loved it! Just wanted to let you know!"

— Christine Andacic  
Cakes By Christine, Billerica

## PARKER SCHOOL WINS TOWN VOTE

On Nov. 21, the town went to the polls to decide if they would fund building the new \$34 million Parker School. The vote was close but the Parker came out on top by 134 votes. This vote saw about 25 percent of registered voters casting their say in the matter, which as of late, is more than recent elections of our local officials.



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Second Annual Girl Scout Talent Show to entertain the residents of Billerica Crossings. "Seven Caroling Cuties" singing Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer. (listed in alphabetical order) Tess Gobel, Gracie Jones, Jessica Maillet, Grace Morrissey, Kailey Roche, Brooke Vallerand, Elizabeth White

## SHORT SALE SPECIALISTS GO THE EXTRA MILE

It's coming. The economy is turning. Albeit slowly but its turning. However, as the wreckage of the economy still sits waiting to be cleaned up, real estate agencies must adjust to meet the needs of today's market. Years ago, short sales were unheard of. Now, for many who were impacted by unfortunate job losses, the short sale gives them the opportunity to stay in their home and save their credit.

Not everyone does them in the real estate world. Short sale is not an accurate description because the transactions are anything but short. They can take more than double--sometimes triple--the time of a regular real estate purchase. However, when done right, they can give the buyer some substantial savings.

Realty World Advantage Owner Lisa Luther along with two of her agents, Joan DiOrio and Cathy Lomasney are Loss Mitigation Certified short sale specialists. When others may not want to deal with the short sale, these agents are skilled in working with the banks and are committed to completing the process.

"We won't hand off our short sales packages to third parties," said Luther.

It can be a risk to do a short sale. Because some can take a long as three months to complete, buyers can get frustrated and walk away. It takes a patient buyer who knows what they want paired off with a persistent specialist who can get any needed information to banks in a timely fashion.

"I'm very organized," said Lomasney. "Open communication is important."

All the ins and outs of a short sale may be confusing. That is why Realty World Advantage is holding two free informational seminars to explain what buyers and sellers need to know. During the seminar, a mortgage loan officer, a local attorney who handles closings, and Realty World staff will be on hand. In addition to further explaining the federal \$8,000 stimulus tax credit for home buyers, Realty World Advantage also offers an additional \$2,000 in savings as a bonus.

The seminars will be held on Tuesday, Jan. 12 from 6:30-8:30 pm and Saturday, Jan. 23 from 10 to 11:30 am. Call 978-667-1848 for more information.

### The Body Elite

•By Brian Panarese, B.S. Professional Fitness Trainer



## KEEP YOUR RESOLUTION THIS YEAR

New Years Eve is almost here and like most Americans, you're about to make another resolution that you will NOT keep. I'm talking about the dreaded, "I'm going to get in shape this year". I think it's great that

you want to improve your health and lose weight but do you know how?

Most Americans fail quickly, within the first month, because they don't know how to reduce BODY FAT in a healthy way and

stick with it. I always ask my clients to ask themselves this question before starting an exercise or food plan, "Can I do this for the rest of my life?" If you answer that question with a NO, then don't start it. Whatever you chose to do, to be successful for the long run you need to do it for the rest of your life.

Here are my two steps you need to do in order to be successful:

#### 1. Join a Gym/Fitness facility:

Save your money and don't buy any infomercial gadgets or DVD's that don't work. For a relatively small monthly fee, you can workout on a million dollars worth of equipment. There are a large number of facilities around and you might think this is a difficult choice but I am going to simplify it for you with one word: CONVENIENCE. Forget price, fluff or special classes. The place you want to workout in must be easy to get to at the time you want to exercise. There are some knock out facilities around that offer all kinds of cutting edge equipment or classes BUT if it's a hassle to get there, you will not go on a regular basis like you need to. Visit a few facilities that you know will work for you. Go at the same time of day that you'd be working out to see what the crowd is like at that time.

#### 2. Hire a Personal Trainer:

Do you think a 17 year old with a driver's license can drive a Formula I race car to its fullest potential? No, right? Then why do you think you'll use the equipment in a gym to its fullest potential. Just because your gym teacher in 1963 showed you how to lift rusty barbells or use a Universal Multi-Station doesn't mean you know how to get great results today. You need to hire an educated

person who is trained to help you.

Honestly, I hate the title "TRAINER". People think we yell and scream and push you to great lengths like the celebrity trainers on "Biggest Loser". Let me educate you, dear readers, these people are not trainers. These are the stereotypes that we professionals fight on a daily basis.

In my five year program at Northeastern University, I took three years of anatomy and physiology, learning every muscle, bone, joint type etc. and earned a Bachelor of Science degree. Now, during continuing education seminars, I am learning from Ph. D. research scientists who are on the cutting edge of science and medicine. A good trainer knows how to perform an evaluation with body composition testing, medical background checks and how today's medicines can affect you during exercise.

Ask your trainer if they know how to build the proper program for you from the ground up. There is a progression that has to be followed in order for you to continually make gains and not get hurt, just like building a house with a specific order and procedure. Then ask your trainer for references from their client base. Talk to the clients and they will tell you first hand how well they have done. Personal training is an added expense but it will speed up the time it takes to get your results and more importantly, KEEP THEM THROUGHOUT THE YEAR!

*Brian Panarese, B.S. owns The Body Elite Professional Fitness Training Company and has been a Professional Trainer for 33 years. If you have a fitness related question please e-mail him at Body.Elite@verizon.net*

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**Dave Says**

•By Dave Ramsey

**CHRISTMAS IS ABOUT GIVING**

Dear Dave,

*We're new parents, and we were wondering if you have any advice on how to teach children that Christmas is not a gift-giving free-for-all.*

– Lauren

Dear Lauren,

This is a great question. I think one of the best things you can do is teach kids from an early age exactly what Christmas is all about. It's not about kids being consumers and getting everything they see. First and foremost, Christmas is a spiritual holiday. It's about celebrating the birth of Christ!

Christ came into this world because God chose to give his only son. So, Christmas is about giving, not receiving. You need to talk about this concept a lot. Now, how long will that stick in their heads after they're confronted with Saturday morning cartoons and malls full of bright, shiny things that make noise? Probably not long. That's why you need to have the "giving" talk early and often – not just when Christmas rolls around.

The only way you win at this parenting thing is through death by a thousand cuts. You just don't stop teaching, and finally you wear them down and hope some of your good advice sticks in their heads!

– Dave

**Say no to creating business partners.**

Dear Dave,

*I own a moving business, and I have a good, smart employee, who is currently my general manager, and he wants to invest in the company. We're growing and doing pretty well right now, but we could still use the money. How would you suggest that I structure things?*

– Daniel

Dear Daniel,

You're not going to like my answer, because I wouldn't do this deal. You've got a nice company right now that's making money and growing. Just be patient and let it grow. Don't rush things.

If you bring in a partner it's liable to complicate everything. This person is going to develop a whole new set of opinions on how things should be done. I've got a close friend, who is older and wiser than I am, and he's got a great saying: "The only ship that won't sail is a partnership." I tend to agree with that, because when you take on a partner you end up being joined at hip. You're not just getting the business side of the guy. You'll be stuck with all the personal baggage and problems that could interfere with the business, too!

Let's separate this into two issues. On one hand you've got a quality employee, and you'd like him to help you carry the load. So, maybe it's time for you to build your first layer of leadership. That means it's time to delegate. This guy is obviously responsible and someone you trust. Take it to the next level and develop the relationship even more. You want to be on the same page about everything with him, even to the point that he can finish your sentences and know what you want done in every situation. You could even reward him for this by cutting him in on the profits. That way, you give him the emotional ownership and desire to carry the load with you.

The second issue is all about how to grow, and the word to remember is slowly. Buy used equipment, pay cash for everything, and stay away from debt. You're probably going to see some good things happen if you just stay calm and run this thing lean and clean. Then, set aside a percentage of your profits each year for additional trucks, new crew members and things like that. You won't be an overnight success, but you'd rather be the tortoise than the hare. Remember that story? The tortoise wins every time!

– Dave

\*For more financial advice, plus special offers to our readers, please visit [www.davesays.org](http://www.davesays.org).

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Nancy Graham of Middlesex Savings Bank chats with Carol Hughes, Community Sales Director at Brightview's Country Club Heights community in Woburn at Brightview Concord River's professional referral reception.



# New Year New View New You

By Liana Measmer

## MAKE 2010 YOUR YEAR OF CHANGE

We all do it at the stroke of midnight on Dec. 31. We make our resolutions. Sometimes we make them excitedly; other times we make them begrudgingly. Unfortunately, within six weeks, the resolution has often been broken and we resume our lives as they were.

Why? Because we don't always know how to be successful. Four experts around town shared their suggestions for fresh views on the classic four—exercise, eating, money, and organization—by teaching you how to be the best you possible.

### RESOLUTION #1: I RESOLVE TO EXERCISE

For health purposes, people repeatedly hear that exercise is needed. Yet studies show that 60 percent of American adults don't get the recommended amount of physical activity, and over 25 percent of adults are not active at all. In Paige Waehner's article "Top Ten Reasons You Don't Exercise," the most common excuses people gave were hating exercise, not having the time or not knowing how.

These excuses are whisked away the moment one walks into Curves Gym in Treble Cove Plaza. This fitness facility for women has been in existence for 12 years and features a computerized personal coaching system. The gym is arranged in an oval with alternating weight resistance machines and resting stations. Music plays over the sound system and every few minutes a woman's voice says, "Change stations now." Gym members move through every station and complete their workout in 30 minutes. Each member's workout is tailored to the individual to ensure it targets what is needed.

"It's programmed to me or you," said Curves co-owner Cheryl White. "Your energy level creates strength."

Prior to ever getting on a machine, members complete a body signature, measuring arm length and energy level. They are issued a programmed key tag which records their statistics. Upon using a machine, the tag is inserted in the Curves Smart computer and the machine adjusts accordingly. Based on results, the machine will change its intensity.

Each workout starts with a warmup, followed by strength and cardio training and ending with a cooldown and stretch. It is recommended that members exercise every other day since their entire body gets a workout. A Curves workout can burn up to 500 calories.

"It goes up or down as needed," says White. "You never outgrow your workout."

*Expert's New View—Bring a friend to the gym.*



## RESOLUTION #2: I RESOLVE TO EAT HEALTHIER

Lifestyles today are demanding in a whole new way. So much that when it comes to meals, fast foods or processed foods are chosen first. Unfortunately, those choices have long term effects. On the www.healthyamericans.org Web site, the adult obesity rate in Massachusetts was 20-25 percent while the child obesity rates were tipping the scales at 30-35 percent. The pressures on parents to give their children junk foods is great.

"The kids these days are going to live shorter lives than us because of childhood diabetes and obesity," said Kathy Lynch, Certified Holistic Health Counselor.

Lynch, founder of the WellSkills System and WellSkills.com, works primarily with busy moms and their families helping them improve their health, energy, and weight through cooking classes, whole foods store tours, and wellness seminars on personal growth and development.

"Many people want to eat better and improve their health but lack the knowledge and support they need to implement their plans," said Lynch. "My expertise is in helping to figure out what works best."

So how is this achieved? Lynch starts with teaching people to think first about what they are eating. Plan your meals. If you don't have something in the house you need, pick it up at the store. Her cooking classes outline easy menu plans which don't take much time.

Doing things like defrosting the chicken before leaving for work in the morning or trying one pot meals can make healthy choices more readily available. She teaches how to dehydrate foods to make homemade fruit leather or beef jerky. She advises that working with whole foods or organic foods is preferred although some would argue organic is too expensive. Lynch disagrees.

"If you spend more on food, you will spend less on health care and doctor visits," said Lynch.

Lynch advises practicing the 90/10 rule. This rule is eat right 90 percent of the time which makes up for not eating right the other 10 percent of the time.

"If people are honest with themselves, they will see it's hard," said Lynch.

**Expert's New View—Put out a sliced apple when someone comes for a visit.**



## RESOLUTION #3: I RESOLVE TO GET MY FINANCES IN ORDER

Financial planning is like building a house. You have to start with a strong foundation. This is what Frank Hynes of Hynes and Associates Financial Services, a Metlife Office, tells his clients while raising their awareness about their money and how they are handling it. This is vital in a slow turning economy that has been heavy with loss of jobs and revenue.

"There is a strong reality check going on," says Hynes.

For starters, establish a budget and manage your debt. Although not a new message for most, it warrants repeating as people so often use the new year as a time to reassess their finances. Establishing a budget teaches discipline while managing debt teaches control. Often, people find filling out a budget worksheet an intimidating task and will procrastinate doing it. Hynes assures folks that this is actually an empowering act because then they know where their money is.

"Just write it down," said Hynes.

Budget worksheets are helpful because the hard numbers are there in black and white allowing for concrete planning to occur.

Next, Hynes explained that when managing debt, stay within a 30 percent debt-to-income ratio and watch discretionary spending. If Hynes notices families are spending \$300 a month on eating out, he may suggest only \$100 or \$200 based on their lifestyle. By decreasing this, it gives a little wiggle room to allow for unforeseen events, as well as reduce debt. Hynes may also review insurance policies with clients and recommend adjusting deductible levels.

The last thing most people do with their money is save it. This is in the reverse as Hynes points out people should pay themselves first with a savings account, retirement account, 401K, or IRA. With online banking as the way most people move their money, setting up a savings system is easy. On an IRA, making a pre-tax contribution can be painless since it was money never seen. Hynes recommends 10 percent of one's income as a goal but ultimately any little bit counts.

"Discipline, habits and systems mean financial success," said Hynes.

**Expert's New View—The best way to teach kids about money is to be a good role model.**



## RESOLUTION #4: I RESOLVE TO GET ORGANIZED

Do you spend more than five minutes looking for lost items? Is clutter taking over your space like your home, car and office?

Tracy Mackenzie of Unclutter Me can help. Having been an organized person, she began her business when she found herself always helping family members get organized. They seemed to feel better and were always appreciative. Her down to earth and common sense ideas have brought order and peace to multiple households.

"Often, they can't do it alone," said MacKenzie.

Why are we so cluttered? So often because we are collectors of too much stuff. What ultimately happens is we start to feel stuck, get overwhelmed and aren't productive.

Sometimes, MacKenzie has to begin the process in a space that holds no emotional connection, like a supply closet. Or she may sort through someone's pile of magazines, suggesting they throw out half of them. For those items that have not been used but are too hard to let go of, Mackenzie suggests a six-month-basket, kept out of sight. If after six months, the items are still unused, they need to be donated. This is what Mackenzie calls delayed purging. Mackenzie is also a big proponent for re-purposing. Take something and use it again but in a whole new way.

Teaching children early to get organized is important. Having hooks on the walls at the right heights makes it easier for children to reach and hang up their coats instead of throwing them on the ground. Giving them their own shelves or baskets to keep their belongings gives them a sense of pride in ownership.

"We're teaching them responsibility for their own articles," said MacKenzie.

Mackenzie organizes kitchen cabinets, counter spaces, coat closets, book shelves, and junk drawers. Some of her favorite organization systems are check book boxes. These boxes are the right size for piles of loose change, paper clips or nuts and bolts.

"Once they verbalize what they need, I can come in," she said.

**Expert's New View—Use ice cube trays to sort multiple pairs of earrings since they are stackable.**

Above all, remember this -- the trick to keeping resolutions is to set realistic goals. Start small and build up slowly. Expecting to be thin, rich, muscular, and organized in six weeks may not happen. You will be more likely to succeed by focusing on one goal and tackling it one day at a time. Then perhaps you can stay on the right path for the long haul and avoid resolutions all together next year.





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Making Cents  
•By Frank Hynes



ELECTRONIC ENVELOPES

I remember when I was a young boy, probably about 8-10 yrs old. Every Thursday was pay day for my dad, a hard working Teamster that drove a truck for 42 years to support a family of 8 on one pay check.

My dad would come home from a long day of work and after eating his supper, he would proceed to make little stacks of money on the kitchen table. As a young child, I thought we were rich and could not understand why my mom and dad would say no to me and my 5 siblings when we “wanted” something.

After arranging the stacks of money, he would take out this hard cover binder that had envelopes as pages. On each envelope was a different name; savings, groceries, heat, gas, vacation, etc. Each envelope received its own share of the stacks of money.

I couldn't appreciate the impact that this hard working man would have on me in my future career as a Financial Adviser. Today, my mom and dad live a very comfortable financial life. What was his secret? In a word, “discipline”.

The dictionary defines discipline as: a rule or system of rules governing conduct

or activity. Ah ha! He had a system and he adhered to it.

So why is it so hard for many people to budget today? Clearly we live in a different time of needing everything that we want NOW. Today, most people do not cash their paychecks, they use direct deposit. With the technology that we have at our fingertips, it should be an easy task to create “Electronic envelopes” that can become a workable system to support a budget. All it takes is discipline. There is an abundance of software and websites available to you that can make this process simple. Create your system and stick to it.

I encourage anyone today to embrace the principles of a very smart man, my dad.

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It's Better Than You Think  
•By Jenn Gervais



RESOLUTIONS, WE CAN'T WAIT TO START

I've given it some thought and for 2010, I've decided to make a different kind of New Year's resolution. None of the usual cast of resolutions for me - not this year. Among the top few most common resolutions has to be “lose weight”. And, absolutely, I need to lose weight. It'd be a fitting resolution, but I've made and failed to keep that one time and again. Moving on to “find a job”. Absolutely on my list of 2010 To-Do's. But it's not a New Year's resolution; it's a continuation of what I did in 2009.

Quit smoking? I don't smoke. Exercise? Got that one covered already with karate. Get organized? No need to make a resolution to get better organized; it's something of a strength of mine.

So what then? I could certainly benefit from any of the resolutions already mentioned. However, I am not going to torture myself via a New Year's resolution that by February will be history.

I'm not sure yet what resolution I will make for 2010, but it'll very likely involve learning something new and completely different. Using a personal favorite prior

resolution – one I actually kept – I'll model this year's resolution after that one.

One year, I resolved to learn to play the acoustic guitar in the New Year. And I did! I haven't played in years, and probably wouldn't know be able to play a chord if I picked up a guitar today, but that's not the point. The point is I was chomping at the bit to get started with my resolution. And it felt great!

There was no self-incrimination. No discomfort or self-denial sticking to my resolution. Instead of spending January beating myself up over some personal shortcoming, I bought a second-hand guitar, and couldn't wait for my first class. Practicing became an obsession. After a couple months, I was able to get all the way through several songs, including “City of New Orleans”. I'm sure my husband cringes even now when that song comes on the radio, remembering me plucking away at the chords as I learned to play. I think there was also a Grateful Dead classic in my repertoire (and I'm taking great liberties with that term). And Yellow Submarine – that's a song definitely not

intended to be played on an acoustic guitar. At least not by me.

By June of that year, my guitar class had ended. I bought books of sheet music by John Cougar, Neil Young, and the Eagles. I signed up for “advanced” guitar, but opted out once I realized that one class does not an advanced player make.

Twenty years later, having kept that resolution remains a source of personal pride. I take satisfaction knowing I righted a wrong, when as a teen I received a guitar from my parents for Christmas. And by February, said guitar was already collecting dust in a closet or the attic. Guitar lessons, and a commitment to learn, made all the difference the second time around.

It's that type of pride and anticipation I'm after in 2010's resolution. It's a tall order, but one worth pursuing. Care to join me in casting off our old negative resolutions, and finding one you can't wait to begin? Who knows where it might lead! Happy New Year!



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The Elks Santa was the busiest one in town. He had hot cocoa with kids at the Masonic Lodge after the tree lighting. He brought smiles and carnations to handicapped children and nursing home patients. And he visited the Irish American Children's Christmas Party to wish everyone a Merry Christmas.

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## Family Matters with Ed and Sandy

•By Sandra Giroux



## LOUD AND PROUD: A WINNING TEAM IS BORN

A team is comprised of a group of people linked in a common purpose. According to Wikipedia, teams have members with complementary skills, who generate synergy through a coordinated effort, allowing each member to maximize his or her strengths and minimize his or her weaknesses.

I was fortunate to see a team be born. I am speaking of one specific group of Pop Warner teenage Cheerleaders who were placed on a "team". There were no tryouts since anyone can join. The girls were dropped at practice and into the hands of a coach some had never met before. Yes, you say "HI" when you pick up and drop off but deeper conversations have been had in the deli line.

My daughter would come home tired and hungry with little to say about the others. Even though the practices were hard, I heard very few complaints. What I did hear a lot of was "Coach said this" and "Coach said that." "Coach said we need to work harder and practice more". When it was time to leave for practice and she was ready to go, I was truly floored by a teenager ready, on time and without attitude!

As the season progressed and football games started, we met the other parents. They were normal everyday people like you and

me. I also heard from them "Coach handles things her own way. Coach doesn't allow the girls to correct each other. She is the coach for a reason." The more I hear, the more I like.

Competition rolls around and the girls did well, taking home a trophy and moving on to more practice, and reviewing what was right and wrong. Come the end of the night, they are still a group working together for a goal.

At the next competition, they show even more maturity when they make the effort to cheer every team coming on and off the floor while they wait. They were loud and proud, showing tremendous spirit. And when it was their turn to take the floor, every other team cheered them on too. The spirit was returned to them and they took first.

We come to the final competition where the top two teams in each division will move on to Nationals at Disney World in Florida. The competition is fierce and nerves are high because today is win or go home. The girls are nervous and little things go wrong, but they put in a good routine and the crowd cheers.

As we were watching the remaining performances, my phone went off but I ignored it because I wouldn't be able to hear anyway. Then my husband's phone went off so he left to see what was going on. It was

our daughter's coach. During one of the first passes, she sprained her knee, but because she didn't want to let her team down, she finished the routine before walking off the mat with her teammates. As we approached the medical area, we found her sitting in a wheel chair with an enlarged knee unable to bear weight.

Unable to make it back to her team, she found a seat by herself because it wasn't cool to have parental units there. However, another team saw her and found the right Billerica Team to join her.

Then came time to present the awards and the announcement was made: The Billerica Indians took third and would not be moving on. Although the girls were devastated because the season was over, they still applauded when the winning teams were announced. I have never seen a better show of sportsmanship than that day.

Looking back years from now, they will see this defining moment in their lives as a building block to start their future. As Sandra Day O'Connor best said, "We don't accomplish anything in this world alone; and whatever happens is the result of the whole tapestry of one's life and all the weavings of individual threads from one to another that creates something special."

*"A group becomes*

*a team when each*

*member is sure*

*enough of himself*

*and his contribution*

*to praise the skills*

*of the others."*

*~Norman Shidle*



# DRINK RESPONSIBLY AND SAFELY THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

By Dr. Stephen Moss, Ph. D

Holidays are a time for celebration, gratitude, charity and hope. Too often, though, alcohol and drugs mar a family's happiness during the season. As we approach the New Year, it is not unusual to see family or friends consuming more alcohol than during other times of the year. Studies show that unhealthy behavior often results in depression, drunk driving accidents, domestic arguments and violence, and even suicide all of which tend to increase during the holiday period.

If you do drink, try to drink safely and moderately. Here are some guidelines for avoiding alcohol misuse during the holidays:

## Make a commitment to abstain or moderate your drinking during the holidays

In general, safer and more moderate means no more than 2 drinks a day for a man and one for a woman. More than this can lead to abuse, major health problems, most notably liver damage and heart disease

## Beware of "oversize" or "strong" drinks

People often have an inaccurate view of drink portions. You can easily drink "more" drinks than intended and suffer unintended consequences by drinking oversize or very strong drinks. One "drink" is measured by the following: 1 5-ounce glass of wine, 1 12-ounce beer, or 1 ounce of 80 percent proof hard liquor.

## Avoid over drinking or heavy drinking

Alcohol affects everyone differently. If you are a man, your general risk for crossing the dangerous line to alcohol abuse or dependence increases substantially if you have more than four drinks in a single day or more than 14 per week. If you are a woman, three drinks in a day or more than seven per week puts you at high risk.

## Avoid binge drinking

Binge drinking can be dangerous, has unpredictable outcomes, and puts you at extremely high legal risk if you drive. It is defined as five or more "regular" drinks for a man or four for a woman within a 2-hour period.

## If you do get a hangover, treat is wisely

If you do over drink, do not treat any hangovers with Tylenol/Acetaminophen as it can interact with alcohol and damage the liver. Drinking coffee might help with drowsiness, but it will have no effect whatsoever on how intoxicated you are or how rapidly the alcohol is absorbed or eliminated from the body. The only real cure for a hangover is time.

## Be a good role model for your children

For parents, the holiday season offers an excellent opportunity to model the appropriate role of alcohol at parties. Your children are astute observers of your adult behavior. Don't give them the message that alcohol must be a key ingredient for good times. Your holiday celebrations will be remembered by your children for years and serve as a lifelong guide, so give them the best and healthiest of memories.



*Please drink responsibly. Recycle your cans and bottles!*

## SUESSICAL ADVICE

Happy New Year everyone! I have a quote for you to start off your year: "Be who you are and say what you feel, because those who mind, don't matter and those who matter, don't mind." Three guesses as to who said that? Anyone? Yup, you guessed it: Dr. Seuss!

Now, this doesn't mean it's okay to go around being rude to people. It means if you don't really want to bake 300 cupcakes, just simply say, "No, I don't have the time." You really don't have to reconfigure your whole life to make the time to complete this endeavor. You also don't have to make some excuse as to why you can't do it, even though you'd love to help.

So, now you're riddled with guilt because you promised to help but you also promised three other people you'd help them. Ugh! Now you're just losing your mind. What to do? "Sometimes the questions are complicated and the answers are simple." Another Dr. Seuss quote.

The answer is simple: buy the cup cakes. You're still contributing maybe you're not

giving as much time but you will be giving more money. Honestly, being the crazed person I am, I have learned that no one really cares if you bake or buy as long as the cupcakes get to where they need to be, on time.

Oh wait! You waited until the last minute to get your things, right? Uh oh! There's a ton of traffic. (Story of my life) Just when I'm about to lose what's left of my mind, one of my kids will say one of the funniest things I've ever heard. Or being the "twisted" person I am, I'll see someone trip and crack up. (I only laugh because it reminds me of the last time I tripped).

The point being: "From there to here, and here to there, funny things are everywhere." You just have to open your eyes. (Dr. Seuss really was a smart man!)

The way I see it is be yourself and look for the humor in everything and you'll have a great New Year. Just remember: "Today is your day! Your mountain is waiting. So...get on your way."

## Pet Peeves

•By Nora Fiore



## PARTNERS FOR EDUCATION AWARDS YEAR-END GRANTS

Before gearing up for the next school year, Billerica Partners for Education (BPE) took time during an informal reception on Dec. 1 to honor volunteers and award grants to teachers who have designed innovative classroom programs for this school year.



This year, grants totaled \$20,000 with over \$14,000 going to 38 smaller scale projects.

Following casual mingling, BPE President Bernie Hoar took the microphone. He acknowledged the Board of Directors and thanked all the volunteers. Members from fund raising committees like the Fights for Education and the Town Wide Talent Shows were recognized as well. Sarah

Nahrman and Catherine Barbas, Talent Show organizers thanked their predecessor, Neelam Wali.

"Now we're trying to fill her shoes," said Nahrman.

Since its inception in 1992, through founder Dr. John Katsoulis, the BPE has dedicated itself to enriching public education by facilitating communication between the school system and the greater community. The Partnership has continued to fund grant programs like elementary literacy, innovative middle school programs, and the high school career "Shadow Days".

Some of the projects accepted for funding such things as the creation of a Holocaust wall at the Locke Middle School and the study of Cryogenics through Locke science teacher Maureen Parker.

Large scale winners included technology teacher Christine Donohue's smart board, Vining art teacher Karen Pearson's resident artist's mural, and BMHS drama teacher Susan Yodiak's trip to Scotland.

"Children will be leading the way for us," said Pearson.

One requirement is upon completion of the projects, these teachers have to make the projects available to other teachers. Full reports are sent back to BPE on how successful the teachers were overall. For more information, contact the BPE at [www.bped.org](http://www.bped.org).



## A SUESSICAL FAMILY FIRST NIGHT: TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF NEW YEAR FUN

It's hard to believe that ten years have passed but for volunteers Judi Ciampa and Pat Sawyer the fun they have has made time fly. Each year since 1999, volunteers have taken on the joyful task of providing entertainment and activities for the families and children of Billerica.

Family First Night, being held at Town Hall on Dec. 31 from 4-8 pm, gives families an opportunity to celebrate New Year's Eve early enough in the day that the little ones won't get over tired and mom and dad can still get out together should they choose. By holding it locally, families won't need to travel to Boston and walk through the cold.

"It's basically for the kids," said Ciampa.

When it started years ago, Ciampa called up Sawyer and asked her if she wanted to dress up as Father Time. The first one was held in the Billerica Mall and was scheduled to run from 4 pm to midnight. However, by 10 pm, the volunteers were all alone. To make the timing work better, it was changed to end by 8 pm.

Since 1999, other themes have included Spongebob, Teddy Bears, and last year's March of The Penguins. This year, Sawyer will don the beloved Cat in the Hat costume for photo opportunities with the children.



Indoor activities include face painting, door prizes, cookie decorating, characters, and entertainment. This year, children will be marveled by "Mike the Hatman" from 4-6 pm and Judy Pancoast, renowned child entertainer, from 5-7 pm. Food is provided and everyone gets free hot dogs, chips and a drink. Outside, Krochmal Farms from Tewksbury provides hayrides around the Town Hall parking lot. Even with last year's blizzard, the event, although smaller, still managed to be a success.

"We really enjoy it," said Sawyer. "The kids have a ball."

FamilyFirstNight is run by volunteers and funded by grants and individual donors. The committee of approximately 20 people is thankful for all the support they receive. The Recreation Department provides the games. Students from local church confirmation classes dress up in costumes provided by the Elks Emblem club. BATV Tapes the event. Coca Cola donates the beverages. Sheriff DiPaola's inmates who are on a work program come and clean up the following day.

"We couldn't do it without them," said Ciampa.

With this year's theme, there will be Suessical crafts to do and a book room in honor of the amazing author. So come out of the cold. It's a night you won't want to miss.



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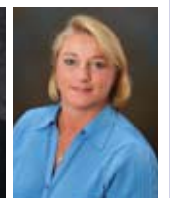
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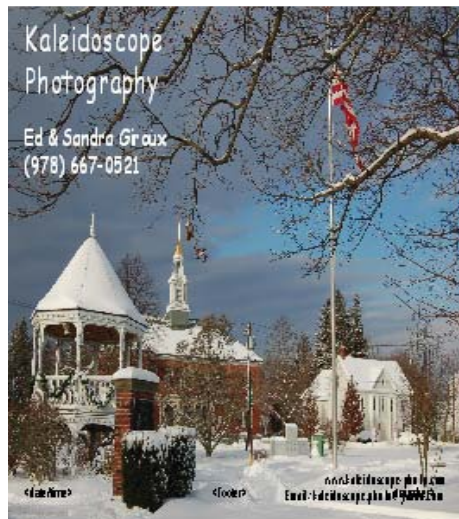


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On Dec. 5, The Clara Sexton House was decorated in true colonial style. Carolers, dressed in period clothing, sang Christmas classics to visitors. The Colonial Billerica Minutemen were on hand as well to build campfires outside. The newly renovated carriage house and barn was open for tours since the carriage house is the future site of a colonial gift shop.





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## LITTLE CHIEFS AND LITTLE BRAVES ARE BIG STARS: POP WARNER HONORS ITS SMALLEST PLAYERS

Every year, they look smaller and smaller. But these five and six year old Pop Warner players pack a big wallop on the field. On Dec. 14, the annual awards banquet was held in honor of the "F" teams for football and cheering. Four seasons in, it wasn't clear how this age group would fare. But it's all worked out well.

"They've been a huge benefit to our program," said Rocco Magliozzi, Billerica Pop Warner President.

At five and six years old, attention span can be an issue. So the very patient coaches spend a lot of time moving quickly from play to play to keep them busy. However, when these little ones get distracted, it always brings a smile to the adults' faces. Bubba Goodwin who has headed up the coaching staff for over 30 years, recounted a story of the first snow fall on the field.

"I turned around to ask for the plays from the coaches and when I looked, all the players had their heads back, sticking out their tongues through their helmets, trying to catch snow flakes," laughed Goodwin.

For the football players, basic plays, tackling, team work, and line ups are taught. They play six games per season and will travel to play other teams in the area. When they start, so often the boys are nervous but by the end of the season, they are confident players.

"At this level, we see a huge change from start to finish," said Magliozzi.

For the girls, Madeline Morris, the cheer leading coordinator, runs them through the fundamentals of cheering

with her coaches at every practice, although the girls mostly just need to look cute. For these sweeties, that comes easy.

"These girls are like little sponges," said Morris. "They are so easy to teach."

The girls work on jump routines and also put on an exhibition. Morris pointed out that they all did great. Morris coordinates all the other cheering teams in Pop Warner as well and this year, two older teams brought home national honors.

The Pop Warner season always starts on Aug. 1 but registration begins following the holidays. Pre-registration starts in Feb. for players already in Pop Warner. Open registration to the public starts in March. Check their web site at [www.billericapopwarner.org](http://www.billericapopwarner.org) for more information or email questions to [billericapopwarner@verizon.net](mailto:billericapopwarner@verizon.net)



## TOWN MANAGER PLANS TO PROMOTE GROWTH



If you see a new face at Town Hall, it will probably be our new Town Manager, John Curran, who is slated to step into the corner office on Jan. 4. Curran has an extensive background in town government. He is currently the Town Administrator of Maynard, was the Mayor of Woburn, sat on the City Council and Planning Boards in Woburn too. Curran was offered the position of Town Manager on Nov. 3 by the Selectmen following the resignation of Bill Williams in September.

Curran has been the Maynard Town Administrator for three and a half years. Maynard is one fourth the size of Billerica with 10,000 people in town. Curran was

also the Mayor of Woburn for two terms beforehand. Curran is no stranger to managing large town budgets. Maynard's is \$30 million while Woburn's was \$20 million.

"Woburn and Maynard were in rough shape," said Curran. "We increased the bond rating there."

Curran is familiar with Billerica as he was a grant writer for the Middlesex Sheriff's Department until 2001. He also has experience is dealing with similar issues to those our town faces. He was involved with the new high school building in Woburn, much like our Parker School.

"That was a big undertaking," said Curran.

He has experience dealing with mixed

use zoning in Woburn and commented that he understands Billerica wants to revitalize Boston Road. He's also worked on sewer and downtown planning issues.

Curran's first order of business is to get a handle on town finances and get the Selectmen's lists of goals.

"I want to ensure we are financially sound," said Curran. "Let's see if there are efficiencies we can put into place."

Curran wants to see Billerica prosper, stating the town has shown signs of this. He plans to bring an upbeat attitude since he sees the town as a great location for positive economic growth.

"There's a lot of good things coming," said Curran. "The more we promote that, the better."



## 10<sup>TH</sup> YEAR OF KESSLER'S SCROOGE SELLS OUT



By Jenn Gervais, Staff Writer

It's an unlikely place to find a musical presentation of *A Christmas Carol*, but on Dec 11, 12, and 13, just such a musical was put on at Alan Kessler's Karate Center. Directed by Leilani McKenney, the cast – made up of students, staff, and parents – were joined by a choir with truly angelic voices.

A Christmas Carol, written by Charles Dickens in 1843, shows the wretched state of Ebenezer Scrooge's life – or perhaps better stated, his existence. His sole source of happiness, if one can ever call Scrooge "happy", is money.

The play recounts his life: past, present and future. Scrooge is visited by the ghost of his former business partner, and then by three ghosts: the Ghost of Christmas Past, the Ghost of Christmas Present, and the Ghost of Christmas Future. These visitations illuminate for Scrooge just how much he's thrown away in the pursuit of wealth. We watch as Scrooge is transformed by what the ghosts have to teach him. We witness Scrooge's redemption.

The rendition put on at Alan Kessler's Karate Center was a festive combination of sight and sound, in theater-in-the-round fashion. Players dressed in costumes reminiscent of the era, with Christmas carols, music, and dance rounding out the story and mood onstage.

This year was Kessler's 10th anniversary of the play at the karate school. Each year, something new is added. The first year, the students read the scripts from paper plates, and one of the ghosts was pulled in a wagon to simulate flying through the air. Compare that to this year's performance, complete with music, singing, professional lighting and sound, and even a smattering of special effects.

Originally, music was a small part of the play. Now, there's a choir of very talented singers: Joyce Borges, Tony Honnellio, Maureen Thibeault, and Leilani McKenney each performed solos as well as with one another. Erica Hughes accompanied on flute and piano.

The play ran for 3 days, two evening

performances and a Sunday matinée. Each show was attended by audiences of 100 or more people. In fact, in 2008 the Sunday matinée was added due to the overwhelming number of requests for tickets.

The cast and crew began practicing for the performance in October. Six short weeks later, three performances are given. In all, thirty-eight "actors" comprise the cast, with several playing multiple roles. Another seventeen to twenty people work backstage, helping make the magic happen. McKenney directed all this in a six-week time frame.

It being a karate school, karate is peppered in logical ways into the performance. Notably, there were toy soldiers complete with wind-up keys doing karate; demos of kata by some senior-most students; and a strobe-lighted fight scene between "hagglers" over Scrooge's stolen bedclothes.

Ranging in age from five years old to college-age, each member of the cast and crew was critical to the success of the play. A half dozen parents were cast in anchor roles, which helped the youngest children remember their queues during the show.

Discussions about next year's rendition, and what will be added, are already underway. Keep an ear out for the dates for next year's performances, and if you get a chance, definitely plan to check it out. The event is provided free of charge to the community, a gift gladly given by the Alan Kessler Karate Center community.

CD's of the beautiful music are available at the karate center. They are ten dollars each, with all proceeds going to St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital.

JT Turner is in his 13th year as Charles Dickens. JT, who is from Ipswich, has graced the stages of the First Parish church in Hamilton and the Gloucester Stage. In Billerica's First Parish Church approximately 100 people watched his show. Said JT, "It is the greatest story of redemption ever written. People relate to what Scrooge goes through."

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## COMMUNITY FUNDS PROGRAM STILL ACTIVE

Although the economy took its toll on everyone this year, the Community Funds Awards Program will still see \$80,000 awarded to 22 of the 40 requests made by organizations, schools, and municipal groups. Last year, \$120,000 in grants were paid out to 25 of the 33 applications submitted.

This program is an agreement between the town and companies which open for business here. This is part of an economic development tax incentive where by participating in the Community Funds, these corporations lower their tax rates for a defined number of years.

In partnership, the selectmen become liaisons with these corporations and submit

grant requests from a variety of groups and organizations which these companies sponsor.

This year, FLIR Systems will fund 14 awards totaling \$30,000 for such groups as The Boys and Girls Club, the library, and three public schools. Nortel Networks will contribute eight awards to the sum of \$50,000 for organizations like the Council on Aging, The Historical Society, and the Holiday Festival Committee.

These groups will receive their award checks in a presentation on Jan. 4 at 7 pm during the next Selectmen's meeting held in the Conway Room at Town Hall.







# A SPECIAL WISH FOR DOMENIC

By Liana Measmer

It's the typical question asked of every pregnant mother-to-be. "Do you want a boy or a girl?" The response back so often is simply, "I just want a healthy baby." Such was the case for Danielle and Mark Cenci.

## A BOUNCING BABY BOY

For Danielle and Mark Cenci, starting their family was a priority and in March 2002, the couple welcomed Domenic. Domenic came into the world healthy by all outward appearances, though on the small side. However, things soon began to change.

Domenic was hard to feed because he vacillated between eating and refusing to eat. He laughed and smiled on target but other developmental milestones were delayed. He took a long time in rolling over and sitting up so the Early Intervention Program began to monitor him.

At 19 months, Domenic came down with a fever which resulted in a lengthy hospital stay. His family took him to Mass General Hospital where they met Dr. Alan Ezekowitz. He worked in the Infectious Diseases Department and was the head of pediatrics. Within one hour of seeing Ezekowitz, Domenic was diagnosed. It wasn't good news.



## DEVASTATING DIAGNOSIS

Domenic was diagnosed with Chronic Granulomatous Disease (CGD). CGD is an inherited immune disorder that leaves patients vulnerable to severe recurrent bacterial and fungal infections because it attacks their white blood cells. Chronic inflammatory conditions like gingivitis, enlarged lymph glands, colitis, or tumor-like masses called granulomas can result as well. When first recognized, children with CGD died before their 10th birthday. Thanks to medical advances, people with CGD can now live to adulthood.

Domenic started getting pneumonia again and again. When he gets sick, he often is hospitalized for three weeks at a time. To top it off, Danielle found out she was pregnant again with Domenic's younger sister, Marianna, in 2004. The stress and worry was overwhelming at times.

"It was draining," said Danielle. "I cried a lot. Not knowing what's going to happen is the biggest fear."

Domenic, who is two sizes too small for his age, is subject mostly to recurring infections of the skin, lungs, mouth, nose, intestines and lymph nodes. Over time, Domenic may also develop multiple recurrent liver abscesses and bone infections.

Because Domenic has had Crone's like symptoms, his digestive system has been compromised and his intestines only absorb half of what he eats. Danielle has seen numerous specialists and nutritionists, and today, her son is doing better. Where in the past a bite of cheese would constitute a meal, he will now finish a plate of food on most days. Texture matters and he likes his food to be crunchy. Lately he's been enjoying steaks off the grill.



## DOMENIC'S WORLD

So what's the world look like through Domenic's eyes? For Domenic, going to the doctor's office four times a week, with hospital stays of up to 10 days, - four times a year - is all he's ever known. This year was the worst because he had a fungal infection that landed him in the hospital 10 times. He was given an IV line to administer medications at home. After three months, the line was finally removed in October.

Danielle said he blocks out a lot of the people who have to treat him, although he is open about his condition with his peers. Domenic started school on schedule although he has had to do things differently.

For starters, because he can not be subjected to mold, he can't play on most local playgrounds. The mulch used on playgrounds as ground cover houses too many dangerous germs and bacteria. So, for the first few years of school, Domenic sat out and watched while his classmates had recess. Domenic can't go on many field trips. He can't be in barns or on water slides or around cut grass.

Domenic has a lot of friends, and this was so evident on one day when Domenic could not participate in his physical education class because he was recovering from a recent bout of pneumonia. When the teacher asked who would sit out with Domenic, the entire class raised their hands. Danielle was touched, but not surprised.

"He has the biggest heart of anyone I know," said Danielle.

## DOMENIC'S WISH

When asked what his favorite thing about school is, Domenic is very quick to respond. "Recess!" he said.

When asked his favorite subject, Domenic said playing with his friends, but then went back and said it was computer class. Domenic had no problem pointing out the things he liked least about the hospital stays. It was hard to always get shots and Domenic does not like having his blood drawn.

Given an uncertain future, Danielle and Mark spoke with the Make-A-Wish Foundation based out of Boston. Shortly thereafter, the family was contacted by their assigned volunteer wish team. Cheryl Keane and Michele MacPhearson met with the Cenci's to determine Domenic's wish.

Domenic had only one wish. He wanted a playground. Because he couldn't play on any public space, he missed that part of childhood and sharing that with other children his age. As a result, a wooden pirate ship and a swing set were brought in this fall. The Cenci's were grateful to Mark's boss from Wescor, Ben Caggiano, who came in and leveled the yard and then planted grass in preparation for the structures.

Following the removal of Domenic's IV in October, the Make-A-Wish Foundation threw him a party after the pirate ship was assembled. Friends and family came to play and Domenic's was the brightest smile in the crowd.

"I like my pirate ship the best," said Domenic, beaming.

## PREVENTION AND A CURE

To keep him healthy and prevent recurrences, Domenic is on a daily regimen of medications. These include steroids and Prevacid for his digestive system. Some of the medications are covered by insurance while others are not. The family's co-payments average about \$60 per month for each medication. Domenic takes five when he's healthy. When he's not, it's more.

"He's a strong child," said Danielle.

Currently, the only cure available is through a bone marrow transplant in the U.S. This procedure may not be completely covered by insurance as well and it is not without risks. Domenic's body could reject the transplant and the probability for infections is high. Domenic's recovery could last as long as two years. Currently, the family is saving money to prepare for the inevitable. They held a fundraiser in October which raised \$80,000, sponsored by Caggiano. A fund has been set up in Domenic's name and anyone wishing to make a donation should make their check payable to: "A Wish for Domenic" and mail it to Wescor Ltd, 271 Main Street, L03, Stoneham, MA 02180. A downloadable form for the donation is available on The Billerica Green Web site at [www.thebillericagreen.com](http://www.thebillericagreen.com).

"We want Domenic to lead as much of a normal life as possible," said Danielle.

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## PUTTING SENIORS FIRST: OUTREACH AND COMPANION PROGRAMS READY TO HELP

When her Dad's Parkinson's Disease became too much to handle, Ann Marie McLeod knew she needed some help. She contacted the Council on Aging and spoke to Respite Companion Coordinator, Lauren Gray. In no time, the situation was assessed and a caring, trained companion was coming to the home, giving McLeod and her own family some much needed family time.

"It was wonderful to have people who had experience with him," said McLeod. "They were compassionate and I could trust them."

Sadly, the service ended when his condition deteriorated and he ultimately passed away this past spring. However, McLeod, in her gratitude, wanted to give back. So she earned her Certified Nurse's Assistant (CNA) certificate and is now a respite companion herself.

"I like the word companion," said McLeod. "It helps the client keep their integrity."

The Respite Companion program is a home care program that has been in existence since 2001. It is a program of support for family/caregivers who are providing care for an elderly or disabled adult family member who should not be left alone. It is helpful when elders may need some supervisory care.

"Half our population has Alzheimer's," said Gray. "We're the second set of eyes."

Companions may prepare snacks or light meals. They will engage the senior in conversation. They can provide supervisory care. They can provide support but no heavy lifting. The service costs \$18.00 an hour and is available days, evenings, and weekends. The service ends if the client requires more hands on, medical care.

The Respite Companions program is only one of the many services provided for seniors at the COA.

The Outreach Program, headed by Mary Coakley and Marilyn Keating, is also available to help. As a grass roots community agency, outreach staff wear many different hats. They may visit seniors who are home bound. They will give information to anyone with a question and make referrals to needed services. If there is a concern of elder abuse, they will contact Merrimack Valley Elder Services to report it.

"We're always client centered," said Donna Popkin, COA Director. "There's a team behind every person."

Volunteer programs provide medical transportation, assistance with food shopping, friendly visitors, and telecare. However, Outreach staff don't just help the seniors. They are available to assist the families of the seniors who have questions.

"They don't know where

to turn," said Coakley.

So often, seniors live on their own with their adult children living far away. Over the holidays, perhaps family comes back to visit and may become distraught when they see the condition their elderly parent may be living in. Maybe bills have not been paid or services shut off and the senior doesn't want to burden anyone by asking for help.

"If people have questions or concerns about a family member, we're a good place to start," said Keating. "If we don't have the answer, we will get it."

For now, the Respite Companion and Outreach staff's focus is to get to every senior that needs help. They want the greater community to know they are here and want to help.

"It's the most needy we don't know about until something happens," said Keating.

If you have any questions, concerns, or need assistance, contact the Outreach Program or the Respite Companion Program by calling the COA at 978-671-0916.



"The Billerica Garden Club volunteered to decorate the bandstand on the Billerica Common this year. They added a fresh tree, velvet bows and pine garland. The Holiday Festival Committee provided the LED twinkle lights on the tree and garland to make it sparkle. The Garden Club was also responsible for the hand made decorations at the Clara Sexton House."



## MCC CERTIFICATE OFFERS HEALTH PROFESSION TRAINING



Starting this semester, Middlesex Community College will now be offering the Academy of Health Professions. This new certificate program is for students exploring the medical field as a career option.

This accelerated part time program is designed as three modules which are broken down into nine weeks of class each time. Students attend school for two evenings and the rest are Saturdays, with a great deal of academic advising available. It's accelerated because courses over a semester are normally 15 weeks long. Since it is so new, it is currently limited to the first 30 students on a first come, first served basis. Anyone beyond those first 30 will be placed on a waiting list until the next session.

"We help students decide what career they want to go into," said Marilynn Galligan, Dean of Admissions at Middlesex.

Each module consists of two courses. The first module consists of Certified Nurses Assistant (CNA) and Medical Receptionist trainings.

"Many employers say that nurses should have CNA experience before embarking in nursing," said Galligan.

Upon completion, the student would take the next module consisting of Phlebotomy and Medical Secretary courses. Finally, students would complete the Dental Assistant and Medical Assistant coursework.

"After completing 27 weeks, they will be eligible to take the state exam," said Galligan.

This certificate program was made possible by a grant from the Commonwealth Corporation. As a benefit of the grant, two additional classes are offered to students prior to beginning their modules. Academic Reading will assess and assist students in their literacy. Essentials of Health Professions gives a wider overview of the medical field as a whole. These two courses will be paid for in full by the grant and are of no cost to the student. Any additional financial aid is currently pending approval.

"We are very pleased to have [the grant] to assist us in offering this," said Galligan.

MCC has scheduled a CNA informational session for Thursday, Jan. 21 at 6 pm at the Lowell Campus. Other regular semester classes begin Jan. 25 while other accelerated programs begin Jan. 8. For more information, call the enrollment line at 1-800-818-3434, Monday through Friday between 8:30 am and 8:30 pm.

On Sat Nov 21st members of the Billerica Elks got together and filled and delivered baskets with the makings of a complete thanksgiving dinner Plus Turkeys (which were donated by one of their members) to 40 needy families in our community. The Billerica Elks have been helping the community through out the holidays for over 40 years.



## MAKING A DIFFERENCE ONE STITCH AT TIME



What started out as a hobby has turned into a labor of love. The knitting club at the Council on Aging, seven years running, would simply bring seniors together to do their favorite activity. Over time, they began getting requests from organization for knitted items to be sent to those in need.

This year, on Nov. 24, the group shipped boxes to 13 local organizations filled with 1,650 hats, scarves, mittens, or slippers. Boxes went to the Beam Program, the Billerica Boys and Girls Club, the Dutile School, the Parker School, the Vining School, the Kennedy School, the Elks, the Billerica Food Pantry, Greenlaugh, the New Colony Baptist Church, the Billerica House of Correction, St. Theresa's Church, and the First Congregational Church.

"We will take requests," said Betty Anderson, club member. "But we push in July to fill our Christmas orders."

First, it was little hats for the preemies at local hospitals like Emerson in Concord. That's grown to Lowell General and Saints Memorial in Lowell. Then they were knitting hats and mittens for children of the inmates at the House of Corrections so they could give gifts to their children over the holidays. They've knitted slippers for soldiers, hats for chemotherapy patients, scarves for Special

Olympic athletes and afghans for seniors in nursing homes.

"I find the patterns on the computer and I bring them to club," said Joan Roddy.

There are 20 people in the knitting club who either do some knitting at the COA or pick up requests and take them home to complete them there. They each put in about 50 hours of knitting to fill these requests but it's a hobby they love. In addition to knitting, they will also crochet, use a finishing machine, and work with a loom. They will make items for who ever needs them and the organizations are grateful.

"Each family is getting hats, mittens and scarves because of these people," said Dot Balistreri of The Elks, who has identified 37 families in need of Christmas gifts.

All the yarn they use is donated and they can always use more. They use infant yarn, which is 2 ply while everything else is 4 ply. Skeins can be brought in to the COA gift shop between 9 am and 4 pm daily at the senior center at 25 Concord Road.



## Happy Holidays

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The Billerica Lodge of Elks held their annual Children's Christmas party, under the directions of lodge Chairman Frank Canfield. Close to 100 children and parents filled the hall as costumed characters: Frosty, Rudolph, Elmo and Mickey and Minnie greeted everyone and posed for photos with kids.

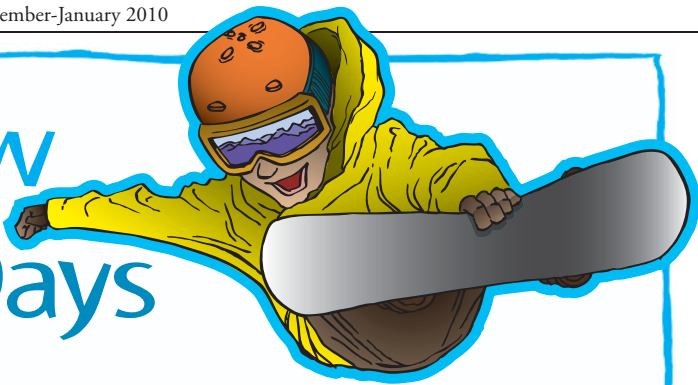
Mr. and Mrs. Santa made an appearance, and the children were thrilled to be able to sit on Santa's lap and tell him what they wanted for Christmas, while Mrs. Santa passed out treats to all. A supper of hot dogs, chips and soda was served and every child went home with a picture of themselves sitting on Santa's lap.

Lindsay and Samantha Holbrook tell Santa all their Christmas wishes at the Mason's Children's Christmas party held on Dec. 5.





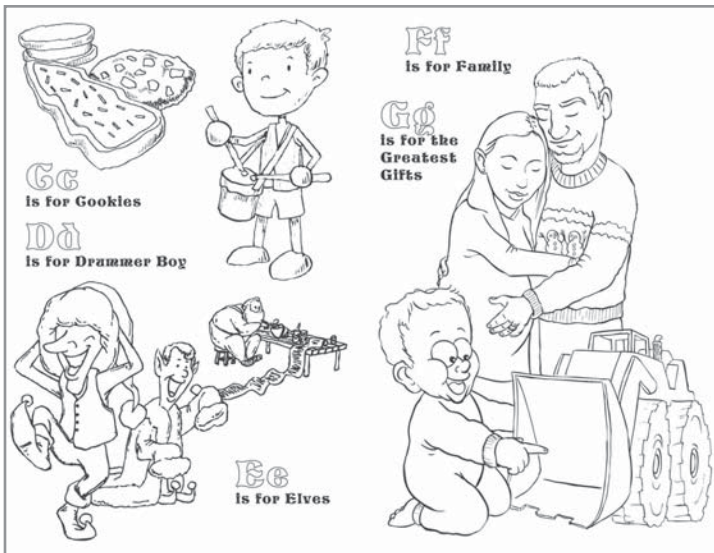
# Snow Days



- candy canes
- catching flakes
- hot cocoa
- ice skating
- no school
- reindeer games
- shovel
- skiing
- sledding
- snow angels
- snow shoes
- snowballs
- snowboarding
- snowman
- tubing

r k n o s c h o o l w c c m  
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# the playground

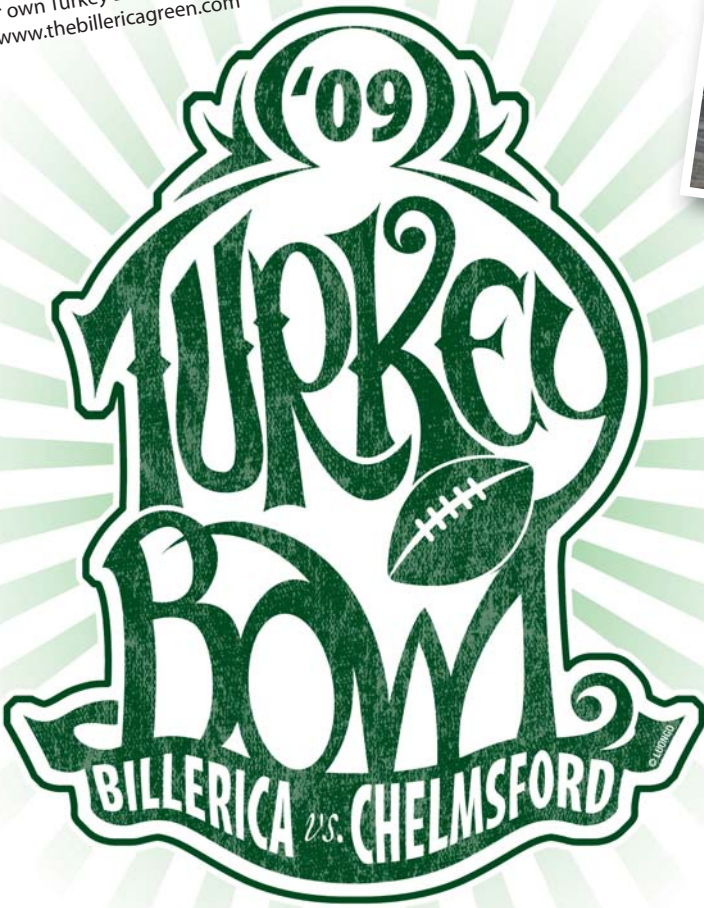


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PHOTOS BY GEORGE LUCOZZI, ASA PHOTOGRAPHIC



# Santa's Warm-Up Cocoa



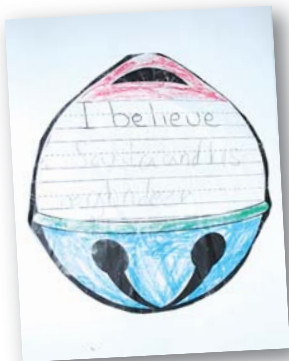
½ cup milk  
½ cup water  
Chocolate syrup  
Peppermint candy cane  
15 (or more) chocolate chips  
Marshmallow Fluff®

Heat milk and water for about 1½ minutes in microwave.  
(Be careful water may be hot.)

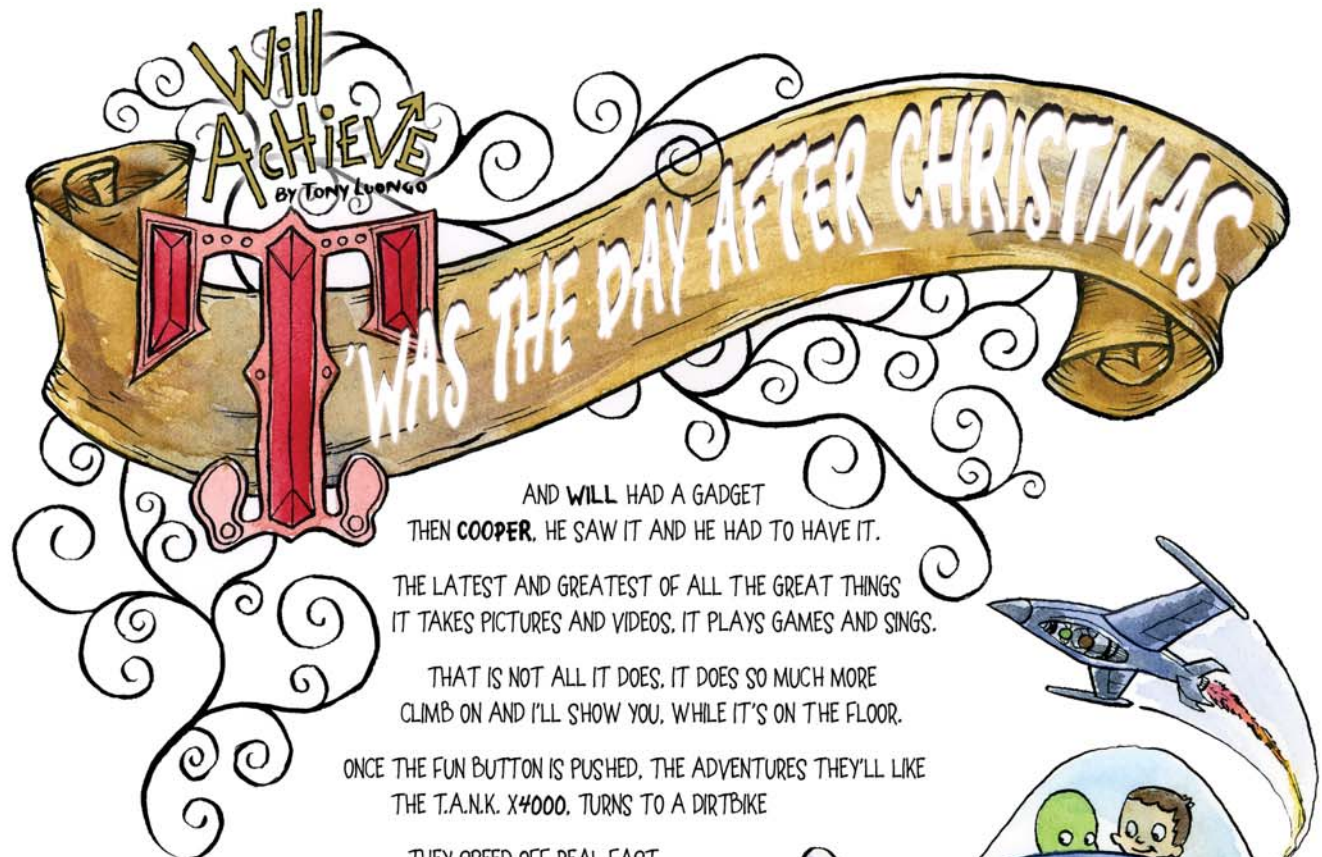
Add chocolate chips and 2 squirts (or more) of chocolate syrup.

Stir with candy cane and top with a scoop of Marshmallow Fluff®.

Enjoy!



JACOB, 6



AND **WILL** HAD A GADGET THEN **COOPER**, HE SAW IT AND HE HAD TO HAVE IT.

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ONCE THE FUN BUTTON IS PUSHED, THE ADVENTURES THEY'LL LIKE THE T.A.N.K. X4000, TURNS TO A DIRTBIKE

THEY SPEED OFF REAL FAST, AS **WILL** HOLDS ON TIGHT THEY LAUNCH OFF A JUMP, AND START TO TAKE FLIGHT

WAY UP IN THE AIR **WILL** TRIES TO EXPLAIN JUST HIT THE FUN BUTTON WE'LL BE IN A PLANE.

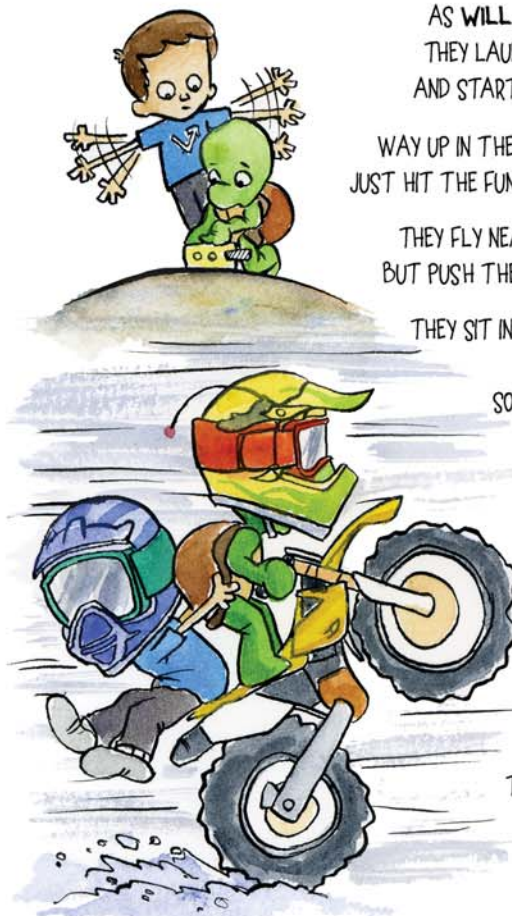
THEY FLY NEAR THE GROUND TO START HEADING HOME BUT PUSH THE BUTTON ONCE MORE AND END UP IN A DOME

THEY SIT IN THE HEAD OF THIS LARGE METAL CREATURE **WILL** CALMS **COOPER** DOWN SO HE CAN SHOW THE LAST FEATURE

**COOPER** THEN ASKS WITH A DAZZLED EXPRESSION WHO'S CRAZY ENOUGH TO GIVE AWAY THIS POSSESSION

**WILL** SMILED A SMILE SO HAPPY AND GAY BECAUSE HE KNEW RIGHT AWAY, THAT HE'D MAKE **COOPER'S** DAY.

THE LAST FEATURE'S THE GREATEST I THINK I AM RIGHT MERRY CHRISTMAS **COOPER** AND TO ALL A GOOD NIGHT.



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3 J's Corner

## QA What will you try this year that is NEW?

Jarred, 12: "I want to create my own media."

Julia, 7: "I want to try ballet. Or soccer. Or gymnastics."

Jacob, 6 (Begrudgingly, at the urging of his siblings): "Oh, alright. I'll try ONE new food."



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What if he  
promises to  
smile?

## Meet the Man Behind the Brush

Billerica Green Art Director and Illustrator, Tony Luongo, will be BATV's visiting artist for January 2010 and will show his work at a gallery opening reception on Thursday, Jan. 7 from 6:30-8:30 pm. (Snow date: Jan. 14th) Please RSVP if you plan to attend to liana@thebillericagreen.com. Hope to see you there!

## Billerica Holiday Festival

www.billericaholidayfestival.org

Dec. 31: 4:00-8:00 pm: Family First Night at Town Hall. Theme: Evening with Dr. Seuss.

## Ye' Olde Meetinghouse Town Hall Meetings

www.town.billerica.ma.us

**Dec. 28:** 7 pm: Planning Board, Rm. 210

**Jan. 4:** 7 pm: Selectmen, Conway Room

**Jan. 4:** 7:30 pm: Board of Health, Room 210

**Jan. 6:** 7 pm: Scholarship Foundation, Collins Rm

**Jan. 11:** 7 pm: Composting Study Committee, Rm 110

**Jan. 12:** 7 pm: Space and Recreation Committee, Room 110

**Jan. 20:** 7 pm: Billerica Republican Town Committee, Room 210

## The Billerica Cat Care Coalition

www.billericacatcarecoalition.org

**Jan. 9:** 11 am to 2 pm: Meet and Greets at Agway, 24 Maple St., Chelmsford

**Jan. 16:** 11 am to 2 pm: Petco, 51 Middlesex Turnpike, Burlington, MA

**Feb. 13:** 11 am to 2 pm: Meet and Greets at Agway, 24 Maple St., Chelmsford

**Mar. 13:** 11 am to 2 pm: Meet and Greets at Agway, 24 Maple St., Chelmsford

## Sons of Italy



Dr Robert J Calabrese Junior Lodge  
(ages 10 - 18)

The Lodge continues to seek members for its Junior Lodge named in memory of former Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Robert J Calabrese. Several more members are needed in order to install the lodge before the end of the year. Members can come from the community at large. The Junior lodge is supervised by the local club as well as by the Grand Lodge of MA. Applications are available from the Italian teachers at the high school as well as through the lodge by contacting the secretary Joan Parcewski at jparcewski@comcast.net or by phone at 978-663-5201.

Starting in January, regular meetings resume on the fourth Wednesday of the month. All meetings are held at the Thomas Talbot Lodge in Billerica Center at 7pm.

## Mass Rides

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## The Billerica Boys & Girls Club



**BOYS & GIRLS CLUB  
OF GREATER BILLERICA**

19 Campbell Rd.,  
Billerica, MA 01821  
978-667-2193

www.billericabgc.com

The Boys & Girls

Club of Greater Billerica provides recreational, educational and social development programs at our Main Club at 19 Campbell Road and in after-school sites located at the 6 elementary schools in Billerica. Scholarship funds are available to assist children from families who genuinely cannot afford the fees.

The Club is a local affiliate of the Boys & Girls Clubs of America - the nation's oldest and largest organization with a primary mission of service to youth from at-risk circumstances. With more than 4,000 local clubs in all fifty states, more than 4.8 million children are served annually by Boys & Girls Clubs of America.

## Child Care Update

Registration for Childcare is still being accepted. Your child will be able to begin 2 business days after the paperwork is received. Boys and Girls Club Child Care Programs are licensed and administered under the auspices of the Office of Early Education and Care. The Board of Directors of the Club, recognizing that the present economy is placing many families in a tight financial bind, has

voted to keep the rates for the program the same in 2010 as in the past year, despite increasing costs to the club.

Early Bird Program: Our before school program operates at the Boys and Girls Club from 6:30am until school bus pick up (our club is a bus stop for all elementary schools).

Fun Club Program: Our after school program that runs from school dismissal until 6:00pm. This is held at each elementary school (grades k-5).

Kindergarten Program: Our program operates in coordination with the school department. The children are at the Boys and Girls Club when they are not in school. For example, if they are in the AM session, they will go to school and be bussed to the Club between 11:00 and 11:45. They are able to stay until 3:00pm. If you need care after 3:00pm, we transport the children back to their school for Fun Club. If they are in the PM session, they come to the club in the morning after 7:45am until the school bus picks them up between 11:00 and 11:45 to take them to their school. If additional care is needed after school, the children can be enrolled in the Fun Club program until 6:00pm.

Childcare payments can now be made online at www.billericabgc.com.

Swim Lessons update

Winter Session II pre-registration began Dec.19. Open registration will begin Jan.16.

Winter Break Hours

**Dec. 26:** CLOSED

**Dec. 28:** 6:30 AM - 6 PM

**Dec. 29:** 6:30 AM - 6 PM

**Dec. 30:** 6:30 AM - 6 PM

**Dec. 31:** 6:30 AM - 1 PM

**Jan. 1:** CLOSED

**Jan. 2:** CLOSED

There will be NO swim lessons or water aerobics during winter break.

## Billerica Public Library

### Library Holiday Hours

**Dec. 25-27:** Closed

**Dec. 28-30:** 9am-9pm

**Dec. 31:** 9am-Noon

**Jan. 1:** Closed

**Jan. 2:** 9am-5pm

**Jan. 3:** 1pm-5pm

### BE A FAMILY FRIEND OF THE LIBRARY!

The Family Friends support the programs and facilities of the Library. Annual membership is \$15 for a family and \$7.50 for an individual. Some of the perks to being a Family Friend are: a yearly subscription to The Library Link (the Family Friends' newsletter), 10 percent off at Book and Bake Sales, early sign up for many children's and family programs sponsored by the Family Friends, and the opportunity to get involved with great hard-working

## ART CLASSES



for adults & kids

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## Colleen Sgroi Gallery & Art Classes



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College Art Portfolio  
Need help putting  
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Classes start Friday January 8th....Sign up NOW!



people. Membership applications available online or at the Library's service desks.

### **NEW LIBRARY PASS**

Are you ready for an adventure, right here in our own backyard? Glass flowers! Fossils! Skeletons! Arthropods! (What's that?) Zoological specimens! Minerals and gemstones! And other special exhibits! Our new library pass to the Harvard Museum of Natural History admits 2 adults and 2 children, available 7 days a week from 9 am - 5 pm. Co-payment of \$2 per person. Limit 4 persons. Make your own reservations online or call 978-671-0948 (Reference Desk), or stop by the Reference Desk on the 2nd floor.

### **PROGRAMS**

**Dec. 29:** 10 am: Meeting Room: 'Winter Survivors' Animal Program for grades preschool - K (Family Friends Only!)

**Dec. 29:** 10:30 am OR 11:15 am: Meeting Room: 'Winter Survivors' Animal Program for grades 1-5 (Family Friends Only!)

**Dec. 30:** 10:30 am: Meeting Room: New Year's Around the World (grades 1-3)

**Dec. 30:** 6:30 pm: Meeting Room: A Pocket Full of Tales presents 'Story Stew' for ages 4 and up!

**Dec. 30:** 6:30 pm: Meeting Room: Nostradamus -- 2012: Is the End Near?

**Jan. 9:** 8 am: Meeting Room: Bottle and Can Drive

**Jan. 12:** 6:30 pm: Meeting Room: Pajama Jam Musical Program with Bernadette Baird for kids ages 0 - 3

**Jan. 13:** 6:30 pm: Meeting Room: 'Robots' presented by Justine Rembisz of iRobot (for grades 1-5)

**Jan. 14:** 7:00 pm: Meeting Room: Headaches and Migraines

**Jan. 15 and 16:** 10:00 am: Meeting Room. 'Dog Day Delight' R.E.A.D. (Reading Education Assistance Dogs)

### **The Council On Aging**

#### **Respite Care Companion Program:**

If you have been thinking about getting help caring for the one you love, don't fret. Everybody needs a little help sometimes, especially caregivers. The respite companions are available to work morning, noon or night, seven days a week. For more information on the respite companion program, please contact Lauren Gray at: 978-671-0916 ext: 226 or lgray@town.billerica.ma.us

#### **COA Van Service:**

The Van is helping seniors with transportation to do local errands, visit friends or go to lunch. The cost is now \$1.00 each way and a 2-day notice is preferred. Call 671-0916, ext 229.

#### **NEW! Mah Jongg :**

Fridays at 12:30 p.m. A tile game that originated in China uses groups of four players who are given a collection of tiles divided into five or six suits. Strategies are used to make tile matches.

#### **Computer Classes:**

Taught by Annette Presseau, there are 6 weekly classes for \$35. Sign up and get the syllabus at

the front desk. Beginner 2 classes start on Monday, January 11 at 10:30 a.m. Intermediate classes start on Monday, January 11 at 1:30 p.m. E-Mail classes start on Thursday, January 14 at 1:30 p.m.

#### **How to Make Burial Arrangements:**

Jan. 12 at 10:00 a.m. Presented by Sweeney Funeral Home, Billerica. Sign up at the front desk.

#### **Pharmacy Clinics:**

Jan. 14 and Jan. 28 at 10:00 a.m.: Dr. Carlton Chin of Walgreen's Pharmacy will help you make sure your current medications are compatible. Sign up at the front desk.

#### **Men's Group Meeting:**

Jan. 20 at 1:00 p.m. Sign up at the front desk.

#### **New Bi-Monthly Laughter Yoga Club:**

**Jan. 22** at 10:00 a.m.: What has been happening to laughter? Why is it so important? What does laughter have to tell us about our happiness and well being? Come join us and Robert Herrick will give you the answers. Sign up at the front desk.

#### **Book Club:**

**Jan. 26** at 12:30 p.m. The January book is Empire Falls by Richard Russo. Sign up at the front desk.

#### **History Lecture:**

**Jan. 28** at 10:00 a.m. Paul Hogman presents "Do You Really Know Your State?" Sign up at the front desk.

### **Police Athletic League (PAL)**



#### **Fall Programming**

www.billericapal.org

Open Gym registration coming soon for Jan. 2010

Check the website for details

### **School News**

#### **Billerica Memorial High School**

School Skating Programs: Anyone interested in the skating program should contact Mrs. Cathy Jenkins at 978-528-7911. Her office is located at BMHS, Data Processing Suite, Room 3262.

After School Tutoring: Tutors for math, science, and languages available Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays in the school library. Yearbook: Senior pictures for the yearbook must be submitted to Ms. Chebook or Ms. DaSilva by Jan. 5, 2010. They must receive the picture on disk. Winter Sports Registration Packet: All freshman student athletes must have a comprehensive physical before being able to try out for a winter sport and must be cleared by the nurse's office.

#### **Locke Middle School**

Jan. 4: Return to School and PTO Meeting; 5:30, Chicago Uno, Burlington

Jan. 15: Amazing Hero Art, Tentative Locke Auditorium

Jan. 18: Martin Luther King Day, No School

Jan. 19: Students/Staff, No School

Jan. 26: BMHS Parent Orientation, 7 pm

Title One Tutoring: Locke Middle School has received Title One grant monies to provide tutorial

assistance to students needing support in English/ Language Arts and Math. For more information or to find out if your child qualifies for free during-the-day tutorial assistance, please contact: Ms. Meghan Hopkins, Math, mhopkins@billerica.k12.ma.us or Ms. Donna Vallee, English /Lang. Arts, dvallee@billerica.k12.ma.us

#### **Ditson Elementary School**

Jan. 16: Lowell Devils Night. School Group Night with the Lowell Devils for those who already purchased tickets.

Feb. 26: Adult Comedy Night at the Billerica Elks. Doors open at 7:00 pm. Show starts at 8:00 pm. Tickets are \$15.00 until Feb. 15. \$20.00 after that and at the door. Appetizers, cash bar & 50/50 Raffle.

#### **Vining and Parker Elementary Schools**

Coats for Kids: Now and runs through Jan. 9, 2010. Please donate your gently worn coats and jackets of any size to help those in need this coming winter (no rips, broken zippers or permanent stains, please!). Our collection box will be located inside the main entrance of the school.

### **The Billerica Green**

#### **Jan. 7:** Meet the Man Behind the Brush

Billerica Green Art Director and Illustrator, Tony Luongo, will be BATV's visiting artist for January 2010 and will show his work at a gallery opening reception on Thursday, Jan. 7 from 6:30-8:30 pm. (Snow date: Jan. 14th) Please RSVP if you plan to attend to liana@thebillericagreen.com. Hope to see you there!

### **The Elks Lodge**

**Feb. 13:** 7 pm: Comedy Night featuring "R" rated Hypnotist, Joey Devito. Music and Dancing before and after by DJ Mike Sasso. Elks Lodge, 14 Webb Brook Road. \$150 for table of ten or \$15 per person.

Bring your own munchies. For tickets call or see Stephanie Joyce 978-761-8987 or Arlene McKenney 781-632-3438. Tickets will not be sold at the door.

### **Pop Warner Football**

Congratulations to the Billerica Braves Cheering team who placed second in the nation. Also, congratulations to the Billerica Apaches cheering team who placed fourth in the nation.

**Jan. 31:** The Banquet for players/cheerleaders for the A-E Teams will be held at the Billerica Elks. The Times are as follows: E Teams from 11:00am to 1:00pm; D&C Teams from 1:30pm to 4:00pm; B&A Teams from 4:30pm to 6:30pm.

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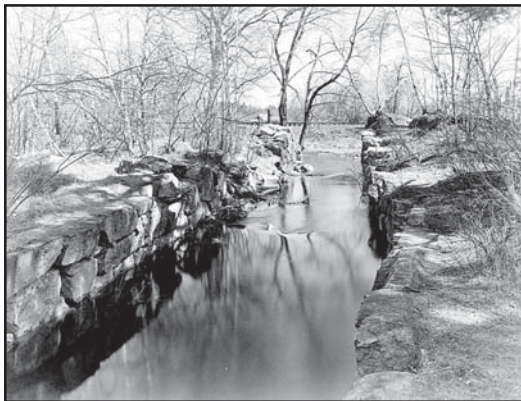
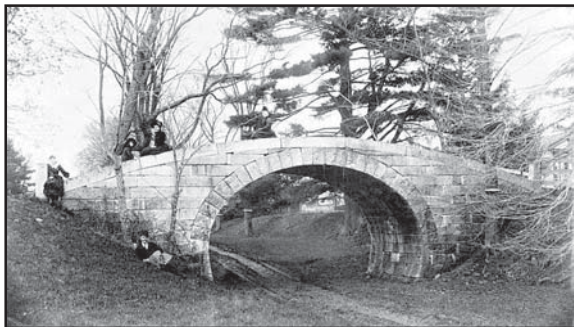
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# The Living on Billerica's waterway: Middlesex Canal Then & Now

By Liana Measmer



Imagine if you will, looking out your bedroom window and seeing colorful red and blue barges pulled by proud steeds along dirt paths. Children are dangling their toes into the water of the Middlesex Canal, casting their fishing lines, hoping for a perch and waving to the happy travelers.

Or, if it's a chilly winter day, couples who donned their ice skates are racing each other along the smooth, solid surface. This was life in the early 1800's when the canal was in its heyday. Although it was only in operation for around 50 years, the Middlesex Canal created engineering innovations and ease of travel in ways hardly seen before in this country. And it all happened in your own backyard.

## **THE INCREDIBLE DITCH**

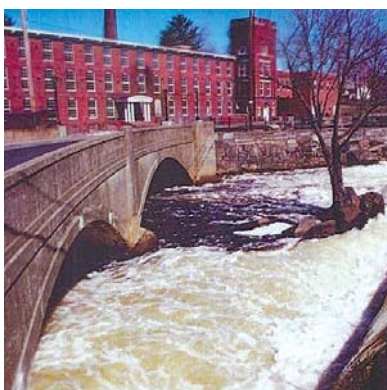
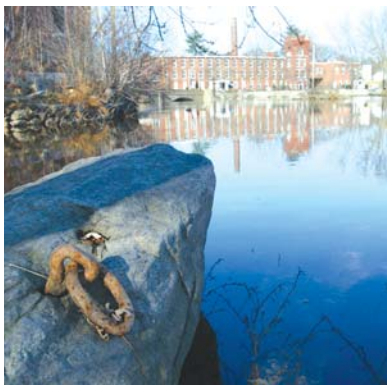
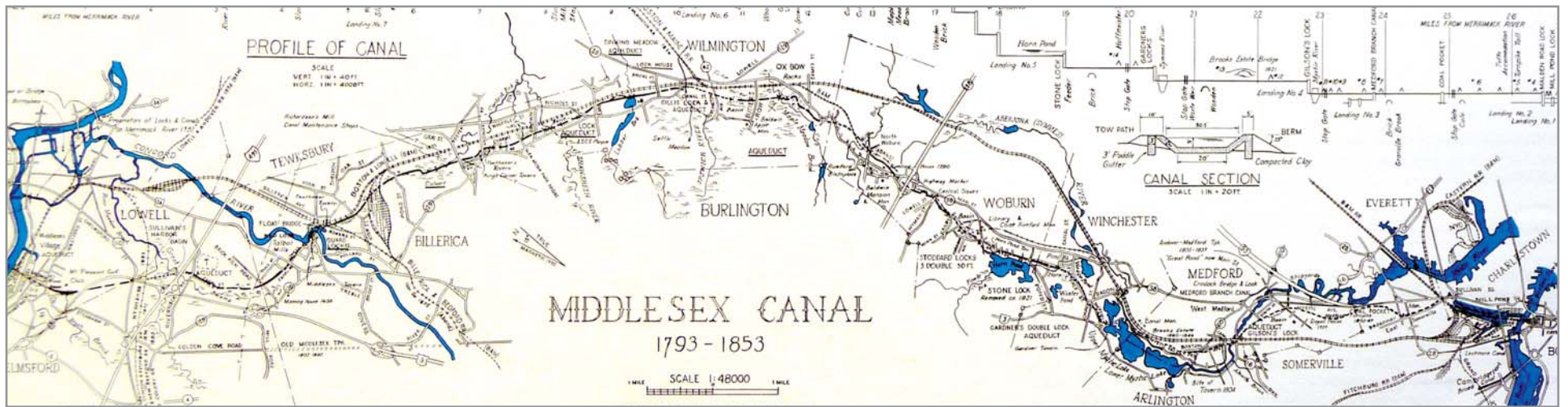
The year was 1790. The Revolutionary War had ended and everyone was short of everything, since this was now a new country. The U.S.A. was in the running as a commercial and political giant and needed ports for importing and exporting goods. Boston was the best as it was the closest to Europe, but there was no way to get inside the interior of Massachusetts. There was the Charles and the Mystic rivers, but they were not always navigable and good roads did not yet exist.

In 1793, The Middlesex Canal Company was chartered to construct a canal which would connect Boston with the Merrimack River above the impassable falls in Lowell. The company was headed by James Sullivan, Esq. while Superintendent Loammi Baldwin of Woburn was to oversee one of the first major engineering projects in the country.

The Middlesex Canal, which was in operation for over 50 years, provided safe and economical water transportation. The canal, which is 27 and a quarter miles in length, runs through nine towns--Lowell, Chelmsford, Billerica, Wilmington, Woburn, Winchester, Medford, Somerville and Charlestown. As a project, it was considered an engineering marvel since so many firsts, from the use of specialty tools to the application of laws of eminent domain to the sale of stocks, were established through this project.

In 1794, ground was broken and for the next 10 years, the canal would





be dug by hand since no construction equipment was available. However, people used their ingenuity to make it happen. The first horse-drawn dump truck in the U.S. was used and hydraulic cement was developed for the 20 locks along the route because it would harden underwater.

In 1804, the canal was open for business. In order to travel on it, one chartered a barge and either pulled it with their own horse or one they would rent. The horse would pull it along the towpath, paid their tolls and was either at the helm, steering or on the horse, towing. The canal offered ease of transport to vendors as well since it shortened the time it took to move their goods. While a horse-drawn wagon could take three days to carry three tons of lumber, horse-drawn barges on the canal could pull 30 tons the same distance in one day. The canal was also instrumental in the establishment of the mills, as it provided transportation for the materials to Lowell.

Unfortunately, the life of the canal was short. In 1836, the railroads came into operation and competed with the canal. By 1851, the Canal Company no longer received adequate toll revenues to meet maintenance costs and ceased operation in 1853. Ironically, it was the canal that transported the railroad ties and rails for the railroads during their construction.

### **TAKING THE TOWPATH**

So where is it exactly? It is possible to hike out and find all the places where the canal had been since about five miles of it runs through Billerica. Parts of it are still visible while others are long gone, buried under private and public property. But if you look along the way, you can still see remnants of it everywhere.

In Billerica, the canal runs from Brick Kiln Road, past the Faulkner Mills, along the railroad tracks that cross High and Pond streets and Andover Road, and finally ending at the Shawsheen Aqueduct on Route 129 at the Wilmington border. There are Middlesex Canal signs and markers along the way and some tow paths are still visible and navigable.

Right on Route 129 at the Wilmington border there is a remnant of the aqueduct pillar where the canal crossed the Shawsheen River. What makes this remarkable is how a wooden structure on stone piers carried that much weight in water and barges over such a steep height. Imagine the canal at the aqueduct like a giant water slide, but made out of wood. When standing and looking over the fence, down some 25 feet or more, all one needs to do is turn around and see the homes and properties all around which never existed during the canal's era. In fact, it's interesting to conjure images of how the canal would run right through someone's living room if it existed today.

At the intersection of George Brown Street and Dignon Road, there is a small stone bridge where a canal segment is still visible. There's a bridge and a culvert in good condition and the canal bed still has water.

At Kitchen Avenue to Staples Street, the canal is not visible. In fact, one would be standing in the backyard of those who live there.

There is a piece of a towpath but there are overgrown trees covering the area.

A long stretch goes from Gray to Pond streets. The canal is visible with running water behind residential properties. One can almost imagine the towpath along what is all woods now. This is one of the longest remaining segments of the canal.

From Pond Street and extending to High Street, this segment is visible from the road. There is visible water and it is 1,500 feet away from the rail yard at the High Street end. Overall, the path is relatively clear.

Between High and Rogers streets, there is a steep slope on the Rogers Street side leading to the towpath and bisected by a railroad track. Although the land is uneven, the water levels at this point are at a consistent height. There is pedestrian access, with a stone marker indicating the location of the canal.

The fire station at Mill Pond to Brick Kiln Road has two sections. One section traverses from the fire station to Boston Road, is visible from Lowell Street and is cleared of brush. The northern section from Boston Road to Brick Kiln road is not as visible and is wet with standing water.

In 2008, The Waterfield Design Group completed a restoration program study for all 27 and a quarter miles with a hefty bill totaling \$12.8 million. In this study, there are recommendations for creating green ways for pedestrians which could provide public access, interest and awareness and be used for educational purposes. Other benefits to restoration would be to provide recreational waterways for kayakers and canoers to travel along.

### **FIND OUT MORE: THE MUSEUM AT FAULKNER MILLS**

Originally housed in the early 1960's at the Clara Sexton House on Concord Road, the museum closed down in 1969 for lack of volunteers and staff to run it. In 2001, the Canal Museum opened its doors in the Faulkner Mills at 71 Faulkner Street in North Billerica where it houses paintings and historical items recounting the life and times of our Middlesex Canal. The museum is open year-round every weekend (except holidays) from noon to 4 p.m..

In addition to museum hours, this facility is also available for rent should one have a function or meeting to schedule. For \$200, this classic mill space and a museum volunteer are available to you. For more information, call 978-670-2740 and leave a message.

### **References**

1. The Old Middlesex Canal, Mary Stetson Clarke,
2. Middlesex Canal Guide and Maps, Burt VerPlanck
3. Middlesex Canal, Middlesex Canal Commission
4. The Middlesex Canal Restoration Program Study, The Watersfield Design Group, Inc.
5. Life on The Middlesex Canal, Alan Seaburg
6. Middlesex Canal Association Web Site at [www.middlesexcanal.org](http://www.middlesexcanal.org)





## ACHIEVABLE, SPECIFIC, AND TIME ORIENTED SUCCESS

Once again we are closing out the year and I hope all of you find yourselves surrounded by family and friends, making fond memories to be cherished for time to come. You may also be finding yourselves thinking about what you had wanted to accomplish this past year or taking an inventory of your achievements from this past year. Your next task is to set the plan for 2010.

As you begin to inventory the many goals you set for yourself last January and determine if those goals were met, do not allow yourself the option of criticism should you find that some (or maybe many) of your goals were not met. This year, you will set better goals and lay down the foundation for achieving them.

You may be wondering what I am speaking about when I say “better” goals. Good question. I am talking about achievable, specific, and time oriented aspirations. No longer will you be able to declare on New Year’s Eve that “I am going to lose weight

this year” or “I will spend more time with my family.” Both have the potential to be wonderful achievements, however, if you have absolutely no idea where to start the process, or what it is going to look like, then it lacks an end point. Usually, these are the reasons many of us have a difficult time achieving all of the goals or tasks we set out for ourselves.

Let us take a closer look at the general goals stated above. Many of us want to lose weight and often set off with wonderful intention at the beginning of a new year. Our motivation and dedication are at their strongest then. However, by March, many of us find our motivation and commitment dwindling. First, motivation wanes because we do not see any movement toward our stated goal. If you have 40 pounds to lose and you have worked off six pounds in two months, this does not always provide enough motivation. However, if you had declared that you were going to lose 40 pounds by

July 2010 by going to the gym 2 times per week as your long term goal, you can see that it is achievable (approximately 1.5 lbs per week), specific (40 lbs by July, gym twice/week), and time oriented (July 2010).

The long term goal has been set. The next question is usually some version of “How do I stay focused for 7 months?” The answer is to break down the long-term goal into smaller goals (short-term goals). If you need to lose 1.5 pounds per week to achieve a total loss of 40 pounds by July, focus on what you will be doing in two week segments. That is much more doable. “I will go to the gym on Monday and Thursday for the next two weeks beginning January 5th and lose 3 pounds by January 19th”. When you achieve this goal, give yourself a small reward. Rewarding yourself is essential to keeping you on the path toward achieving your long term goals.

The second resolution I listed focused on spending time with family. Many people find this time of year brings out the significance of

family time and they refocus on how much they want it to be part of their daily lives. To improve this goal, it will need to be achievable (I will be home to have a family meal 2 evenings per week), more specific (by leaving on time from work), and time oriented (on Tuesdays and Thursdays beginning January 5th 2010.). This is more of a short-term goal with long-term effects. Be sure to get feedback from family members to keep yourself on track. After you have made this a pattern for yourself, be sure to reevaluate your follow-through. Sometimes people slip backwards as time goes on so reassessing is also a key component to achieving your goals and maintaining your accomplishments.

As 2009 draws to a close, let me take a moment to wish each of you a wonderful New Year. I am looking forward to hearing from you about your many accomplishments and helping you answer any questions that may arise as you travel toward your fulfilling your goals.

### Billerica Media Beat

•By Paul Abrego



## WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF TELEVISION

Hello, my name is Paul Abrego and I am currently the Technical and Training Coordinator at Billerica Access Television located in Billerica center. At BATV, my job is to train our membership in all facets of television production and to facilitate their productions while maintaining our cutting edge equipment and facilities. I am proud to be writing for the Billerica Green in order share my expertise in various areas of the media arts. It is my intent within these pages to highlight different aspects of video, television and media literacy as well as to showcase the opportunities that are available for local residents to become media producers on their own. In future articles I’ll touch on various subjects including creative production techniques on the cheap; ways to produce quality videos and to publish them electronically via the internet; and home editing do’s and don’ts. There are various other mediums to provide avenues in which to share your voice with your community while becoming more media savvy in general.

In this inaugural article, I’d like to outline some of the many opportunities available at Billerica Access Television. If you live or work in Billerica, a BATV membership is an invaluable resource for creating media content. For a nominal yearly membership fee for individuals, families or organizations, BATV offers a myriad of technical classes, facilities and professional broadcast-quality equipment. Our classes are free to all members and we offer them in order to familiarize people with our facilities and equipment. After taking an initial orientation class, BATV is within your reach.

I must make you understand that every BATV class is a hands-on affair where each student gets a real feel for how television is produced. In our electronic field production

class, students learn the basics of our digital camcorders and elements of field production, including the effective use of tripods, the implementation of an assortment of microphones and professional shot selection and composition. In our studio productions, members grasp the basics of our large production studio and control room by operating our cameras, sound mixing microphones and music and by doing some technical directing. In our introductory and advanced classes in video editing, students harness the professional editing power of Apple’s Final Cut Pro Studio and learn the basics of video editing, audio mixing and graphics creation.

In addition, BATV offers the the mini-studio. The mini-studio is a wonder to behold for its sheer ease of use and for the quality programming it can create. One person can quickly learn to use it while at the same time pack a wallop of professional studio power without even having to bring in a crew.

The creative possibilities at BATV are endless. Whether you create an original show, help on someone else’s or just want to acquire some new skills to be a brand new you in a brand new year, BATV is here for you to let your voice be heard. Keep an eye out for upcoming Media Beat columns to unleash the media artist inside of you. For more information about BATV or to become a member call 978-663-2284.

See what your neighbors are up to by checking out BATV on Comcast: Channels 8 Public, 10 Educational and 22 Government. Verizon Channels coming soon. For questions for Paul or suggestions for upcoming articles, contact him at [pabrego.batvinc@comcast.net](mailto:pabrego.batvinc@comcast.net)



Camryn Stockton wonders who is in that big red suit.



Jaime Stockton, age 8, shopped for her family with assistance from Becca Burns, age 14.



## FERAL CATS MAKE REWARDING PETS

Feral cats are cats that haven't been properly socialized. Feral cats are not tame toward humans. Very often, feral cats result from the offspring of cats that were once owned and then abandoned. There is a critical period during kitten development in which kittens must be exposed to human caretakers, otherwise they will be feral or at least semi-feral. This critical developmental period is generally from birth to 8 weeks old. If the first human exposure occurs past the age of 8 weeks this usually results in a feral or semi-feral cat.

Many well meaning cat lovers find feral kittens and take them to their local animal shelter. Unfortunately, feral kittens aren't very adoptable and most of the time animal shelters will destroy them to make room for tame kittens that are more likely to be adopted.

Fortunately, there are some shelters that will spay or neuter the kittens and then return the kittens to their natural environment. This program is called Trap-Neuter-Return, and it is being implemented in many areas to control the outdoor cat population without having to kill the cats. The kittens are caught and are unharmed. Then the cat is taken to the vet that participates in Trap-Neuter-Return. The animal is spayed or neutered and is usually given some vaccines. When the cat has recovered from the spay or neuter surgery it returned outdoors in the same location

where it was found. Trap-Neuter-Return is a much more humane way of dealing with feral cats and kittens than euthanasia.

Some people who find feral kittens take them into their homes as pets. It is also the best option for the well-being of the feral cat or kitten. Taking them in as pets generally works best if you catch them when they are relatively young. The younger the better, although some people have taken older feral cats into their homes as pets and they have been fine.

Feral cats need to be kept as indoor only cats. Cats sometimes behave differently once they get outside. In general, they are very fearful of any humans other than the human caretakers that they have grown to trust.

Feral cats and kittens would not make good pets for children. Feral cats that live indoors with humans like to do their own thing most of the time. They don't want to be held and will usually only let you pet them on a limited basis. The key to making a feral cat happy is to only have as much contact with the cat as it wants. Sometimes it is best to keep their litter and food bowls in low human traffic areas so that they can feel safe while eating or using the litter box. There is nothing more rewarding than knowing that you are providing a loving, warm, happy home with plenty of food, water, toys, and veterinary care for these special cats.



My name is Angel and I'm a single, young female with 5 kids and am looking for a home. It hasn't hurt my figure at all - I'm still beautiful! My family and I were living on the streets of Lowell where we were being abused by some people in the neighborhood. Luckily, we were picked up by a kind person who brought us to the foster program at BCCC. It was our lucky day. We have been living the good life since then. As you can tell from my picture, I'm a very attractive calico kitty. I get along with other kitties. All of my kittens have new homes and I would be most appreciative if you would adopt me as I'm really a lap kitty who loves attention. I was born in 2006. . I'm spayed, FIV & FELV negative and up to date on shots.

Marilyn Monroe here! I'm a very beautiful, charming calico female who will be a very lucky kitty to have someone adopt me. You would have to give me a lot of love as I want to sit on your lap and be petted

and cooed over. I was living in a colony of cats when I was brought into foster care. I like other cats just fine. I do have a have a bit of a defect in my left eye. The iris didn't completely fill in so I have some white spots in my eye. Don't let that deter you, as I have been to an ophthalmologist and she assured me that my eye will never get worse or better but I don't need any meds. It doesn't bother me at all. Please consider me as you won't be disappointed!!! I have been spayed and up to date on shots. I'm FIV & FELV negative. I was born approx. March of 2009.



All cats and kittens require an on-line adoption application be completed and sent BEFORE consideration for adoption can take place. On-line applications at [www.billericacatcarecoalition.org](http://www.billericacatcarecoalition.org).



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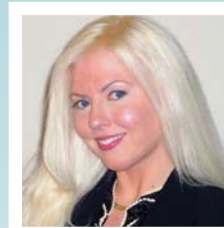
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EXIT Homestead Realty is pleased to announce that the Real Estate License Exam Course will be available in their office starting the weekend of January 23, 2010.

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## DIVORCE SETTLEMENT EQUATION

**Q.** I have finally made the decision to go through with a divorce but I am afraid of my spouse taking everything I own. We have only been married 5 years and prior to getting married, I had my own retirement and bank accounts. Is my spouse really going to get half of everything?

**A.** As a divorce attorney, I often see an increase in business following the holidays. Sometimes people choose to wait until after the holiday season before facing the inevitable in an attempt to provide their children with some stability during what should be a happy time. Others may attempt to give their relationship one last chance during the holidays but soon realize that their marriage has unfortunately broken down to a point that it is unsalvageable. Regardless of the reason, making the difficult decision of calling it quits places an emotional and often a financial strain on an individual. An individual's emotions may range from sadness that happily ever after with their spouse was not in the cards, to fear of the unknown, to anger directed toward the other party. As such, it is obviously extremely important to have a strong emotional support system.

The financial aspect of divorce, however, can often be much easier to deal with.

For the most part, the division of marital assets is a simple process. As a rule of thumb, a party will leave with the assets he came into the marriage with. If "Joe" has \$25,000 in his 401K, upon divorce, the first \$25,000 will be his exclusively. On the contrary, anything acquired during the marriage is deemed a marital asset and will be divided equally upon divorce. This includes real estate, appreciation of property, interest accumulated in a savings account, and any increase in value in one's retirement. If during the marriage "Joe" contributed \$30,000 in his 401k, and his 401K gained another \$5,000 in interest, \$35,000 will be subject to division. It does not matter in whose name any asset is, all are treated equally. As such, placing a home in only one party's name during the marriage does not protect that party from ultimately having to divide that asset equally.

Unfortunately, the same principal also applies when it comes to debts. Whatever debt was incurred during the marriage most often becomes a joint marital debt regardless of who incurred it. While there are some exceptions to this rule, i.e., if one

party had an extreme gambling or drug problem thus depleting the marital assets, most often the liabilities become the joint obligation of both parties. Just because one party may have a credit card exclusively in his name does not relieve his spouse from joint liability with respect to this debt. Any debt a party came into the marriage with will be the sole obligation of such party. For instance, if our friend "Joe" had \$40,000 in student loans before he married, he will be solely responsible for payment on such loans after he is divorced.

The key to the division of assets and liabilities is that only assets acquired and liabilities incurred during the marriage are taken into consideration. For a one-year marriage, usually both parties are in the same or similar financial position as they were prior to the marriage. However, the longer the marriage, the more the parties' assets and debts become commingled.

Often in a marriage where one party has worked and the other has not, the working party feels it unfair to have to divide what he considers to be assets that he acquired exclusively. A judge will not feel the same way since marriage is considered an equal

partnership and usually the working party has been able to earn what he did because the nonworking party maintained the household. If the nonworking party has maintained the home and was the primary caretaker of the children while the working party worked, the court deems her contributions equal regardless of whether the nonworking party was actually paid. Often there is a sacrifice on behalf of the nonworking party to forgo her own career in order to raise a family and maintain the household so the other party can work.

While divorce is a disheartening and sad reality for many, it can also provide a fresh start to both parties. Once the finances are settled, a person can begin to accrue new assets that will remain exclusively his.

*Jennifer H. O'Brien is the owner of O'Brien Law Offices, a general practice located at 630 Boston Road, Billerica, MA 01821. She can be reached at (978) 262-9880 or at [www.obrienlawoffices.org](http://www.obrienlawoffices.org). This information should not be construed as legal advice nor is it intended as a substitute for obtaining legal advice from an attorney. No person should act or rely on any information in this article without seeking the advice of an attorney.*

## HIGH-TECH OR BACK TO BASICS?

It's a new year, and many students—your children among them, most likely, will return to school after winter break equipped with brand-spanking new iPods and sophisticated 3G cell phones, all holiday gifts bestowed by loving relatives. Used to be that most teachers would sternly instruct the kids to put away these high-tech gadgets, but those times are changing. Does this sophisticated technology really belong in our schools? Is it really making our kids smarter? Learn better? There are no clear answers.

When I began teaching in the 1990s, the most advanced technology one would encounter in a high school classroom would be an overhead projector or a television with VCR. DVDs were not yet commonplace, iPods and Mp3 players had not been invented, and the closest any kid came to a "personal stereo" was a clunky Walkman tape player the size of a brick. Mobile phones had not yet arrived on the scene, and even cordless phones were still somewhat of a novelty. Fast forward fifteen years, and no kid can remember a time when texting and Twittering was not the norm.

Fifteen to twenty years ago, going into the computer lab to type a paper for class was an exciting event. Few kids had computers at home, and the only opportunity to play with these cool new machines was at school. Those clunky CRTs with basic word processing software seem laughably archaic to us today, but only a few short years ago, it was cutting edge. Most of my students at that time

lacked keyboarding skills and would hunt-and-peck—a chorus of slow, agonizing "tap tap taps" as the kids struggled to complete the writing assignments. Nowadays they are lightning fast at the keyboards, a skill they have been honing since they were toddlers. Even the wired computers in our school library are fast becoming dinosaurs, as I see my students' clear preference for the nifty laptops the school recently purchased. Even writing silently is fast becoming a rarity. Nowadays, many of my students plead to listen to their iPods because it helps their "creative process," they tell me.

As educators, we have waged a war for years to keep kids' technological gadgets tucked away in backpacks and not out on desks, disrupting the learning process. These past couple of years have seen a sea of change, however, in the way these technologies are used to enhance, rather than disrupt, education. To illustrate, in the school where I teach, we have seen a major revision to the existing cell phone policy. Before this past year, students were not to have their phones visible; if they were caught using one in class, it would be immediately confiscated. An experimental new policy is now in effect, permitting individual teachers to decide how and when they will allow cell phone use in their classrooms. All students are permitted to use their phones during lunch, to text or talk. Teachers were very wary when this was first proposed, as the potential for abuse (cheating, etc.) seemed high; however, with the school year half over, most of

our fears have not been realized. Personally, I don't see their value in my English classroom, but some of my colleagues in other disciplines (math, for instance) are successfully incorporating them into their lessons.

So, is there a downside to all this? I would argue yes. My fear is that some fundamental study skills are being compromised in the name of staying trendy and "current." Kids have traditionally been taught effective listening and note-taking in school, but these are skills that may go by the boards with the onslaught of such technology as the laptop. Most high school students don't carry one to class nowadays, but expect that to change. In many colleges it is a requirement; notes are taken directly on the computer, as opposed to writing them out by hand. One might argue that this is the wave of the future; however, many professors are reporting that college students are surfing the web instead of taking notes, and have banned them from their lectures. Another troubling question: When a child can blog online with a fellow student or teacher, instead of engaging in a face-to-face dialogue in the classroom, is the child learning essential interpersonal skills? These are provocative questions that we as parents and educators—usually the purchasers of our children's technology—must wrestle with in 2010 and beyond.

*Diana Lombardo is a Billerica resident, mom of two and an English teacher with 15 years' experience.*

### The Teacher's Corner

•By Diana Lombardo





## The Power from Within

•By Liana Measmer



## CONSUMED

Typically, folks get thinner as they bring in the New Year. This wasn't the case for me last year. Instead of losing weight, I gained. A lot. As we march bravely into 2010, it seems fitting to share my journey with this reverse 'resolution'.

For fifteen years, I was a member of a group that focused on helping people overcome food issues. I'd tried every diet out there because as a kid I was chubby and always felt fat. For me, chubby meant I hated full length mirrors and owned a closet full of black clothing to hide my body. I wasted time worrying about eating right but then guilted myself for eating wrong.

I was about 150 pounds when I joined. With guidance from members, I got down to 120 by weighing my meals and eliminating flour and sugar from my diet. At first, I did not know how to be smaller. It took many years of waking up each day the same size before I believed I was thin.

Over time, the support felt more like punitive control. I began eating completely plain foods. Besides not ingesting pasta or breads, I stopped chewing gum or drinking coffee. It made going to restaurants challenging for me and my family. I had to carry my food everywhere and I stood out.

I kept losing weight. And losing weight. And losing weight. When I left program in 2008, my weight had plummeted to an anorexic 104 pounds. I had no hips. You could count all my ribs through my clothing. My cheeks were sunken in. But I loved the feel of being so lean. I loved that I owned a dress that was a size zero. I secretly felt omnipotent.

Last fall, I decided to eat like everyone else on the planet. Over Thanksgiving, for the first time in 15 years, I did not weigh my meal and even went up for seconds. For the first time, I was like everyone else and had to unsnap the button on my jeans.

I don't think I will ever forget my first sandwich. I had not put bread in my mouth for more than a decade. Then I ate pasta. Chinese food. Pizza. A brownie. Mudslides.

Wine. Ice cream. It was unbelievable. I was like the proverbial kid in the candy store set loose. A whole world of food opened up to me and I was going to try it all as fast and furiously as I could shovel it in.

My weight started climbing. First, I was 118. Then 125. It crept in, stealthily spreading like a room overtaken by water. On the plus side, I stopped looking emaciated and felt a little better. But then 129 hit. Then 130. 135. Suddenly, nothing fit. I had to trade in the size two's and four's for eight's and tens. Over time, I knew I needed to do something.

To stop the weight gain, I enlisted the help of a remarkable personal trainer. He spoke about the benefits of moderation and never made me feel bad about my choices. He reminded me that self care was crucial to living a healthy lifestyle. Sleeping enough. Daily exercise. Portion control. Less stress. Limiting alcohol and caffeine. He showed me the right kind of cardio exercises and why using weights are a necessity as we get older. He pushed me and encouraged me to do more than I thought I was capable of.

Although I've mostly come to a point of acceptance with my food choices, I know I want to shave off a few pounds like everyone else. I may still overeat sometimes but I'm learning what my triggers are and how to make this work in my life. Most days, I eat right because I feel better when I do. I try to stick to the routine of getting to the gym in the mornings because that's when I have time.

My anorexic ribs have been replaced by curves. I don't get on the scale since I don't want to be controlled by the numbers. My weight has probably leveled off and all my clothes fit comfortably. My trainer once asked me, is this the best you can do right now? To that, my response is- right now? Yes, it is and I'm good with it.

*Beside being Editor of The Billerica Green, Liana Measmer is a Licensed Social Worker, Billerica resident and Mom to three great kids.*



Though you can see her in this picture, The Billerica Green's own, Liana Measmer, braved the cold to ride the Billerica Elks fire truck to spread holiday cheer!



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## COA HOLIDAY RAFFLE WINNERS ANNOUNCED

The Friends of the Council on Aging held their fourth annual Holiday Raffle drawing on Friday, December 11, 2009 at 3:00 PM at the Billerica Senior Center. After a complete sell out of 1200 tickets, the winners were drawn by Julie Greene, Ellen Rawlings, Mike Rosa, Donna Popkin, William Foley and Nick Rosa. Holiday Raffle winners were:

### First place: \$2,000.00

Tony Caggiano, Billerica

### Second place: \$300.00

John Noonan, Billerica

### The ten \$50.00 winners

Priscilla Aufiero, Billerica  
Matt Tittermore, Reading  
Jim Smith, Burlington  
Cathy O'Connell, Billerica  
Jim Sorenson, Billerica  
Russ Crane, Billerica  
Mike Mazzocca, Burlington  
Pat DeSantis, Billerica  
Daniel Donovan, Billerica  
Eleanor Sievert, Billerica

The Friends are thankful to all who purchased tickets to help raise funds for the COA.

## The Voice of the Artist

•By Colleen Sgroi



## THE ART OF LIVING, LAUGHING AND LOVING

*"The Waiting Place... for people just waiting. Waiting for a train to go or a bus to come, or a plane to go or the mail to come, or the rain to go or the phone to ring, or the snow to snow or waiting around for a Yes or No or waiting for their hair to grow. Everyone is just waiting."*

*"Waiting for the fish to bite or waiting for wind to fly a kite or waiting around for Friday night or waiting, perhaps, for their Uncle Jake or a pot to boil, or a Better Break or a string of pearls, or a pair of pants or a wig with curls, or Another Chance. Everyone is just waiting."*

*"No! That's not for you!"*

*"Somehow you'll escape all that waiting and staying. You'll find the bright places where Boom Bands are playing. With banner flip-flapping, once more you'll ride high! Ready for anything under the sky. Ready because you're that kind of a guy!"*

*— Dr. Seuss, Oh! The Places You'll Go!*

At the end of each year, I take time to look at the goals I made back in January and begin to think about what I would like to see happen in the coming year. At the top of my goals page this year is the statement: "To live in the now, laugh every day and let love be my guide." I must say, that setting this as my every day goal has changed my world from "The Waiting Place" to a "Ready for anything under the sky" kind of existence. My thinking has slowly changed from yearning for change to being the change, from a longing sadness to an expecting joy and from looking to be loved to just simply loving.

You may be asking, how does one live in the now when the natural tendency of the human mind is to race around from one thought to another. We spend countless hours rehashing the past and fretting over the future, rather than maintaining

awareness in the present moment. When you think about it, every moment is truly new and filled with creative possibilities. We have the ability to give up past moments in favor of unlimited possibilities now. No matter what has come before, a new reality is possible in this very moment. No matter how "bad" your day has been, you have the power to create the best day of your life.

This is where laughing each day comes in for me. If I can find the one thing in any situation to laugh about, suddenly in the laughing, the egoic mind's grip on me is loosened and I begin to relax into the present moment. I can actually feel the stress of the circumstances leaving my body. The next time you feel yourself stressing about the past or the future, try being silly. Even if you can't find one thing good in the moment, simply go to the silly. Stand up and say something like "Well, at least my feet don't stink!" Something in this silliness awakens the brain cells and brings you into the joy of the present moment.

Doctor Seuss understood this very well. "I like nonsense, it wakes up the brain cells. Fantasy is a necessary ingredient in living; It's a way of looking at life through the wrong end of a telescope. Which is what I do, and that enables you to laugh at life's realities."

I have found that from this newfound place of joy comes love. I love the moment, I love the sky, I love the trees, I love you and I love me. There is no "Waiting Place" there is only "now". The now of living, laughing and loving.

Colleen Sgroi is a teaching artist and the owner of Colleen Sgroi Gallery, 12 Andover Road, Billerica, MA [www.ColleenSgroi.com](http://www.ColleenSgroi.com)

## STICKER SHOCK: DETERRING UNDERAGE DRINKING

Each year, approximately 5,000 young people under the age of 21 die as a result of underage drinking nationwide. This includes about 1,900 deaths from motor vehicle crashes, 1,600 as a result of homicides, 300 from suicide, as well as hundreds from other injuries such as falls, burns, and drownings. One group in town doesn't want Billerica teens added to this list.

The Billerica Substance Abuse Prevention Committee (BSAPC) is working diligently to create a substance abuse free community by increasing awareness, promoting education, and providing resources to Billerica via proven prevention and intervention approaches. They sponsor community events, develop and organize survey data, and get students involved.

One such program is the Sticker Shock program. Developed by Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) nationwide, this

program brings students into liquor stores to tag every cardboard box of alcohol with a warning sticker in hopes it will deter minors from attempting to purchase alcohol. In December on four designated dates, a group of athletes from BMHS visited various establishments around town, canvassing every box they could find.

On Dec. 14, seniors Jimmy Holland, Amy Greensmith, and Wayne Bolz were guided by Officer John Mullen to visit Kelly's Liquors on Pollard Street and Jim's Quick Stop on Boston Road. Hundreds of stickers were placed by these students and Mullen, both in the store and in the walk-in fridge.

"It's for a good cause," said Greensmith.

For these students, it was their first time doing this and they see it as a way to do their part to stop under age drinking. They would recommend it to their friends as an important cause.

"Definitely a good thing," said Holland.

Kelly's owner, Tim Donaghey, feels this is a good thing for the town and agrees that underage drinking is a problem, especially if adults provide it to students. Donaghey said the stickers definitely get noticed and he's been involved with the BSAPC for the last four years.

"Kids have no business getting their hands on this stuff," said Donaghey.

At Jim's Quick stop, the three seniors covered the boxes in no time flat. Cheryl Hansen, store employee, said this was the establishment's second year working with Sticker Shock. As a parent too, she knows it's good to be part of this. At Jim's Quick stop, everyone gets carded, with no exceptions.

"We need to be safe," said Hansen.

The BSAPC will be holding a public forum on Jan. 26 in the Buck Auditorium of Town Hall at 7 pm. The purpose of the forum is to



share information through handouts and speakers. It's a free event, open to the public and the hope is that parents will bring their pre-teens and teens along.



## WHERE FAMILIES PLAY TOGETHER AGAIN

Tucked away behind Chris's Ice Cream at 265 Boston Road down the street from McDonald's is a gem for groups and families. Putt-A-Round Indoor Mini Golf, although relatively new to Billerica, is providing a fun, local alternative for birthday parties, groups and school vacation activities.

Owned by Steve Lynch, Putt-A-Round gets back to the roots of interactive family fun at a time when technology and video games seem to have taken over.

"I envisioned an entertainment venue that would bring families together for an hour or so, where they could interact, converse, and laugh TOGETHER," said Lynch. "I think we need to get back to human, face-to-face interactions and I like to think that is exactly what Putt-A-Round accomplishes."

For school vacation week, running from Dec. 26 to Jan. 2, Putt-A-Round will be open daily from 10 am to 9 pm. Sunday, Lynch will be open from 12 noon to 9 pm. Putt-A-Round will be closed on New Year's Eve but open New Year's day. To play unlimited golf, you can't beat the price at \$6 per person.

Putt-A-Round Mini Golf offers an 18 hole indoor pro-am miniature golf course. The holes are challenging with rolling bank shots, water & sand hazards and many obstacles to test and entertain golfers of all abilities. Whether there's rain, snow or sweltering summer heat outside, this temperature controlled indoor course is a treat for a family, group, organization, or company.



"It's a safe, family oriented environment," said Lynch.

In addition to golf, Lynch also has a 3d virtual reality simulator movie theater and an indoor gemstone mining & panning facility where the whole family can enjoy panning for treasures and fossils.

"The best part is you get to keep what you find," said Lynch.

In keeping with the times, Lynch has added fluorescent paint and black lighting to offer Glow In the Dark golf. Black light golf starts at 5 pm each day and, for the nominal price of \$6 for unlimited rounds of golf, everyone who plays also gets a glow-stick bracelet to enhance the experience.

Birthday parties are always booming at Putt-A-Round since the facility can accommodate

groups of up to 30 people. The birthday package includes unlimited golf and unlimited movies for \$7 per person. For \$3 more, each child can have an ice cream from Chris's Ice Cream. And for \$10 more, pizza and a drink are an option, complete with paper products. It's simple. No planning or clean up. Just show up and have a blast!

Putt-A-Round regular hours are Thurs. 3-6 pm, Fri. 3-9 pm, Sat. 12-9 pm, and Sun. 12-6 pm. For \$4 you can play 18 holes or add \$2 more to play unlimited. For small groups and parties, Lynch is open Mon., Tues., and Wed. To get additional information, call 978-663-2422 today.

## WORKING OUT IS EASY ANY TIME: 24 HOUR GYM OPENS FOR BUSINESS

If you can get to the gym, now you can work out. Any time. Whether you work the midnight shift or you wake up at 4 am, now you can work out. Any time. Every day of the week or year? Sure. Sunday nights after supper? No problem. Half an hour on the tread mill, right before the Easter egg hunt? It's easy. Since Anytime Fitness has come to Billerica.

Prominently situated in Brick Kiln Plaza, this 24 hour fitness facility is one of the 1000 + across the country. An official ribbon-cutting ceremony will be held on Friday, Jan. 8, from 10:30 to 11:30 am, while the grand opening celebration will take place on Saturday, Jan. 9, from 9:00 am to 6:00

pm. Club tours will be available during the opening celebration and anyone is welcome to come in and ask questions.

For owner Wade Winters, Anytime Fitness represents all that is good about a gym. Winters had always had a passion for fitness and was a personal trainer earlier in his career because he enjoyed helping others meet their own fitness goals. Winters sees Anytime Fitness as a no frills facility with a non-intimidating environment and atmosphere, that will be perfect for the person who has never had a gym membership before.

"We strip away the challenges so they can meet these goals once and for all," said Winters.

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Also coming on board is Anytime Fitness Manager April Gagnon. Gagnon is enthusiastic about opening this new club in town.

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# Taking it to the edge: Local body builder climbs into the ring



By Liana Measmer

Flexing his muscles while perched on the arm of his couch, Jason Barrett was like most little boys who loved pro wrestling. In his mind's eye, he could see the roaring crowd of thousands, and when he would jump off, playfully soaring, he envisioned himself landing on a worthy opponent.

Even before the ring ever came into full view, Barrett got the opportunity to stand before the roaring crowd of thousands as a bodybuilder. Over the last seven years, Barret has devoted his life to the determination and discipline it takes to become the iron man he is today. He takes it to the limit every time, learning valuable lessons about himself and how far he can go.

was hooked. He read bodybuilding magazines and began to care more about using proper form by completing the proper number of repetitions and sets. After watching the movie "Pumping Iron" with Arnold Schwarzenegger, Barrett was even more motivated to find out what lifting weights could do for his physique.

## BODY BUILDING BASICS

At 20 years old, Barrett joined his local gym and later became the manager. At 22, Barrett decided to enter his first bodybuilding competition.

"I did it on a whim," said Barrett. "I did it just to do it."

Barrett explained the order to preparing for competition. One needs to bulk up with weights and then diet down to get the muscle as close to the skin underneath as possible. This allows the striations to be visible. For

## WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

For 27-year-old Barrett, a Billerica native, athleticism came easy. He was always lean and had no weight issues. Growing up, his sports of choice were basketball and boxing. He also kept in shape by running.

"I did what I could," said Barrett.

In his basement, Barrett's stepfather had a weight set, which he worked out regularly with. Barrett watched him and was inspired. He started curling 10-pound dumbbells and





his first run, Barrett competed in the National Physique Committee's (NPC) Northeastern in Worcester. The NPC, based out of Pennsylvania, is one of the nation's top amateur bodybuilding organizations.

Inexperienced, Barrett only prepared for three weeks and didn't diet correctly. He ate too many carbohydrates and proteins that were too fatty. He did not achieve the lean look he needed. Competition day arrived and Barrett was placed in the middle weight class. He went up against 13 other contestants who, like Barrett, were judged on proportion, symmetry, vascularity, and definition. Although he felt nervous about putting his body on display, he did his best and placed third.

"My symmetry was fine but the people who won were in better condition," said Barrett.

What Barrett learned was he was not yet a bona fide bodybuilder with so much room for improvement. Until he was to make changes, Barrett would not feel like the real deal. He understood his purpose and it drove him harder.

## GETTING RIPPED

As a result, Barrett waited four years before returning to competitive bodybuilding.

"I became more educated on how the body responds to certain exercises," said Barrett.

Barrett put himself on a strict regimen. He would work out six days a week for two hours a day. He focused initially at growing in mass. If there was an exercise he disliked, he did it more often. His back got thicker. He focused on his shoulders and hamstrings. He didn't worry about weight gain and held off on cardiovascular exercises. He trained the same muscle groups every four days.

This fall, Barrett decided to compete in the NPC New England in Boston, the largest regional bodybuilding competition in the area. He followed his bulk-up regimen and six weeks before the event came the hardest part. Dieting.

Barrett went from eating whatever he wanted to watching every morsel that went into his mouth. He ate mostly egg whites, chicken, fish, rice, asparagus and broccoli. To aid in the process, Barrett did an hour of cardiovascular exercise per day. Within six weeks, Barrett carved off 42 pounds. As a result, he was tired and grouchy all the time.

"It was hard," said Barrett. "Some days, I didn't want to do it."

Barrett at times felt alone in this endeavor. People around him thought nothing of eating junk food in front of him. Driving home at night, Barrett passed restaurants and fast food places that he had to avoid but wished he could visit.

He was invited to

numerous weddings and carried in his own meals while he watched his friends socialize over a few drinks.

However, Barrett kept his eyes on the prize. When he would read his bodybuilding magazines to motivate himself, he would keep a photo of the man who beat him the last time as a book mark. He mentally kept reminding himself of why he was doing this.

"If I slacked off even for one day, it could mean the difference in placing," said Barrett. "But it was a constant battle."

## STEPPING BACK ON STAGE

When competition day arrived on Oct. 31, Barrett felt depleted but ready. He got on stage for pre-judging and ran through his poses. After the judges moved him around, the competitors were sent out for the day. Barrett passed the time touring Boston with friends before returning at 8 p.m.

In front of the audience, Barrett let it all shine. Everything he worked so hard for was a culmination of this moment. His routine, set to music, started slow with a song by Type O Negative. Then he immediately went into the faster and "dancier" "Thriller," by Michael Jackson. Within his 90-second routine, he got the crowd involved.

"I got a pretty good ovation," said Barrett. "I felt confident."

When it was done, the judges, who ranged from former bodybuilders to fitness center owners, called the names and a relieved Barrett made the top five. When the winners were called, and Barrett made third place, the crowd let their displeasure be known. Barrett felt second place was more suitable but was happy to place.

Not one to rest on his laurels, Barrett has a new plan for future competitions. Although not certain when he will compete again, when he does next time, he will

make his decision earlier, hit the weights harder, incorporate more cardio, and eat more cleanly.

"It's body BUILDING," Barrett pointed out. "You can't build a body in a short amount of time. It's a full-time job."



## TAKING IT TO THE TOP ROPE

In the back of Barrett's mind has always been wrestling. He loved it as a child and after meeting Richard Burn, a professional wrestler, Barrett decided to come to Burn's wrestling school in Malden, in February. Unless one trains for the Olympics, there is no professional level for wrestling as a sport. Professional wrestlers are paid entertainers who need to have some athletic ability.

At the school, Barrett was taught all the techniques. He found it physically demanding, but knew it was necessary since it was all about his safety and the safety of the other person in the ring.

"You are putting your body in the hands of someone else," said Barrett.

Executing the moves takes skill and it came naturally to Barrett. Where others typically took six months of training, Barrett grasped everything quickly and was put in the ring within one month.

His first show was a 30-man Royal Rumble where he got to meet wrestling icon, Ric Flair. To date, Barrett has been in seven matches all over Massachusetts and Connecticut. He's had the opportunity to meet other popular wrestlers like Rowdy Roddy Piper, Terry Funk, and The Honky Tonk Man.

Barrett was crowned with the name Flex Armstrong and he is always the good guy. He's lost a few matches as well as won some. His character's signature is back flip athleticism and, yup, you guessed it. Flexing.

"It's fun for me," said Barrett.

## WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS

Although Barrett acknowledges the life of the wrestler is difficult, with lots of travel, little money, and extensive physical demands, he would like to explore the dream of making it big on TV regardless. Having the discipline and drive to succeed as a bodybuilder, Barrett plans to put the same effort and focus into exploring this as a possible career some day.

"That would be a success in my mind," said Barrett. "I'll just have to see what doors open with this."



## KESSLER'S KICKS CANCER

By Jenn Gervais, Staff Writer

Feet were flying at Alan Kessler's Karate Center on Sat., Dec. 5 when the studio sponsored their annual Kick-a-thon fundraiser to benefit St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital.

Kessler's Karate Center has hosted the Kick-a-thon fundraiser for the past eight years. In that time, they've raised between forty and forty-five thousand dollars.

"I want to support, to whatever extent I can, a hospital that would never deny services to a family that is uninsured or unable to cover the co-pay," said Kessler.

To raise money for the important research and treatment done at St. Jude's, the karate students ask friends and family to sponsor them as they see how many kicks they can do.

St. Jude's Hospital, based in Memphis, TN, provides cutting-edge care to children with cancer and other devastating diseases.



Founded in 1962, St. Jude's has grown to become the largest children's cancer research center in terms of the number of patients enrolled and successfully treated. In addition to top-notch medical

care, St. Jude's provides families with social workers, psychologists, child life specialists and chaplains to help them cope with the life-threatening illness their child is battling. In addition, no child is ever turned away because of an inability to pay for their care.

The highest number of kicks on Saturday was achieved by four students, with over sixteen thousand kicks delivered by each. Overall, the 50 students who participated collectively performed tens of thousands of kicks and raised over three thousand dollars for St. Jude's. Donations continue to be given even after the event itself with this year's total projected to be around five thousand dollars. Two families alone raised almost four hundred dollars each.

For their efforts, each student at the kick-a-thon was awarded a certificate with the number of kicks they delivered, signed by the Sensei. In addition, other awards included a St. Jude's gym bag, a barbecue set, St. Jude's t-shirts.

Following the fundraiser, the school put on a karate demonstration for the

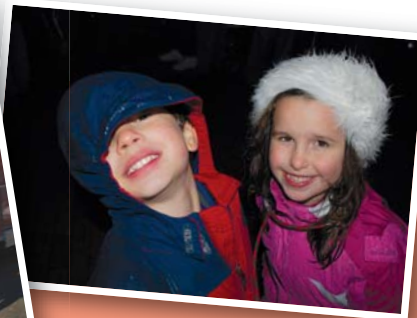


PHOTOS BY GEORGE LUCOZZI, ASA PHOTOGRAPHIC

audience.

Headed by Tyler Nichols, the Demo Team put on mock fight scenes, performed katas, and showed the application of karate moves through board breaking.

"St. Jude's Children Research Hospital is an example of a health care system that works," said Kessler. "The patient's needs come first. The hospital's mission is motivated by compassion, not profit."



On Dec. 5, families braved the rain and snow to dance to Christmas carols and wait for the arrival of Santa before one of Billerica's finest, just home from Afghanistan, threw the switch and illuminated the entire common.

## Giordano FIRE RELIEF FUND

## BILLERICA TAKES CARE OF ITS OWN. THANK YOU!

Please help one our families, The Giordano's on Champa Road, who lost their home to a fire this week. According to friend, Kim Larson, the fire started in their garage by the door from a crushed Christmas light. They have lost everything due to smoke and water damage. The house is still standing but the inside had to be gutted out.

There has been a fund set up in their name at Sovereign Bank, 508 Boston Road, Billerica, MA 01821-2811. Please consider mailing your donation to the Giordano Fire Relief Fund. If you have any questions, call the bank at (978) 670-9253

Every little bit helps, so please help this family in their time of need, especially at holiday time.

## ALL NIGHT WINTER PARKING BAN NOV. 15 - MAR. 15

The annual all-night parking ban will be in full force on all Billerica roadways. Vehicles found parked in the roadway longer than two (2) hours between Midnight and 6:00 AM during the above dates will be tagged and subject to a fine. If a vehicle is parked as to interfere with snow removal, a fine will be assessed and will be subject to towing. Upon declaration of a snow emergency by the Town Manager, parking on all public ways will be prohibited. Vehicles found parked on public ways will be subject to a \$50.00 fine and towing. The Chief of Police requests the cooperation of all residents to comply with this public safety ordinance to insure that snow plowing operations will not be hampered by illegally parked vehicles.

*Paul Watson, Interim Town Manager*



## The Sunny Side of the Street

•By Dave Gagliardi



# AUNTIE PAM TAKES FA-LEENS BY STORM

When I was a young boy there were no shopping malls as we know them today. If you wanted to shop for Christmas, you usually went into downtown Boston to do it. Every year at Christmas, Easter and just before school began, my father would drag us into the city to buy new clothes. His favorite place to shop back then was Filene's Basement (properly pronounced Fa-leens).

This was not the Filene's Basement you know today since back then it was not a store at all. It was actually the basement of Filene's where everything was sent that that they couldn't sell upstairs. The items were usually either too big or small for a real person to fit into or were the most God-awful color or style. They were all thrown into huge bins and greatly reduced in price because they knew someone would buy them no matter what they looked like. This was because the "bargain" would be too good to pass up. My father, my brother, my Auntie Pam and I would usually go there on a Monday night. We always took my Auntie Pam because when it came to hunting down bargains and plowing through hundreds of people to get them, Auntie Pam was the best.

Let me acquaint you with Auntie Pam. If you have ever been standing in a long line waiting and a little woman about the size of a munchkin cuts the line ahead of you, chances are it was Auntie Pam. If you have ever been in a store where a pint sized lady was dressing down a store manager in front of tons of other shoppers, to the point she's given lots of free stuff just to keep her quiet.... Auntie Pam. She put a jeweler out of business once because he kept giving her free stuff, just to get her out of his store.

Auntie Pam was brought along not just because she was a voracious shopper but because she was also the official parking space saver. Back in the day, Downtown Crossing was called Washington Street and you could park right in front of Filene's provided you found a spot. Picture this if you will. Bumper to bumper traffic with everyone looking for

a place to park. Up ahead, a space is being vacated by another motorist. Suddenly, Auntie Pam leaps from the still moving car and races to the empty space before anyone can pull into it. She then kicks at the bumpers and fenders of any car trying to pull into that space until my father can get there. This is very embarrassing for my brother and I but believe me, the embarrassment has only just begun.

Next, we are led into the store and down a set of steep stairs into an ocean of humanity. We are dragged by our arms until we reach a bin of pants. Like mad people, my aunt and my father begin digging through the bin, all the while pushing and elbowing other people out of their way. My aunt finds a pair of pants she thinks will fit me. She grabs it by one leg just as a large woman grabs it by the other. They begin a tug of war, both pulling and shouting at one another. My aunt wins the battle, after pulling the pants from the grasp of the other woman calling her a fat ba\*\*\*rd as a parting shot.

Now comes the embarrassing part. There are no dressing rooms in the Basement so my aunt whips down my pants in front of hundreds of people and tells me to try the new pants on. When I protest, I am told "No ones looking!" I look around to see that everyone IS looking. Just then, I catch the eye of my brother who is standing there with his pants around his ankles and holding a new pair of pants in his hands. My father had done the same thing to him. My brother has a look on his face that says, "Get used to it pal." I try on the pants that are pea green, 2 sizes too big and 12 inches too long. Auntie Pam says they will be perfect after she takes them in a little and hems them. Besides, they were only \$1.76!

Now, it's onto a bin filled with sports coats and blazers. After all, what self-respecting 10 year old can go without a blazer in his closet, especially one that is candy apple red and is a 42 long?

After Auntie Pam's alterations, we wind

up completely outfitted for Christmas with pea green pants and candy apple red blazers. We look about as good as the Christmas tree at home but that's a story I will tell you some time in the future.

I don't like clothes shopping and after reading this, I am sure you can understand why. As a matter of fact, every time I go near a clothing store, my palms begin to sweat, my heart races and I begin to urinate uncontrollably. God bless Lands End.com!

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## FIREFIGHTERS BRING SMILES TO BURN SURVIVORS

On Dec. 16, eight Billerica firefighters made their annual trek to the Shriner's Hospital for Children in Boston to spend time with the patients staying on the unit. They carried in boxes of pizza, boxes of toys, and gingerbread houses to build.

Lead by Firefighter Phil Tammaro, Director of the Student Awareness of Fire Education Program (SAFE), the group ate pizza, talked to children in the burn clinic and played Wii. Firefighters John Pellegrino and Mark Fredrickson have been coming for over five years.

"We come to help out," said Pellegrino.

For patient Jonathan Morales-Rosa, coming to the Shriner's hospital is all he's known for 17 of the 19 years he has been alive. He was burned as a baby in a bathtub and has been a patient here since he was two. Over 75 percent of his body was burned which has resulted in him undergoing two surgeries per year. These surgeries could be either skin grafts or Z-plasty's, which allow for the skin to grow with him. Morales-Rosa has had more surgeries than admissions since at times, he would receive more than one surgery per hospital stay. He has never hidden his injury, telling others openly about it. Morales-Rosa has only had positive experiences here at the Shriner's hospital but has a strong message to share.

"Pay attention to what you are doing," said Morales-Rosa. "Don't play around."

Shriner's Hospitals for Children, Boston (SHC) is a 30-bed pediatric burn hospital and research and

teaching center. SHC is operated by Shriner's Hospitals for Children, an international health care system of 22 hospitals dedicated to providing pediatric specialty care, innovative research and outstanding teaching programs. Children up to age 18 with orthopedic conditions, burns, spinal cord injuries, and cleft lip and palate are eligible for care and receive all services in a family-centered environment, without financial obligation to patients or their families. The good news is most of the patients thrive following their injuries and get back into school, sports, and friends.

"You try to get a sense of normalcy while you're in the hospital," said Kathleen Golden,

Director of Marketing and Public Relations.

For Tammaro, this is truly a familiar labor of love. He himself is a burn survivor who received all his care at the Shriner's. Now he is an active volunteer at the hospital. Tammaro was burned in a house fire as a child and has grown up with scars and reconstructive surgeries on his legs and feet. He is still receiving surgeries today.

"It's an ongoing thing," said Tammaro. "It doesn't slow me down."

A few years ago, he invited some of the other firefighters to come and they enjoyed it. A win-win for everyone, the staff appreciated it and the children loved it too. Now Tammaro is working with other local fire departments, getting them involved with visiting the children as well.

"It's not like a hospital setting," said Tammaro. "They're more like a part of your family."



Niko and Alex Merkel proudly display the first samples of their future cookie decorating business they plan to open.



Co-organizer and MC Kierra Walsh of Cadette Troop 60107 Irish Step Dancing to Christmas in Killarney

## Notes from General Sound

•By Todd Dellaporta



## GOAT HOOVES

Sounds. They're all around us. I read a survey that stated close to 80 percent of those polled, when asked which of their five senses was most important to them, stated their sense of sound. This is a surprise to me because even though music is such a huge part of my life, I am still tempted to label sight as my "must have". I will say, however, that at Cawley stadium on December 1st watching the Varsity football team play what would be their last game together, I was thinking that maybe, just maybe the 80 percent had it right. Sure the sounds were pretty much the same as most high school football games. There were calls by the players and coaches, the marching band, our awesome cheerleaders and of course those loyal, blaring Billerica fans. Everyone there who was proudly wearing green knew that it was "do or die" although we put the latter option out of our mind and screamed wildly for Coach Flynn's boys. The sound that stood out most was the hollow, melodic rattling of the goat hooves. Yes, don't adjust the reading lamp; you saw it correctly the first time. The nice women behind me and to my right were shaking noise makers made of goat hooves. What a unique and inspiring, if somewhat primitive sounding instrument!

Then something bad happened. It was real bad and it was something that none of us expected, and for what seemed like an eternity, the stadium got very quiet. The entire mood around me had changed. Suddenly I wasn't at a football game; I was floating on a surfboard in a cove where the roaring rushing waves had somehow just gone still. I was a street vagrant in a major city at 3am, where the hustling, bustling crowds had all gone home. The silence was truly deafening.

It's strange that I really hadn't noticed the dramatic lull when it first started. I only fully realized the power and spirit of the Billerica fans when it began to return. It started like a slight wave in the cove or the gradual increase of foot traffic and early morning newspaper delivery trucks on that city street. The cheering got louder and even the hooves started rattling again. It was awesome. The team was feeling our excitement and continued with courage and steadfast determination. The fever pitch returned this time not just as support but as admiration. Our boys were teaching us what "Billerica Tough" means and the strength, determination and class they exhibited in the face of often excessive insult and injury was nothing less than remarkable. They made us all very proud of our town and what it means to be from Billerica.

My intent is not to report on the game. Others have recorded the events of that evening and I am far from a sports writer anyway. That night is long over and our young quarterback will ultimately recover and see what I hope is many, many glorious games in his future. On that night, however, our team experienced a bond and a battle that will live with them forever. It will continue to coax their maturity and develop their character. Sure, losing stinks but our Indians are winners and they will continue to feel the support and hear the cheering of their family and friends forever! That and those damn goat hooves. Keep music in your life and have a healthy, safe and prosperous New Year!

All my Best,  
DJ Todd

*Todd DellaPorta, is the owner of General Sound Entertainment, and has been providing clean, upbeat entertainment for the people of Billerica for almost two decades. To inquire about quality entertainment, Videography or Photography for your next event call 508-572-6880, visit [www.generalsound.com](http://www.generalsound.com), or email at [info@generalsound.com](mailto:info@generalsound.com).*





KIM WILLMOTT PHOTO

## THE HOMEBUYER TAX CREDIT EXTENSION: FOUR THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW

Submitted By Carol Woods, Broker/Notary  
Woods Real Estate

The good news for home buyers came on Nov. 6 when the President approved an extended and expanded home buyer tax credit. However, there are a few things to consider:

**1.** Who are eligible homebuyers and has eligibility been expanded to include existing homeowners?

Eligible home buyers now come in two categories: First time or long time. First time home buyers are anyone who have not owned a principal residence in the past 3 years. These folks who may qualify as a first time home buyer may be subject to income restrictions. The long time residents of a same principal residence are those who owned a home and occupied it as the principal residence for any consecutive five year period during the last eight years. They may also be eligible for a credit and also subject to the new income ceilings. This does include current homeowners, as the home was both owned and occupied by the taxpayer for at least five consecutive years.

**2.** What are the new maximum income levels?

For the first time home buyer as well as for the long time resident, the Modified Adjusted Gross Income limit is now \$125k for singles, \$225k for couples. The "Modified Adjusted Gross Income" (MAGI) is defined by the IRS.

To find it, a taxpayer must first determine "Adjusted Gross Income" (AGI). AGI is total income for a year minus certain deductions (known as "adjustments" or "above-the-line deductions") calculated prior to itemized deductions from Schedule A or personal exemptions are subtracted. AGI includes all forms of income including wages, salaries, interest income, dividends and capital gains.

To determine modified adjusted gross income (MAGI), add to AGI amounts like foreign income, foreign-housing deductions, student-loan deductions, IRA-contribution deductions and deductions for higher-education costs. Singles cannot make more than \$125,000 in MAGI, and married couples cannot make not more \$225,000 in order to get the maximum credit. Partial credit is available for those with MAGI between \$125k to \$145k.

**3.** Has the credit amount been increased? No, but the maximum credit amount is different depending on whether the taxpayer is a first time buyer or a long time resident. For the first time buyer, the full credit is still \$8,000\* (\$4,000 if married filing separately). For the long term resident, the full credit is \$6,500\* (\$3,250 if married filing separately).

This money comes in the form of a Federal Tax Refund, just as always. Though it is still a true credit, as opposed to a loan, recapture or repayment would still be required if you sold your home within 36 months of purchase.

**4.** What housing qualifies as a Principal Residence purchase?

As before, single family homes, condos, townhouses, and co-ops qualify so long as they are used as the taxpayer's principal residence. Homes purchased last year do not qualify for this program. Also, sales between immediate family members are ineligible. It is also important to note that the purchase price of the home cannot exceed \$800,000. The date of purchase has been extended to July 1, 2010, so long as a binding Purchase & Sales agreement was executed (signed) by April 30, 2010.

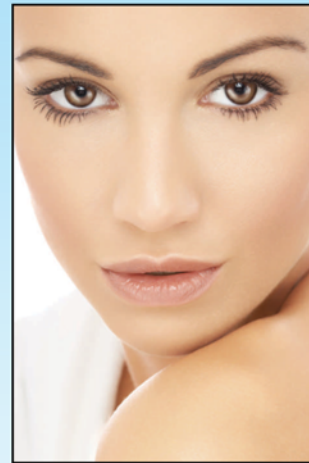
*This Q&A is intended to provide a quick overview. There are numerous other provisions in the new credit, and home buyers should understand them clearly before they make any decision regarding their eligibility. Source: Massachusetts Association of Realtors*

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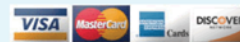
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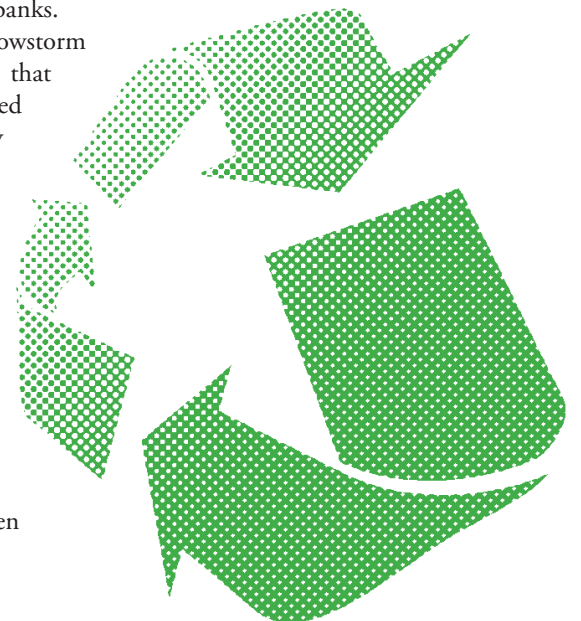
## WINTER GUIDELINES FOR TRASH CARTS AND RECYCLE BINS

When there is snow on the ground, residents should take special care to be sure trash carts are accessible to the arm of the automated trash trucks, with 3' clearance around the cart to all obstacles such as tall snow banks, recycle bins, overflow bags, mailboxes, trees and parked cars.

Please avoid placing trash carts or recycling into the plowed roadway by clearing a small area just off the edge of road for trash and recycle containers. If possible, please continue to place recycling on the opposite side of the driveway or walkway from the trash cart, and be sure it is clearly visible from the road and not blocked by snow banks.

In the event of an active snowstorm on trash day, please be aware that trash or recycle containers placed too close to the edge of road may be tipped over during plowing, especially with wet heavy snow or slush. Trash collection may be delayed due to inclement weather on trash day, and will continue until complete. In the event that trash collection must be postponed due to weather, such notice will be posted on [www.billericadpw.org](http://www.billericadpw.org) and BATV with information on when collection will resume.

Department of Public Works





**Business to Business**

•By Pat Zapert

**HELPING BUSINESSES GROW**

In my first column for The Billerica Green, I thought it would be helpful to provide some information about our organization and its membership. In future columns, I'll elaborate more on our goals and activities.

The Billerica Community Alliance is made up of local businesses, agencies, community groups and individuals, primarily in the Town of Billerica. Our organization was created in 2008 by the merger of the Billerica Chamber of Commerce and the Billerica Plan, both of which were in existence for 20 years or more prior. The Alliance is a non-profit organization whose focus is solely on Billerica.

Our members include small businesses, larger corporations, and community groups. Our objectives are to promote local businesses and economic development as well as to improve the quality of life for the businesses and residents of the town. We fund a number of charitable endeavors within the town, including the sponsorship and the annual funding of grants and scholarships. For many of our large member companies, membership in this organization helps them fulfill their community commitment goals.

The Alliance sponsors or co-sponsors a number of events within the community. These have included the Annual Health and Recreation Fair, the Valentine's Sweetheart Social for couples married for 50 years or more and the annual Clean Up and Green Up activities. In addition, the organization endows a scholarship through the Billerica Scholarship foundation and sponsors

a community grants program annually.

Our objective for businesses is to help them grow and provide opportunities for business to business networking as well as to facilitate access to town government. We publish a monthly e-newsletter which goes to all of our membership and provides the opportunity for our members to advertise an event, activity, or special services with discounts posted on our website, [www.billerica-alliance.org](http://www.billerica-alliance.org).

To address timely topics of interest to small businesses and the town, we also sponsor several seminars and host two business round table sessions per year.

We hold monthly membership meetings on the 4th Thursday of each month at a variety of member locations. These morning meetings, which start at 8 am, have an agenda, a speaker and allow time for networking. [CALL OUT START--Our next meeting is Thursday, January 28th at 8:00 am at the Merrimack Education Center in Linnell Circle off Middlesex Turnpike—CALL OUT END]. In addition, we hold quarterly evening social events, known as Sundowners, at which members gather specifically to network. None of our meetings require mandatory attendance.

It is easy to become a member. If you are interested in membership, contact the office at 978-667-4174 or via email at [info@billerica-alliance.org](mailto:info@billerica-alliance.org).

*Pat Zapert is the Executive Director of The Billerica Community Alliance.*

Nick Cantal, 2, watches as mom, Kasey Cantal has her face painted at the Shawsheen during Breakfast with Santa.



PHOTOS BY GEORGE LUCOZZI, ASA PHOTOGRAPHIC

**PROGRAMMABLE THERMOSTATS SAVE ENERGY**

New Year is a great time to think about ways to improve your house over the next year. The one-afternoon project that gets you the most bang for your buck is installing a new programmable thermostat.

Your new thermostat will automatically manage the time that your heating system is burning expensive fuel. It will turn itself down at night while you are under your warm covers, but it will turn itself back up in time to warm up the house before you wake up. It will do the same when you are away at work during the day.

Expect to spend between \$40 and \$70 minus any rebates that might be available from NStar. Ask the staff at the hardware store to show you the different types available. Some can hold two sets of programs (one for the weekdays and the other for weekends), while the fancy units can run seven programs, one for each day of the week.

Now put together the tools you will need: a Phillips screwdriver, a flat-head screwdriver, a pencil, a drill, a hammer, and masking

tape. Shut off the emergency switch next to the boiler. I'll assume your old thermostat only controls your heating system, but you can certainly use the new one to control your A/C, too.

Let's take your old thermostat off the wall. The way to remove it depends on what you have. Look for a tab on the bottom. Poke around (gently) with your flat-head screwdriver. After a minute or two you'll figure out how to pop the cover off.

(Your old thermostat probably has a mercury switch. Put it in a sealed plastic bag. Call the Town health department to ask about safe disposal.)

You can now see the guts of the thermostat. You'll see wires connected to "terminals," or screws. Before you unscrew them, make a note of the letter stamped next to each screw and the color of the wire connected to it. Your new thermostat will come with lettered stickers to make it easier. Take a digital photo, just in case. (This trick has gotten the Green Handyman out of

trouble many times.)

Unscrew the base plate from the wall. Use masking tape to stick the wires to the wall to prevent the wires from going back through the hole in the wall. Then unscrew the terminals and pull off the bare ends of the wires.

Next, look at your new thermostat. Unsnap the face from the base plate. Put the base plate on the wall, level it – using a bubble level if you like – and trace the perimeter of the screw hole slots with the pencil.

Put the base plate aside and drill a hole in the middle of your pencil marks. Use the bit size recommended by the thermostat instructions – probably 3/16 inch. Tap the plastic drywall anchors (included with the thermostat) into the holes with the hammer.

Now you need to connect the wires to the terminals on base plate. Working with wire can be tricky and frustrating, but keep at it. The idea is to get the loop on the end of the wire to hook around the terminal. Be patient – you may need to wiggle them, and

if your fingers are in the way, try needle-nose pliers. Make sure the letter code you noted for each wire matches the code on the base plate. Screw the base plate to the wall.

It's more comfortable to program the unit while relaxing in a chair, so have a seat and get started. Think about what temperature you want while you are asleep. Between 55 and 60 is reasonable if you have a warm blanket. When you are away from home, it can be as low as 50. When you are home, try something in the 65-68 area, which is OK if you are willing to wear a sweater. Program the warmest temperature to start 30 minutes before you wake up or return from work.

Snap the face plate in the base. Well done! You have just saved yourself a bundle in energy costs.

*Jeffrey R. Parenti, P.E. is a registered professional civil engineer living in Billerica.*

**The Green Handyman**

•By Jeffrey R. Parenti, P.E.





**The Traveling Gourmets**

•By John and Sherry Livsey

**NEWTOWNE GRILLE & BAR****FAMILY FRIENDLY DELIVERED**

This month we decided to go to the Newtowne Grille & Sports Bar knowing it would be "family friendly" but also because there was a coupon in Nov/Dec edition of The Billerica Green. We had been there when they first opened and found it to be average at best. We were not expecting a gourmet meal, just a casual dinner at an affordable price. This time, Newtowne Grille actually over delivered!

We sat right down and ordered our drinks, Shirley Temples for the kids, Harpoon IPA for John, and I had my first "Absolut Sunset" which is a delicious concoction of Absolut Mandrin, Peach Schnapps, pineapple juice, cranberry, and grenadine. The drink selection was extensive and fun with a dozen beers on draft, a nice list of wines, and an interesting martini and mixed drink menu.

The kids sat and colored while we perused the menu and specials list. It was difficult to decide what to eat as there were so many choices that looked appealing. The server brought us some delicious bread sticks with dipping oil to enjoy as we decided. I was surprised when our daughter chose spaghetti and meatballs instead of the usual chicken tenders with fries. John decided to try the Shrimp Fra Diavolo pizza from the specials list. I had trouble deciding between the lobster ravioli and the lobster macaroni and cheese. I decided to indulge in the lobster mac and cheese although I was skeptical due to the low price.

The mac and cheese was wonderfully creamy and there was plenty of tender lobster meat in it. I licked the plate when I was done! The chicken tenders were made with real chicken and were accompanied with crispy french fries. The pizza had a thin and delicious crust with a Fra Diavolo sauce that had just the right amount of spice. John was full with two slices left but kept going back for another bite until it was all gone. The spaghetti and meatballs were served in separate plates which made our daughter particularly happy; it's the little things that mean so much with the kids.

The Newtowne Grille also has a separate bar area with high definition TVs throughout, including in some of the booths. We noticed some families with children eating dinner in the bar area and thought it would be a fun place to watch a football game.

The Newtowne Grille and Sports Bar has gotten past the woes of a new restaurant and has shown incredible improvement in every aspect since our first visit. The service was very friendly throughout the night, the prices were great, and the food was fresh and delicious. We were very pleased with our night out and recommend that you check out the Newtowne Grille and Sports Bar.

*Sherry Livsey is an Independent Wine Consultant with Traveling Vineyard. For a home wine tasting experience, contact her at sherrylivsey@comcast.net.*

**COMING TO YOUR MAILBOX IN JANUARY****Robert Calabrese: Leader, Educator, Friend:**

As the time for the Scholarship Foundation's Team Trivia Challenge approaches, an event which Calabrese emceed for years, we'll look back over the life of one of Billerica's finest who left his hand print on our hearts.

**Lyme Disease-New Treatment and Guidelines:**

Staff Writer Jenn Gervais reports on Federal changes which could impact your care next season.

**It's All About Love:**

Get inspired by couples who've been married for over 50 years and read about how they made it work.

**Get Out, Find Out:**

We'll preview big upcoming events around town so you can have fun and make a difference.


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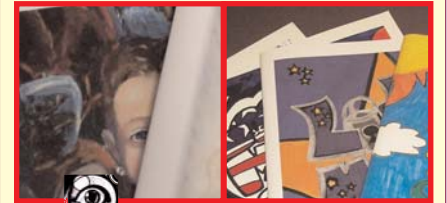
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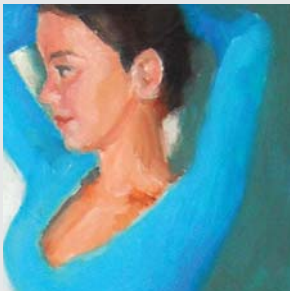
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Tony Luongo, will be BATV's visiting artist for January 2010 and will show his work at a gallery opening reception on Thursday, Jan. 7 from 6:30-8:30 pm. (Snow date: Jan. 14th) Please RSVP if you plan to attend to [liana@thebillericagreen.com](mailto:liana@thebillericagreen.com). Hope to see you there!

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