

# THE SANDISFIELD TIMES

*Tribunus*



*Plebis*

RELIABLE. REGULAR. RELEVANT.

Volume XI, Number 3

June 2020

## Annual Town Meeting and Town Election Preview

By *Tim Brooks*

This year's annual Town Meeting and elections are being held one month later than usual, due to the Covid-19 pandemic. It will take place Saturday, June 20, at 10 a.m., at the DPW garage adjacent to the Old Town Hall. The Annual Town Election will be held on Monday, June 22, at the Old Town Hall, rain date June 27. Social distancing guidelines will be observed at both, and at this time masks are required to participate.

### TOWN MEETING AND WARRANT

This year the warrant for the Town Meeting contains just 23 articles. Due to virus restrictions, the Town Warrant will not be distributed before the Town Meeting. Readers can obtain a copy of the full warrant at Town Hall or at the Town website, [www.sandisfieldma.gov](http://www.sandisfieldma.gov). Copies will also be available at the Town Meeting on June 20. Details of two of the more noteworthy warrant articles appear below.

Article 3 asks voters to consider allotting \$25,000 for a new records storage facility. Currently Town records are stored in a trailer in the parking lot of Town Hall Annex. As discussed at Select Board meetings this year, the trailer has been infested with vermin, creating unsanitary conditions and endangering the condition of the records. However, the Finance Committee has unanimously opposed this article and would rather see the Town investigate other long-term solutions to record-keeping, like digitization.

*con't p.2*

## Candidate Statements

This year, the challengers in the two contested positions are write-in candidates who neither took out nomination papers nor were nominated at the Town Caucus. In all of the other open seats, the candidates are incumbents and are running without opposition.

### SELECT BOARD CANDIDATE: THREE-YEAR TERM

#### MARK NEWMAN (INCUMBENT)

It has been a great honor for me to have served on the Select Board. The board has been working on several good-size highway projects that will be taking place this summer. We have also been able to get started with our high-speed internet project. We continue the tough job of working on our budget for the town. This year our town meeting will be held at our DPW Garage on June 20 and elections on June 22 at the Old Town Hall, and I encourage all of you to take part. Our town officers have been working hard during the Covid-19 State of Emergency to adhere to the important safety guidelines, which has resulted in changes in how we get our jobs done this year, but we've all been working together to get through these challenging times as effectively as possible. I would like to thank everyone for your continued support.

*con't p. 2*



## Thank You, Veterans!

A DRIVE-BY WORKS FOR THIS YEAR

Story and Photo By *Ron Bernard*

One of Sandisfield's enduring traditions, the annual Memorial Day marching parade (since 1947), like nearly every other public event, fell victim this year to national pandemic social distancing.

But despite the unavailability of the Lee High School band, jaunty marching families, locally made and decorated floats, and the Post #456 Legionnaires, an alternative idea surfaced to appropriately honor past and present military veterans – a "Drive-By" Parade.

Inspired by the "We Miss You (school) Parade" on April 15 (see May issue, p. 6), Fire Chief Ralph Morrison and long-time parade organizer Jim Higgins of Otis pulled together an estimated 75 vets and family members – including members of the Southwick VFW – to meet at the Farmington River School in Otis to

*con't p. 2*

**DRIVERS: PLEASE WATCH OUT FOR TURTLES!**



**ESSAY CONTEST WINNERS  
ANNOUNCED INSIDE! →**

# Select Board Meetings

## COVID MAKES ATTENDING SELECT BOARD MEETINGS EASIER

By Times Reporters

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the Sandisfield Select Board has restricted public access to Town Hall Annex, including attendance at its meetings.

However, residents can participate in the meetings remotely simply by calling either 855-855-9834 or 518-860-1995 and entering the Meeting ID Number 1160419849#. Meetings are normally Mondays at 7 p.m. The Board will soon adopt its summer schedule of meeting every other week, so watch agendas for meeting dates.

Agendas and minutes of former meetings can be accessed at [www.sandisfieldma.gov](http://www.sandisfieldma.gov). Go to Minutes/Agendas and select Board of Selectmen. For those without online access, minutes are posted at the Town Hall and Transfer Station bulletin boards by the Thursday afternoon previous to the meeting. This system will remain in effect until restrictions are lifted as the pandemic eases.

## Annual Town Meeting and Town Elections Preview

con't from p. 1

Article 15 asks voters to increase by \$97,463 the annual appropriation for school operations. Both the Select Board and the Finance Committee have opposed this increase. "The Select Board feels that educational expenses are a big part of the town budget and deserve attention," Town Manager Joann Grybosh told the Times.

### TOWN ELECTION BALLOT

The annual Town Caucus was held on the evening of May 3 at the DPW Garage Building, with 24 registered voters attending to nominate candidates for this year's Town Election. The results for each of the offices listed are:

- Moderator (1 year) . . . . . Simon Winchester
- Selectmen (3 years) . . . . . Mark P. Newman
- Town Clerk (3 years) . . . . . Dolores Harasyko
- Board of Assessors (3 years) . . . Steven J. Kopiec
- School Committee (3 years) . . . . Roger Kohler
- Board of Health (3 years) . . . Victor N. Hryckvich
- Planning Board (5 years) . . . . . no nominees
- Constables (3 years) . . . . . John Burrows
- Choose two. . . . . Nazario Sanchez

### EARLY VOTING

Town Clerk, Dolores Harasyko, sent early ballot applications to all registered voters in early May, which will allow voters the option of voting early,

from home, and returning their ballots before the deadline. Those who wish to vote in person, on June 22, may still do so, although polling hours will be reduced from 2 p.m. to 7 p.m. Based on the large number of residents applying for early ballots, Dolores told The Times that she expects a higher-than-average voter turn-out this year

## Thank You, Veterans!

con't from p. 1

form a long motorcade that snaked through West Otis to Sandisfield Center and New Boston before returning to Otis on a beautiful Sunday morning, May 27.

Flashing lights of police vehicles and horns and sirens of the fire departments of Sandisfield, Otis, New Marlborough, Monterey, and Tolland loudly and unabashedly announced the procession which drew many families out of their homes all along the route.

There were stops at the New Boston Cemetery and the Berkshire Rehabilitation Center, both places home to many veterans, with color guard ceremonies and a gun salute. In his first public appearance, Isaac Schultz, 13, played Taps. His father is color guard participant USMC Lt. Col. (Ret.) Steve Schultz.

Chief Morrison told the Times, "As soon as word got around, I received calls from vets all over the area who wanted in." Will this be the model for future parades? We don't know but one of the older vets, a long-time participant, told Ralph, "We should do this every year. It sure beats marching!"

## Candidate Statements

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### ALEX BOWMAN (RUNNING AS A WRITE-IN CANDIDATE, NOT LISTED ON BALLOT)

I'm running for Select Board to serve the town with a focus on transparency and accountability. I grew up four towns away, in Westhampton, and earned a degree in Computer Engineering at Brown University. After climbing the ladder as a technology and business consultant, I helped a New York City startup scale up its operations 15-fold before acquisition. I am now cofounder of my own business and advise Marty's Local, a distributor specializing in locally-produced food based in Pittsfield. Progress and efficiency are my passions.

I moved full time to Sandisfield with my wife and two children in 2017. I love getting to know folks in town, exploring the woods and taking country bike rides.

My goal as a selectman is to engage our community in order to progress our town forward and believe the Board of Selectmen should be transparent,

accountable, and there to serve the townspeople. I need your help—please write me in!

### SCHOOL COMMITTEE: THREE-YEAR TERM - ROGER KOHLER

As a current public school math teacher (in another district), I hope to bring my experience and perspective to the school committee on many issues including oversight, accountability, school-choice, and the budget. I want to make sure that our Sandisfield tax dollars are being well spent and that we are getting the best value for our money.

### NICK DELLAGIUSTINA (RUNNING AS A WRITE-IN CANDIDATE, NOT LISTED ON BALLOT)

I bring a "real-world" mindset to our School Committee, especially in dealing with finances. Over the past nine years, I worked hard to get the cost of health benefits lowered for our teachers, and also helped negotiate an annual two percent salary increase for their upcoming three-year contract. In the coming year, the School Committee will need to focus on facilities maintenance and upkeep at our 20-year old Farmington River School.

# Aggressive Bear (or Bears)

## SHEEP KILLED IN WEST NEW BOSTON

By Bill Price

The black bears that roam Sandisfield seldom attack other animals, but it's been different this spring. In early May a sheep owned by Catherine Layne of Sears Road, across the Farmington River from the library, was killed and partially eaten early one morning by a bear that broke through a six-foot metal enclosure.

The sheep's name was Cloudy. Catherine Layne wrote on ConnectSandisfield Facebook, "Cloudy was so sweet and gentle, and [had] been with us ten years. She was about 14 years old. We will miss our sweet queen of the farm."

The bear returned a few hours later. Sandisfield police fired a warning shot, but despite that, and

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# The Sandisfield Times Essay Contest

## WINNER AND A GREAT RUNNER-UP

How proud we are to have received so many hundreds of words describing, arguing, stating, agreeing that Sandisfield is not just different from but in so many ways is much better than anywhere else.

Callie Hyland, all of twelve years-old, wrote five hundred fine and excellent words for us, and so should be delighted to have come in a close second. We're pleased to publish her essay, but second she must be.

Peter Rock, a gentleman more than five times Callie's age, takes the laurels. Peter cleverly

compared our village not to any other place, but to itself at an earlier time. And for that cleverness, and for the elegance of his writing, he takes home the prize of \$250 and the pleasure of seeing his work published here.

We'll do this again next year, with a topic to be announced in the New Year. So sharpen your pencils and prepare to write us a 500-word essay for 2021 of comparable excellence and distinction.

*Simon Winchester*  
*Founding Editor*

## FREEDOM AND SERENITY

*By Callie Hyland (Runner-Up)*



Sandisfield has been overlooked due to its small amount of people and beaten-down roads. Although, as the Roman philosopher Seneca once said, "It is the quality rather than the quantity that matters." It doesn't matter that there are fewer people, it's the nostalgic feel we all get in this

town. The feeling of freedom and serenity that is so strong that it feels like it's in the air we breathe.

As someone who lives in New York City and in Sandisfield, I can tell you that whenever my family and I drive up here, I am always excited and relieved because unlike New York, Sandisfield is not so crowded and stressful that you feel like cattle being herded on the sidewalks. Sandisfield does not have intimidating skyscrapers that look like they can tumble down in the blink of an eye, or tourists blocking the street that make all New Yorkers annoyed. Sandisfield is different.

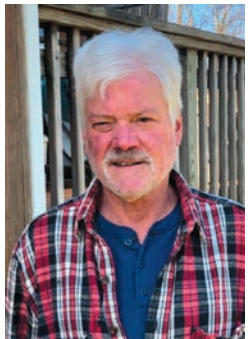
The secluded nature of Sandisfield allows me to finally breathe in the fresh air and be able to appreciate nature. Enjoying things like golfing, fishing, and the tranquility of my surroundings is what makes this town the best place to be. The peacefulness of this town also makes me think of the three generations my family has lived in Sandisfield. We have been here over 50 years.

The history of this town with the old houses and the stone walls that divide properties really make it special. Established in 1762, Sandisfield was named after Samuel Sandys who was a British official. The old history of this town truly makes it unique and shows the importance of Sandisfield. And especially during these times, Sandisfield is important because it makes me feel safe. As our world deals with the Covid-19 pandemic, the stressful news I read and hear makes me fear for first responders and those who are in the most danger. However, being here in Sandisfield, I am not worried about my family or my health. And not only do I feel safe, I feel like I am a part of a community.

Unlike other towns, Sandisfield has a community like no other. I used to think that it is because there are so few people in this town, but I realized that it's not just the number of people in this town, it is the trust we have for each other that makes up our community. The Sandisfield Arts Center and the Memorial Day Parade truly represent the people of Sandisfield and how they connect to people through this town. The Sandisfield Times always makes me smile reading all the interesting stories and things that are happening to people. Reading the Sandisfield Times is never stressful and never makes me fear things that are happening in the world. Instead, it brings joy and simple stories that make me forget breaking news that we hear every day on the television or in a newspaper. The love and joy in this town are what makes Sandisfield better. 🍷

## WHERE MUTUAL RESPECT AND CIVILITY REIGN

*By Peter Rock (Winner)*



Sandisfield is different and yes, it is better. Please allow this essay to dispel any incredulity you may have. We have lived on Stump Road since April 1986 and thus our frame of reference is limited

to the past thirty-four years, the words different and better being quite relative terms.

I will stake much of my argument on two defining moments in Sandisfield's recent history. First the Wild and Scenic River designation regarding the Farmington River in 1990-1991. This was a very contentious issue which polarized the town and saw old friendships wither and die as an opposition group formed which seemed to pit property owners against environmentalists. While the debate dragged on over a year and votes were taken in town meetings, the whole process devolved into a mean-spirited and divisive issue which ended with the Town not granting the river the Wild and Scenic status. I am not taking either side but regret the provincial attitude which marked the debate, which at times was downright nasty.

Now to the second issue which confronts us, what we have termed the Pot Farm controversy. I have not seen one shred of the rancor and bitterness which marked the battle over the Farmington River. Although I have only

the Sandisfield Times to inform my opinion (Happy Birthday, by the way), I am delighted that the arguments on both sides have been marked by an air of civility and respect. Month after month one can read well considered arguments from concerned neighbors and equally convincing arguments from folks who feel it would be a benefit for the town for a variety of reasons. Let the healthy debate continue. It will surely be a process which takes a long time to bear fruit as we wade through what for Sandisfield is uncharted territory. I hope the feeling of mutual respect carries on through future town votes, meetings and any permitting process to come.

Could there have been a sea-change in the town over the thirty years which separate the two issues? We are certainly being more circumspect in our deliberations and less apt to dismiss thorny issues out of hand because they are difficult to consider. Of course, the town is different from what it was in, say, 1910 when it had an agrarian economy and probably resembled Grover's Corners from the play "Our Town" by Thornton Wilder. I would like to have seen a horse-drawn milk wagon, but that ship has sailed. I understand change is difficult. I'm the type of guy who never discards old worn-out but comfortable shirts—my wife is more than happy to do that for me.

We live in the largest town (geographically) in Berkshire county, with a very small population, and I suspect most of us like it that way. I don't want to sound flip about something serious, but we were practicing social distancing before the phrase was coined. I've lived half of my 68 years here, always glad to return after having been away. 🍷

# Helping Hands

## RESPONSES TO COVID-19 BY FRIENDS & NEIGHBORS

By Bill Price

With Covid-19 restrictions gradually being lifted across the state, most Sandisfielders continue to protect themselves and others by following the guidelines of social distancing. Most are approaching the easing of safety standards with a caution and are aware of the possibility of a second wave of the virus striking while the first hasn't in fact left town yet.

But, here, so far so good. Sandisfield's Board of Health spokesman, Roger Kohler, reported that he had been notified of no new cases in Town since last month. "My last communication with the public health nurse was on May 24." And, he said, "according to data I received on Friday, May 22, there were only 26 new positive cases reported in Berkshire County in the last ten days." The Massachusetts Department of Health reported a total of 92,675 cases within the Commonwealth, with 6,372 deaths.

### AN OFFER OF HELP

Many Sandisfielders found a note in their mailboxes in early May from a couple on New Hartford Road introducing themselves and offering to help. The note read, in part:

"Please allow us to introduce ourselves. I just wanted to reach out and let you know that we're here. If you need anything, please don't hesitate to contact us. Some of you may be seniors and all alone these difficult times. Here are our telephone numbers. Please feel free to contact us for any reason.

Thank you and God bless you, Melissa and Geoff Baker"

It turned out that Melissa and Geoff received several messages of gratitude and neighborly introductions, but no one in need contacted them in response to their offer. One witty neighbor did ask The Times if the newspaper thought the Bakers would be willing to help dig a 4-foot deep foundation hole for a small building, but The Times refused to relay the request.

### LOCAL DRIVERS PITCHING IN

At least one Town resident, in need of medical treatment twice a week, accepted the offer of the Council on Aging to provide volunteer drivers. Linda Riiska and Ann Wald have driven him to his appointments.

Another resident, Charles Giaimo, has volunteered to run errands for seniors, as well.

If you need this service, call Linda at 413-258-4816.

### VISIT MARVIN FOR A FREE MASK

Since his day job produces copious amounts of sawdust and finishing fumes, carpenter Carl Codling had in his supply cabinets a good supply of protective face masks. With masks in short supply at the beginning of the pandemic, Carl proceeded to give away his extras, still in their protective plastic boxes.

When his free hand-outs at the Transfer Station were genially closed down by a regretful Board of Health, which wanted the Town to avoid potential lawsuits or obscure regulations about health materials being distributed on Town property, Carl moved his distribution headquarters to the back door of his home on Roosterville Road, announcing on ConnectSandisfield where the masks could be found.

He soon ran out of masks. But, since he had a sewing machine and knew how to use it, Carl started making more. Much of his material was donated by Theresa Bills, who uses colorful



Marvin says: "Maskit or Casket, your choice."

cloths in her artwork and had yards of the stuff on hand. When Carl ran out of ¼ inch elastic that he used for straps, he put out a request on ConnectSandisfield and Town residents stepped up and gave him what they had. Lynn Rubenstein ordered a batch of ¼" elastic. He was back in business.

He set up a picnic cooler on his back steps to store the masks, announced "free homemade masks" on ConnectSandisfield, and the masks started going, Carl said, "like hot cakes." He enlisted a green plastic skeleton named Marvin to sit beside the cooler as a greeter. A skeleton might not have been the best metaphor Carl could have thought of during a pandemic, but it is sort of Sandisfieldian. He dressed Marvin up with a mask, glasses, and a ball cap so he would at least appear decent to people stopping by for a free mask.

Asked about his generosity, Carl said, "We are all in this together. For the most part," he said, "I've been able not to endanger anyone except myself. Recently, though, I slipped with a utility knife cutting material for the masks and needed four stitches to fix my thumb. You can't imagine how often a day you use your thumb."

Masks are still available at Carl's place, handmade, wrapped in protective plastic bags, 6 Roosterville Road from 9:00 to 5:00. Carl says, "Spread the word. These masks are free, but if you feel the need to donate please to so to a food bank."

### HUNGRY PETS?

Anyone needing a bit of help feeding their dog and/or cat during the Covid-19 quarantine can call the Berkshire Humane Society in Pittsfield. The society's Community Food Bank is providing free donated pet food for those requiring a little help.

Town Manager Joanne Grybosh said that she helps run a pet food bank in another town and knows there are people choosing between buying pet food and people food during this pandemic. She said, "No animal should go hungry. No person, either. There are folks willing to help."

The pickup days are Tuesday and Wednesday between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Orders need to be called in no later than the previous Monday by 2 p.m. Call 413-447-7878. The society's address is 214 Barker Road in Pittsfield. 🐾



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# Local School Provides Help in Real Time

## FRRSD DELIVERS FOOD TO THOSE IN NEED

By Bill Price

Three days after closing its doors due to Covid-19, staff members at the Farmington River Regional School had assembled cartons of food and other necessities for sixteen families where students qualified for the school's free- and reduced-lunch program.

But the state-wide quarantine had further consequences. As job losses increased, it became clear that more families were struggling financially and the need for help grew rapidly. Principal Tom Nadolny, after consulting with the Director of Food Services Kendra Rybacki, e-mailed student families with an offer to extend food services to anyone in need, regardless of income or age.

The invitation spread through the communities of Otis and Sandisfield over a period of hours. Within a few days the school began providing groceries and other necessities to 39 district families, including 80 children and 52 senior citizens (20 from Sandisfield). The cost of meals being served to students under the age of 21 will be reimbursed by the state.

School staff members Kendra Rybacki, Jenny Schwartz, and Karen Yvon, and Teresa DellaGiustina searched grant and other programs for possibilities for reimbursement to offset the cost of food for anyone served over the age of 21. Participating groups include, among others, The Salvation Army, Berkshire Bounty, The People's Pantry, Cabot's Cheese, Guidos, High Lawn Farm, Crowley's, and Otis Poultry Farm.

Two of the school's cash calendar winners donated their prize money to the food distribution as well. Arlene Tolopko, an Otis School Committee member, organized a "community" of residents from Otis Woodlands to donate gift cards or food, as well as donating weekly herself.

Staff and volunteer drivers, who either pick up donated food or deliver boxes to the towns' far-flung families include Candy Chaffee, Teresa DellaGiustina, Terri Digrigoli, Ralph and Jane Gleason of the Otis COA, Meaghan Martin, and Tom Soules of AMVETS.

For its part, AMVETS has donated food, as well as dog and cat food, and distributed water bottles filled with candy for children. All the drivers either pick up the donated food or deliver the boxes to our families.

The School Committee has provided 100 percent support for the program. It is hoped that if funding through grants and continued donations keep coming, the School will be able to help residents throughout the summer.

FRRSD Assistant to the Superintendent Teresa DellaGiustina said that all of the Berkshire County school districts have worked hard to help each other "in so many ways. The quarantine did not get in the way of bringing people together to help their fellow residents."

If anyone in Otis or Sandisfield is in need of food or any other resources, please contact [krybacki@frrsd.org](mailto:krybacki@frrsd.org) or [tdigrigoli@frrsd.org](mailto:tdigrigoli@frrsd.org). Or visit a link to other food resource centers in the area on the Farmington River Regional School District website at [www.frrsd.org](http://www.frrsd.org).

# Staying Good, So Far

By Bill Price

The Berkshire Rehabilitation & Skilled Nursing Center in New Boston reported no new cases of the coronavirus since their last report in May, that one patient had tested positive in March but has since recovered and is now symptom-free.

"We are very happy for this resident and our team here," said Tim Brown, spokesman for Athena Health Care Systems, the parent organization for the nursing home.

The building actually closed nearly two weeks before the state government ordered businesses to close their doors in order to protect citizens from the Covid-19 pandemic and has been following guidelines from the state and the Center for Disease Control. "All of our residents are

adjusting well to wearing masks and social distancing," said Brown.

"Our staff is doing well and although we do have some extended work hours, we are lucky enough to have a wonderful team at Berkshire. Their compassion and professionalism is inspiring to all of us every day."

While the building remains closed to patients' families, the staff is looking forward "to being able to open our doors again to visitors, when it is safe for our residents and the community. With the improving, warmer weather approaching, we also look forward to continuing with our 'window visit' program to complement our Facetime visits at Berkshire Rehabilitation."

Brown added, "We'd like to thank the community and our families for their support, patience, and understanding."

# Teachers as Parents/ Parents as Teachers

## HELPING YOUR KIDS WITH HOMEWORK

By Maxene Kupperman-Guiñals



Teacher Maxene Kupperman-Guiñals is still in touch with the student in the middle, front row. Graduation Day, I.S. 143, District 5, New York City, 1972

*Editor's note: With this issue The Times begins a new column of advice for parents to help their children with schoolwork. Maxene Kupperman-Guiñals of Town Hill Road, a teacher for 35 years and the parent of a teacher for the last 15, is well qualified to provide support to parents who may be having a rough time these days when schools are closed altogether and children working remotely and often independently.*

*The column will continue after the pandemic because, once the world is*

*healthy again, homework will continue to be assigned and your children, especially from a young age, will need your help to learn how to get it done and turned in on time. In her proposal to The Times, Maxene said, "I hope you will let me be of assistance to the parents of our town." Maxene, welcome aboard.*

1. The desk or table your children work at should be big enough for them to spread out the work materials. Sometimes they may have art projects or need to make dioramas for science or social studies, and these require a lot more space than reading a short story for English or French class. If they don't have room on other surfaces, you may have to temporarily give up the use of the kitchen or dining room table. Sometimes kids like to work on the floor. Try to give them that space, if necessary.
2. Lighting is crucial to good vision and alertness. If your student is right-handed, the light should come from the front left; if your student is left-handed, the lighting should come from the front right. Try to make lighting and their space comfortable.
3. List all the math words you use. You will be amazed how many there are: dozen, ratio, proportion, addition, measure, divide, length, hour, half, quart, o'clock. Among the members of your family group, there will be well over a hundred – without including the names of the numbers! Keep a poster on a wall where your kids or anyone else can add to the list.

**NOTICE  
OF AN INITIAL SITE  
INVESTIGATION AND  
TIER II CLASSIFICATION**

**RELEASE TRACKING NUMBER  
1-20847**

**ROUTE 8 SB MM 6.2  
SANDISFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS**

Pursuant to the Massachusetts Contingency Plan (310 CMR 40.0480), an Initial Site Investigation has been performed at the above referenced location. Detections of fuel oil have been observed at this location which is a disposal site (defined by M.G.L. c. 21E, Section 2). This Site has been classified as Tier II, pursuant to 310 CMR 40.0500. Response actions at this Site will be conducted by the potentially responsible parties, who have retained Jeffrey A. Curtis, Licensed Site Professional, to manage response actions in accordance with the Massachusetts Contingency Plan (310 CMR 40.0000).


M.G.L. c. 21E and the MCP provide additional opportunities for public notice of and involvement in decisions regarding response actions at the disposal sites; 1) The Chief Municipal Officer and Board of Health of the community in which the site is located will be notified of the major milestones and events, pursuant to 310 CMR 40.1403; and 2) Upon receipt of a petition of ten or more residents of the municipality in which the disposal site is located, or of a municipality potentially affected by the disposal site, a plan for involving the public in decisions regarding response actions will be prepared and implemented, pursuant to 310 CMR 40.1405.

To obtain more information on this disposal site and the opportunities for public involvement during its remediation, please contact Mr. Jeffrey Curtis, Response Environmental, Inc., 7 Henry Street, Worcester, Massachusetts, 01604 at 978-874-0060.

# Legal Notice of Environmental Clean-Up

Despite the legal verbiage and somewhat frightening detail of the nearby public notice, the facts behind the "Initial Site Investigation" are rather mundane and matter of fact.

The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection requires a site visit to follow up on the September 2018 accident between the A&M Auto tow truck from New Boston and a box truck driving north on Rt. 8 near the Farmington River.

Jeff Curtis of Response Environmental, Inc., of Worcester will visit the accident site and assess the condition of the fuel spill. It was possible that some gasoline or petroleum reached the river or remains in catch basins along the roadway. Curtis will ensure that "everything is going away naturally," in what is termed a "natural attenuation." 

## Select Board Report


Select Board meetings are still being conducted by telephone conference call. This month was a mix of regular business and final changes to the Town budget and Town Meeting warrant items.

We decided to grant a requested second extension for the Yanner Park logging, on condition that the Town Hill Road section be cleaned up first. We set a postponed deadline of August 15 for departments and committees to submit their annual reports – this means that the Town Report Booklet will not be completed in time for the Town Meeting this year.

After spirited discussion with the Fire Department, we will postpone the establishment of an Ambulance Enterprise Fund for one year, after making an agreement with the department to create separate line items for ambulance income and expenses beginning July 1 so that these items can be tracked for an Enterprise Fund budget next year.

We had two more Open Meeting Law complaints from Alex Bowman; we dealt with several complaints about jeep convoys on dirt roads; we received a grant for a new shed at the Transfer Station, which will become a shelter for the attendant and eventually a Swap Shop. (Please note that the Swap Shop is not open at this time.)

We hired a new part-time Transfer Station attendant, Keith Larson, who will also be working part-time at the Highway Department. Town properties will be mowed by Matt McCuin. An Internet hotspot at the Town Hall parking lot is now operational and free to the public.

Town Meeting will be on Saturday, June 20 at the DPW Building; rain date June 27. Town Election is June 22; voting hours are from 2:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. 

*Mark Newman, Chair  
Brian O'Rourke  
George Riley*

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# Eagles as Our Neighbors

By Brigitte Ruthman

The list of predators hungry for pastured chicken dinners is long and somewhat predictable: coyotes, foxes, bears, and predatory birds.

A red-shouldered hawk with a hair-raising screech arrived last year. She dropped down regularly inside the electrified poultry fence with deadly accuracy until thwarted by a \$10 plastic owl named Who. Who is moved daily to keep from revealing the ruse to the hungry hawk that, in any case, shies away from a food fight.

I thought it was the hawk again when one February dawn revealed a statuesque though too-tall figure high up in a white pine tree. But there was no mistaking the stunning contrast of the snow-white hood and tail against the jet-black body.

Gone for 70 years, the iconic American eagle is back.

Normally, eagles prefer areas of open water year-round. Females, which can live 20-30 years, lay a clutch of one to three eggs around the end of February. Incubated for 35 days, the chicks are tended for 10 to 12 weeks, by both parents, before learning to hunt and fly in time for the next winter. Eagles typically take four to five years to reach adulthood, when brown feathers turn to the more distinctive contrast.

Eagles are skilled hunters, able to remain still for long periods of time. With a quick swivel of their head they can pick out the movement of a rabbit or the swirl of a pond perch from up to a mile away. A two-pound rabbit is no match against an eagle's gripping talons and hooked, yellow beak. Chickens too are snatched, leaving only a pile of feathers.

Mankind has not been kind to these emblems of American strength, courage, and freedom. Selected in 1782 as a national symbol by the Second Continental Congress, eagles were first stamped on a 1776 copper coin by patriots of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Eagles were brought nearly to extinction by overzealous use of chemicals and destruction of fragile shoreline ecosystems. By 1963, total U.S. eagle population dropped to 487 nesting pairs, victims in large part to the widespread agricultural use of the chemical DDT, which weakened eggshells so severely that chicks couldn't hatch. By 1950, eagles were gone from Massachusetts and Connecticut. DDT was banned by the Endangered Species Act in 1973, when the birds were declared endangered across the U.S.

Restoration began locally in the 1980s when MassWildlife and others partnered to bring young eaglets from Canada to the Quabbin Reservoir – the primary water source for Boston – where they were raised in cages to familiarize them with their surroundings before being released.

Flourishing once again, they are now fiercely protected. Reclassified as merely threatened in 1995 by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, eagles were removed from the endangered list altogether in 2007. They remain protected by the federal Bald Eagle and Golden Eagle Protective Act of 1940 and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, which bans even harassment of the birds.



Among the eaglets that were banded in the early 1990s was a pair that flew south to the Barkhamsted Reservoir in Connecticut, where the count slowly began ticking up. Massachusetts removed them from a threatened species in 2008 and redesignated them as a species of "special concern" in January this year. Today at least 64 pairs are recorded in Connecticut. Biologists from MassWildlife this spring documented 70 active nests throughout Massachusetts' river systems and inland lakes.

Although unable this spring to reach more suspected nesting sites by boat along the Quabbin Reservoir because of social distancing policies, Biologist Andrew Vitz noted a dramatic increase in newly documented eagle nests. He is confident that 2020 will be a record year for eagle territories, including Sandisfield.


Sightings of the majestic broad-winged raptor are no longer uncommon. Impressive for their sheer size and 6- to 8-foot wingspans, eagles fly overhead like small gliders and can often be seen along the Farmington River system that flows into the Colebrook Reservoir on Sandisfield's southern fringe. They fly the length of the Clam River and the Buck and other Farmington tributaries and circle high above Sandisfield's reservoirs.

When seen, they connect with people on an emotional level.

Vitz said, "More people are getting the thrill of seeing eagles in their own regions and neighborhoods. These birds will continue to expand their range and they acclimate surprisingly well to urban and suburban landscapes."

Biologist Andrew Madden said that eagles seen in the York Lake state forest area are likely descended from a nesting pair just over the state line in Colebrook. Another nest is documented on Big Pond in Otis and more are suspected in the vicinity of Otis Reservoir.

There are hurdles to eagles' continued success. Attracted to roadkill animals, they are at risk of being struck by motor vehicles. Some have turned up with high levels of lead ingested from gunshot game. Shoreline development has limited nesting site options.

But their population is growing, and their human fans are in awe not only of their beauty but how close we came to losing them. In a year of so much challenge, seeing eagles soaring once again restores hope in resiliency. 

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# Police/Fire/EMS Logs

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## POLICE

### March and April 2020 Incidents

Police statistics for March and April were unavailable due to clerical staff layoffs at Police Dispatch Center.



## FIRE

### April 2020 Incidents

- April 3. . . . . Fire alarm activation, no fire
- April 3. . . . . Fire alarm activation, no fire
- April 18 . . . . . Fire alarm activation set off by cooking
- April 20 . . . . . Fire alarm activation, set off by water leak
- April 29 . . . . . Illegal outside burn, owner extinguished fire



## EMS

### April 2020 Incidents

- April 1. . . . . Call for lift assistance
- April 2. . . . . Medical call, Tolland, transport to Fairview Hospital, Great Barrington
- April 9. . . . . Medical call, no transport
- April 11. . . . . Medical call, transport to Fairview Hospital
- April 13 . . . . . Medical call, transport to Fairview Hospital
- April 17 . . . . . Medical call, transport to Fairview Hospital
- April 19 . . . . . Medical call, transport to Fairview Hospital
- April 20 . . . . . Motor vehicle accident, New Marlborough, respond to mutual aid
- April 30 . . . . . Medical call, no transport



## The Beaver Pond

Our dog at daybreak.  
See a second photo of the beaver pond on page 18.  
Photos: Suzanne Avery, Otis

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All photos shown are the actual work of C.W.Nelson



# Colebrook Store Closing/But Reopening

By Bill Price

**Bad/Good News:** The Colebrook Store closed its doors May 17, but will reopen mid-June. The Board of Trustees of the Colebrook Preservation Society, the non-profit organization which owns the magnificent 228-year-old building, announced that the store would be back in business with Daniel Wilcox, an experienced chef and restaurant manager, as the store's new operator.

The Times celebrated the store in our Jan/ Feb issue as one of the few general stores surviving in the Berkshires – we extended the Berkshire boundaries to embrace the store which is in fact just south of the Massachusetts border.

In a note to residents in early May, Jodi Marinelli, who had operated the store since December 2014, expressed her appreciation to customers for “the conversations, the laughs, the memories, and the kind words,” adding that she and her family had been “blessed with the care for this wonderful

landmark we call the store and are sad to leave.”

A graduate of Johnson & Wales University in Rhode Island, one of the nation's top culinary schools with business and liberal arts programs, Daniel Wilcox has managed restaurants, served as a private chef, and honed his hospitality and management skills as Front of the House Manager at Bacaro, one of Providence's fine Italian restaurants. After completing a part-time stint at Starbucks, he knows how to whip up a perfect latte.

Daniel plans to build on what “Jodi created and steadily add new featured items,” basing a series of take-out hot meals on family recipes and those he has perfected through his professional career. He will feature store-made baked goods, a full menu of burgers and hot dogs, and a robust selection of pizzas, as well as providing a showcase area to local artisans.



Daniel Wilcox at the Colebrook Store.

Ed Lord, president of the Colebrook Preservation Society said that Daniel “has experience, energy, and a lot of very interesting and sensible ideas for maintaining and expanding on the store's tone and the popularity it achieved with Jodi Marinelli at the helm over the past five years.”



## Sandisfield's New Social Director

Keith Larson, the new manager of the Transfer Station, stands beside the Town's brand-new cardboard crusher. An Otis-based woodsman and logger for thirty-five years who first settled in Sandisfield a few years ago as a laborer with the Highway Department, Keith now oversees the most-visited site in town. “I love talking to people, finding out their life stories,” he tells *The Times*. A most noble sentiment, which all of us will welcome. (Though some of us are very talkative - so maybe beware of what you wish for!)

Photo: Simon Winchester

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historia (Greek) - "Inquiry, knowledge acquired by investigation." The discovery, collection, organization, and presentation of information about past events.

# The Good Old Golden Rule Days

## A SNAPSHOT OF SANDISFIELD SCHOOLS, CIRCA 1840s

By Ron Bernard

In 2010, while researching my book for our town's sesquicentennial, *Sandisfield Then and Now: 1762-2012*, I had the good fortune to meet a fellow researcher, Charlotte Westhead of Amherst, Mass.

For a long time Charlotte has been interested in the histories of ethnic groups who immigrated or moved to Sandisfield and the schools that were so important to them. We shared what we had learned and her contributions were important to the thoroughness and richness of the chapters on ethnic communities and the schools.

She occasionally passes along interesting historical facts and anecdotes she finds about Sandisfield. Recently she sent a gem, a statistical report from *Berkshire County School Returns*, a kind of census for the 1840/41 school year.

*Berkshire County School Returns* turns out to be a fascinating snapshot of our schools as they existed some 180 years ago. Her gift triggered this story of schools in Sandisfield and what happened to those one-room schoolhouses.

### BEGINNING A LOCAL SCHOOL SYSTEM

In 1768, the town established four school districts. It is unclear when the first true schoolhouse opened but it may have been 1773 at the busy Center green, the first of three that were ultimately located there.

The number of grammar schools (called common schools) grew proportionally with the rise in population. Families were large and district boundaries redrawn almost every year. Schooling was available to boys and girls eventually to the 9th grade. Attendance varied according to agricultural cycles.

### THE 1840s, SANDISFIELD'S GOLDEN AGE

SANDISFIELD, . . .	
{ (1) Population, 1,464. Valuation, \$371,500 00.	Number of Public Schools, 14.
No. of Scholars of all ages in all the Schools—In Summer, 305—In Winter, 401.	Average attendance in the Schools—In Summer, 203—In Winter, 265.
No. of persons between 4 and 16 years of age in the town, 357—No. of persons under 4 years of age who attend School, 15—No. over 16 years of age who attend School, 47.	Aggregate length of the Schools, 106 mths. 21 days.—In Summer, 57 7/8—In Winter, 49 1/4.
No. of Teachers in Summer—M. —F. 13—No. of Teachers in Winter—M. 7—F. 7.	

#### School population, 1840/41

population was 1,464 which compares to about 900 full-time residents today.

This was a period of furious new construction, especially in and around the Montville section. New schoolhouses – plain, mostly one-room wooden buildings with ells of various sizes – were constructed all over town.

One house size, two-story structure stood next to the Baptist church (now the Arts Center) on Hammertown Road in Montville. A recently constructed low stone wall marks the outline of the building. An historical marker tells its story.

According to the school census of 1840/41, fourteen public schools operated in two sessions, summer and winter. "Scholars" of all ages included 300 that summer (average attendance, 203) and 401 in winter (average attendance, 265).

Children of standard school age (four to 16 years old) numbered 357. In addition, there were 15 children "under the age of four" and 47 "over the age of 16" who attended school to some degree. Children comprised almost 30 percent of the town's population.



Montville School (District 13), c.1906. Stood next to what is now the Sandisfield Arts Center. Demolished, 1961. Photo: DeMars collection.

School attendance was not compulsory in Massachusetts until 1852 (for ages 8 to 14).

In summer, 1840, there were 13 female teachers. For winter session there were seven females and seven males, the latter typically better educated farmers from the area who sought even meager compensation during the off season. Male teachers would sometimes reside in lonely winter existence in their schoolhouses. Adult males were more essential then to impose order because "large boys" as they were called could be disruptive.

Girls as young as 16 could be teachers. In the 1840s most were daughters of local farmers. Somewhat later young women teachers who lived away from their families customarily boarded, on a rotation basis, with families that had children in their school. Lengths of stay were prorated depending upon how many children a host family sent to school.



Sandisfield Center School (District 16), c. 1906; burned 1938, not replaced. Photo: DeMars collection

*Ancient school-houses were not built for comfort. Their seats were high and narrow, their desks awkward and inconvenient. Their chimneys were large and fireplaces broad and smoky, and the floors in front of them were sure to be worn with the tramp of uneasily-seated children, who in winter went up to them in never-ending procession. The worst used place in the whole district was the school-room. Youngsters hewed and hacked at their desks with vengeful persistence. The plastering of the walls was covered with rude inscriptions and the ceiling overhead bespattered with ink and paper squibs. Almost every teacher had his or her profile in it, done in tolerable outline by roguish fingers. No law had force against this custom. The scribbling of the school-room had become second nature to the scholars.*

I like to think that our later 19th century pupils did not destroy their desks out of respect for the fact that their beautiful new desks were manufactured

DeMars Collection photos used with permission,  
Great Barrington Historical Society

in their home town, at the “Old Red Shop” in Roosterville, New Boston, by O. D. Case & Co. Made with care with local wood and forged iron, several of the Case company desks survive in private homes.

### WHAT HAPPENED TO THE SCHOOLHOUSES?

Over time probably two dozen school buildings including replacements were in use in Sandisfield. Today only five of them survive, including four that date to the 1840s era. Three have been converted as residences, one is an adjunct building (New Boston Firehouse No. 1) and one, probably the smallest of them all, is still in near original condition and location on Cold Spring Road. This building has been certified as eligible for recognition on the National Register of Historic Places.



*Beech Plain North School (District 9), 1913.  
Now a private residence on Cold Spring Road; eligible for the  
National Register of Historic Places.  
Photo: Nancy Rowley*



*West New Boston School (District 4), 1937.  
Now private residence. Situated on Silverbrook Road  
perpendicular to the Town Highway department complex.  
Photo: Sandisfield Historical Society*



*East New Boston School (District 5), c. 1906.  
After closure, building was incorporated into the New Boston  
firehouse. Served as Hq. American Legion Post  
No. 456, 1983-2015. Photo: DeMars collection*



*South Sandisfield School (District 14), c. 1910s postcard image.  
Building moved and converted to a residence,  
South Sandisfield village center.*

Only one structure from the first period still stands, in the old Northwest District at the intersection Hubbard Road and West Street. Believed to date to the 1770s, the former West Street School is one of the three which were converted to private homes.

In 1950, a consolidated school informally known as “New School” opened on Sandisfield Road, grades K through 6. Over the next 50 years, due to population fluctuation, the building was either overcrowded or under-utilized. The New School closed in 1999 when it was consolidated into the Farmington River Regional School District in Otis and Sandisfield school children have been bused there ever since. The former New School was converted into the Town Hall Annex.

Still above the front door, facing Sandisfield Road (Rt. 57), is the true name of the place, carved in marble, faintly visible: SANDISFIELD SCHOOL.

Sandisfield’s 237-year history of town-managed education was a rich tapestry of community effort. Sandisfield natives over age 75 can recall their time in a one-room school, and those who followed in the New School building. Most of them remember fondly their intimate country school and caring teachers. Local schools were very important in the life of this community including its identity, family connections, and vitality.

At least some of the old schoolhouses survive, bittersweet reminders of another time and way of life.

For more about the history of Sandisfield schools, see *Sandisfield Then and Now*, pp. 110-17. 📖

### Short-Cuts to School

For young children, early one-room schoolhouses were supposed to be within walking distance of their home, but in early Sandisfield that rule was aspirational. Children in rural New England walked long distances on poor surfaces including short-cuts through private farmland to reach their schools. Some of these paths evolved by the 19th century into distinct trails. If included on county maps of the day they could become “grandfathered” as public ways. Even if no longer in use the tracks are protected under permanent easements in deeds, much to the surprise of some new landowners, especially developers. If you know of any of these in Sandisfield, please contact me through The Times.

### Architect Who Assisted in Design of the Sandisfield School Dies

Quentin W. Sizer of Westfield, a partner with his architect father in a firm noted for “building large scale school models,” including one of the Sandisfield School which was exhibited at the Westfield Athenaeum, died May 2, 2020.

# Who Brings You This News?

## NOW HEAR THIS!

By Bill Price

*In honor of our 10th decade of bringing the news to Sandisfield, we'd like to present the first of a series of profiles of 'Who's Who in bringing you The Times every month.*

Without Laura, no one in Sandisfield would know where to go or when.

Since 2013, Laura Rogers-Castro has volunteered as editor of the Now Hear This! column in The Times which lists events going on in Town and a few neighboring villages.

A resident of Sandisfield for over 20 years, Laura lives on Town Hill Road with her husband, Mario. Their son, Mario, 21, is enrolled at Worcester Polytechnic Institute studying computer science. Laura said, "He laments the poor internet in town and does all his online work outside Sandisfield."

Laura was born in Meriden, Connecticut, where her family still lives. She is happy to be so close to her parents and her three siblings.

She has been employed as an outreach educator/naturalist with Connecticut's Department of



*Laura Rogers-Castro on a trail on Mt. Greylock. "One of my favorite places on earth."*

*Photo: Mario Castro*

Energy and Environmental Protection in Hartford for nearly 30 years.

After attending Quinnipiac University for biology and the the University of Tennessee for entomology, she began her career in Tennessee,

where she met Mario. They were married in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

At ConnDEEP, Laura teaches others about nature and leads hikes and programs featuring different nature topics. She is interested in "all things creepy crawly, but especially insects and spiders." She especially loves teaching children, who often like the same things Laura does, the "creepy crawlies."

Our event-gatherer worked as a naturalist and lived for a time on Mt. Greylock, the highest peak in Massachusetts. She participated in sea turtle research in Costa Rica, served as a live arthropod curator at a Tennessee museum, and once held black bear cubs while the mother bear was being studied. What she loves best about Sandisfield are "the land, the wildlife, and the quiet."

The column Now Hear This! was a feature of Vol.1, #1, at the beginning. Initially edited by Liana Toscanini, the column was next edited by Judy Goldsmith who was followed for several years by Susan Van Sickle. Laura became the column's editor in April 2013.

Most events that take place in Town or neighboring communities can be listed in Now Hear This! Laura often calls planners at COA, the New Boston Church, and the Rec Committee and visits town websites to learn about events. She asks that planners forward listings to her at [editor@sandisfieldtimes.org](mailto:editor@sandisfieldtimes.org) or send her a note at PO Box 584, Sandisfield, MA 01255. Be sure to include all information of what/when/where and sometimes /why. 🍷

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# Broadband Push Becomes More Urgent in Area

## FREE INTERNET SIGNAL AT TOWN HALL ANNEX PARKING LOT

By *Thomas Christopher and Seth Kershner*

It's official. Massachusetts residents now have a "phased reopening" plan, suggesting that there is light at the end of the tunnel.

But some aspects of life under restrictions due to Covid-19 pandemic are making things a lot harder. Working from home – whether for a job or for school – can be a real struggle without faster Internet.

To help alleviate that problem at least a bit, Sandisfield opened a free Internet connection at the Town Hall Annex. The network signal can be picked up from your car, in the parking lot to the right of the Town Hall building. This free service is available from now through September 1 or until the MA State of Emergency ends.

Depending on the type of device you have, you will see one or two open network connections. No password is required. Employees and students who must work and learn remotely during the pandemic are welcome to use this location. Proper social distancing is necessary. Please note, the town hall is currently closed to the public.

According to a recent Berkshire Eagle article, residents in Monterey are starting to feel desperate. Last year, the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI) signed an agreement with the town and broadband provider Fiber Connect outlining an action plan to fill gaps in broadband coverage. According to Peter Larkin, chairman of the MBI Board, substantial progress has since been made in resolving a wide range of issues. But Monterey Select Board Chair Steven Weisz says that the pandemic has amplified the need. "The idea that we're here in 2020 and people are sitting in parked cars [outside public hot spots] to log in is pitiful," Weisz told reporter Heather Bellow. Weisz also noted that with children home-schooling and some relying on telemedicine during the state shut down, the gaps in coverage have become critical.

Just south of Sandisfield, the tourist-driven economy of Norfolk has been hit hard by the pandemic. With its Yale Chamber Music Festival cancelled, the town loses an economic engine that brings thousands of summer visitors to its downtown. Even with a broadband network, residents

have trouble working remotely. In a paid advertisement in Norfolk Now, a monthly newspaper, a representative of Northwest ConneCT wrote that the pandemic demonstrated how their town's existing broadband network "is so limited it actually prevents effective working or schooling from home for many." The solution, one long advocated by the non-profit, lies not with broadband but with a regional fiber optic network.

In Sandisfield, the work towards broadband Internet is under contract with Charter Communications of Stamford, Connecticut. As reported in last month's issue of the Times, Charter says it will finish the installation process within 12 months of completing "make ready" work—the preliminary job of inspecting utility poles and obtaining the release of licenses to install cable on those poles. According to Jeff Bye, Chair of Sandisfield's Broadband Committee, the work is progressing slowly. For periodic updates on the Broadband issue, readers are directed to the Town website: [www.sandisfieldma.gov](http://www.sandisfieldma.gov).<sup>17</sup>



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# TRI Continuing to Help Homeowners

## FUNDS STILL AVAILABLE FOR THOSE QUALIFIED

By Dawn Odell Lemon

The program offering modification work for Sandisfield homes is still open for business. Phone calls and emails are being responded to and works in progress are still on track, even if with some modifications to meet coronavirus safety guidelines. So far, so good.

The Resource, for Community and Economic Development (TRI) remains ready to help those qualifying with their housing issues, and funds are still available.

While the office site itself is closed, the staff has been working from their homes since March 24 and will continue to do so until restrictions are lifted by the governor's office.

**Have an application in with us already?** Please review the bullet points below and contact me for more details of what is happening in your particular case:

- Your application has been submitted – but you have not received an acceptance letter: We are working on your qualifications and reviewing your supporting documentation. This process is on a first-come, first-served basis.

- Your application has been submitted and you received an acceptance letter but not an in-home intake with the Rehab Specialist: Site visits will continue to take place for exterior work until the “Stay Home Advisory” is lifted and we can enter your house. We are monitoring these developments closely.
- You have had a visit from the Rehab Specialist: You should be receiving your Work Write Up shortly for your review and approval, and contractor site visits will continue to be scheduled.
- You have approved your WWU, a site visit was conducted, you approved the WWU, and your project went out for bid: We are working with each homeowner to devise a plan to close the loan while observing social distancing. Your program manager will contact you individually to form a plan that will work best for you, your contractor, and the TRI staff to ensure progress and safety.
- Your loan has been closed and construction is ready to begin: Depending on your scope of work, some aspects may proceed (outside work – replacing a roof), some may need to wait (asbestos removal, window replacement – partially indoor work). In either situation, work will proceed only if both parties are comfortable with the plan and progress.

**The Good News?** We still have some funds left in our grants and – especially if you are quarantining at home – this is a great time to contact us for an application. Please contact us at 413-645-3448 or by email at dawn@theresource.org. You'll need to gather supporting documentation for submission (we can come up with creative solutions!). When this virus business passes – and it will – the demand for our program will be stronger and more vital than ever. 🍀

*Sandisfield Graduates from Middle and High Schools*



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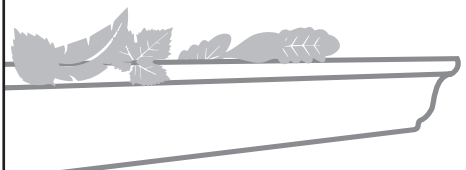
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*Haley Kohler*


**MOUNT EVERETT REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL**  
*Alex Green*  
*Kenneth Zucco*

**MONUMENT MOUNTAIN REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL**  
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# Be a Better Gardener

## GARDENING WITH CHILDREN

By Thomas Christopher

At this time of social distancing, many of our normal family activities have gone by the wayside. However, this enforced togetherness presents an ideal opportunity to focus on gardening with your children or grandchildren.

Some of my happiest memories of fatherhood are of the projects I undertook with my son in our garden. There was, for example, the one I dubbed “garden graffiti.” I purchased a jumbo package of curly cress seed (*Lepidium sativum*) from a mail-order seed company and a bag of lime from the garden center. Then I forked up a bed by the side of our driveway and raked it smooth—my son was in kindergarten at the time and passed that spot every morning on the way to the school bus stop. Dribbling the powdered lime between fingers, I wrote my son’s initials in large letters on top of the raked soil. Any missteps were erased by re-raking the soil. When I had inscribed the initials to my satisfaction, I sprinkled cress seed over all the whitened areas. With a hand cultivator, I gently worked the seed into the soil surface, and then I watered it in.

Curly cress is as close as you can come to instant green. Seedlings began to emerge in a week or so, and within a couple more, the finely cut leaves had made a ruffled, alphabetical thicket. My son, who was learning his letters, recognized the initials for what they were. When he asked me about them, I made a show of looking surprised and announced that I thought the garden was trying to communicate with him. Even at age six he wasn’t so naïve as to believe that, but he kept his eye on that bed and later used the leftover cress seed to plant a pattern of his own.

Gardening with children is one of the primary missions of the Berkshire Botanical Garden. Ordinarily, the educators there pursue a variety of programs, many based at primary or middle schools or public libraries. As Botanical Garden Director of Education Bridgette Stone testifies, the benefits to the children can be many. Planning and planting a garden can teach not only the benefits to a diet of fresh vegetables but also life skills that children will need to succeed as they mature. Especially in a time of sequestration, when children may feel cooped up, an interval in the garden, says Stone, can help them “unplug” and explore the world around them. To assist with this, the Botanical Garden has launched Family Fun Fridays on their Instagram and Facebook pages. And on their website’s Virtual Learning page ([BerkshireBotanical.org/](http://BerkshireBotanical.org/)




*Last summer, Berkshire Botanical Garden’s Farm in the Garden Camp “Harvesters” expanded their know-how in the culinary herb and vegetable garden which supplies food for campers throughout the season.*

virtual-learning) under “Family Fun Fridays,” you can find illustrated instructional PDFs and links to their YouTube videos offering entertaining and educational nature projects.

For an entire online curriculum, parents can turn to KidsGardening.org, the website of the nonprofit Kids Gardening, which is headquartered in Burlington, Vermont. I spoke recently to its Senior Education Specialist, Sarah Pounders. Pounders introduced me to a wealth of online materials, including not only tips for gardening with children of different ages and fun activities to pursue with a child or grandchild, but also a section of the website devoted to lesson plans. These, she pointed out, could be especially helpful to parents who are homeschooling this spring. Besides the fun involved in gardening, Pounders noted, there is an added benefit: Children who don’t perform as well in a classroom setting often come into their own in the garden.

For more information about gardening with children, you can listen to interviews I recorded with gardening pundit Ruth Rogers Clausen, who is currently introducing her two-and-a-half-year-old granddaughter to the craft, and with Sarah Pounders of Kids Gardener. You’ll find these interviews and more at [ThomasChristopherGardens.com/podcast](http://ThomasChristopherGardens.com/podcast).

Be-a-Better-Gardener is a community service of Berkshire Botanical Garden, located in Stockbridge, MA. 

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# Comings and Goings



**WARREN BALL**  
1922-2020

Warren W. Ball, 97, of Windsor, Conn., beloved husband of Dorothy (Pelton) Ball for 76 years, died May 13, 2020. Born in Hartford, son of the late William W C Ball and Margaret (Greer) Ball, he was a life-long resident of Windsor.

The Balls through the Pelton family have been for some 70 years associated with Sandisfield and the historic c.1785 Benjamin Pierce Tavern on New Hartford Road. In 1992, Dorothy Pelton Ball inherited this property, which is arguably the most intact antique house in Sandisfield. It has been their weekend and seasonal home until recently when their son, Roger, assumed responsibility.

The Peltons and Balls have been keenly aware of the historical significance and heritage of this property and assiduously continued the tradition of its preservation established by the only two previous families who had owned it since 1795. They cherished their home's role in the history of the town and its contribution to the character of South Sandisfield. Since 1953, the Balls have celebrated the tradition of sugaring in Sandisfield, continuing to use the original sap house. Warren especially enjoyed this pastime as well as growing blueberries on the grounds, another legacy of agricultural Sandisfield.

Warren graduated from the Loomis School in 1941 and later earned a BA from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy, NY. He served in the US Navy as a LTJG on an LSM in the Philippines during WWII where he took part in three major landings in 1944 for which he received the Pacific Combat Medal. Employed by the Sigourney Tool Company in Hartford and the Smyth Manufacturing Company before starting his own company, Graphic Arts Machinery in Windsor, Warren later represented Blumer Maschinenbau of Switzerland until his retirement.

A quiet, unassuming man, he never called attention to himself. He was a member of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, Washington Lodge #70 AF & AM, Poquonock Volunteer Fire Company, Windsor Historical Society, and Friends of Northwest Park.

Besides his devoted wife, Dorothy, Warren leaves three daughters and a son and many grand-children and great-grandchildren.

A private funeral service with military honors was held at the Elm Grove Cemetery in Windsor.



**MARY A. VESELIC**  
1957-2020

A lifelong resident of Sandisfield, Mary A. Veselic, 62, died at her home on East Hubbard Road on May 11, of complications from lung cancer.

Born at Charlotte Hungerford Hospital in Torrington, August 28, 1957, Mary was a daughter of the late Edward Ryan, II and Mary "Betty" (Skinner) Ryan.

Mary retired after 26 years of service at the Winsted Post Office. She had also worked for Hitchcock Chair in Riverton, Conn.

She enjoyed fishing, playing the card game 9-5, and life and everyone she was with. Mary loved spending time with her family, her extended family, and her friends.

Mary is survived by her husband, Richard T. Veselic; daughter, Brenda L. Carr; son, Justin R. Veselic; two brothers, Billy Ryan and Edward Ryan, III; nieces and nephews and her extended family that called her "mom" and "grandma Mary." She was predeceased by her sister, Carol Kozlowski.

Burial will be held at the convenience of the family. Montano-Shea Funeral Home, Winsted, has care of the arrangements. Tributes to Mary and her family have been left at the online guestbook at [montano-shea.com](http://montano-shea.com).



## THE SPIRIT

The water, land and sky reflect the earthly day,  
We are all enduring.  
Come here for peace, quiet and harmony.  
Sing to the land, sky and trees,  
As nature's microphone amplifies your voice,  
While wild birds sing back in their own language  
Each time someone sings  
A song to them.

*Mary Ann Gacek  
Cold Spring Road*

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## ROBIN THEW 1925-2020

Robin Nada Thew, mother of Katie Rocco of Rood Hill Road, died April 30 in Canaan, CT. Born in Westport to a creative family on November 30, 1925, Robin's father, Robert Garrett Thew, was a sculpture and painter who worked primarily in the advertising industry; her mother, Elsie Green Thew, was a journalist. Robin was welcomed into a world of inspiration and ingenuity that stayed with her all her life.

At a young age, Robin showed outstanding artistic abilities. At the age of 12 she was selected by Good Housekeeping to design several patterns for its issues. Throughout high school, Robin was recognized for her artistic abilities, which seemingly knew no bounds – from sewing, to sculpting and painting. Her imagination inspired ingenious caricatures and magical scenes.

She attended the Art Students League in New York City after which she worked with several clothes designers, eventually designing windows for stores such as Macy's and Bloomingdales. She was married in the late 1940s and had two boys, Michael and Gary Lincoln.

During the 1960s, Robin was introduced to Gene Moore, the famous window dresser at Tiffany & Co., who commissioned her to design five separate windows for their stores to showcase their jewels. Robin crafted a mischievous gang of mice robbers from papier-mâché as decorations. Her work was voted best windows on Fifth Avenue that year, much to the chagrin of its competitor Cartier, whose letter in response to the windows as using "irresponsible subject matter" brought even more onlookers to the Tiffany windows.

Robin subsequently designed three additional windows for Tiffany's, which inspired a children's book, in collaboration with her daughter Katie Rocco, about a little girl's love of horses. She continued to create remarkable artwork such as designs for Milton Bradley, in 1971, for Little Orphan Annie, The Cat in the Hat, and Charlie Chaplin dolls. The Chaplin doll was endorsed by Charlie himself and won the award for Doll of the Year.

Her soft sculpture displays in Westport and New Canaan stores like Pic-a-Pants and the Remarkable Book store were widely loved and when she moved to Northwest Connecticut her work's legacy grew as her paintings adorned the walls of shops like the Salisbury Antique Center, Chiwalla, April 56, and Four the Birds Gift Shop. Her whimsical animal creations were widely recognized and admired.

For the past eleven years, Robin lived in Geer Nursing and Rehabilitation in Canaan where she continued to produce artwork until last year.

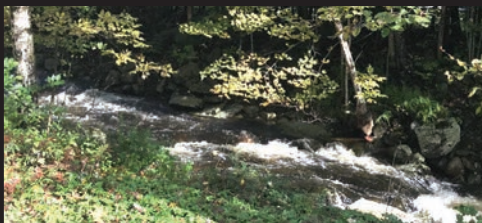
Her greatest love was making others smile with her artwork.

*Contributed by Katie Rocco*

## Riverfront House in Sandisfield FOR SALE • \$200K

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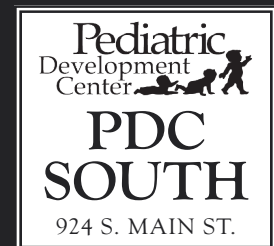
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## Letters to the Editors

### LANDFILL MEMORIES, GOOD STUFF

I was so pleased to see that the town has created an official location for people to exchange things. I have been a summer resident of the town but am now only a landowner and taxpayer who longs to be there, if only in spirit.

I don't know when the dump site was started or selected but my connection to the dump began when my father bought the cabin on the big hill across the road from the dump and above the lower entrance of the cemetery in 1946 after our cabin on West Street had burned down. At that time, I was about 11-years-old.

There was not much traffic on the road in those days so I could hear when someone stopped at the landfill to drop something off. That was one of my favorite things to investigate.

I have some very special things that I retrieved over the years. One of my best finds was when someone left a series of World War II military items: a web belt with a canteen, a GI sleeping bag and the most prized item, a fatigue jacket with a large yellow "Seabee" emblem on the back. I wore that jacket proudly for many years and passed it on to my sons. I could never understand why someone would ever throw something like that out after serving our country in the Army.

I spent summers at the cabin until the fall of 1955 when I joined the Army myself. After that my parents Lou and Lee stayed there until they moved to Mill River. I have many more memories of the landfill although those early days it was more of a landslide down toward Lower West St. and became a hazard that was soon to collapse, not to mention the fires that people would set at times.

I look forward to reading The Sandisfield Times every month and being a supporter of the town.

*Peter Wool  
West Street*

### GREAT JOB!

Thank you for doing what you do. We have been meaning to donate for as long as you have been at it. Keep up the great job!

*The Newsomes  
N. Beech Plain Road*

## CLASSIFIED ADS

**Canoe for sale:** Old Town Discovery 158 w/ paddles and 2 life jackets. Contact Tom at 258-4537 or by email to togara\_5@hotmail.com

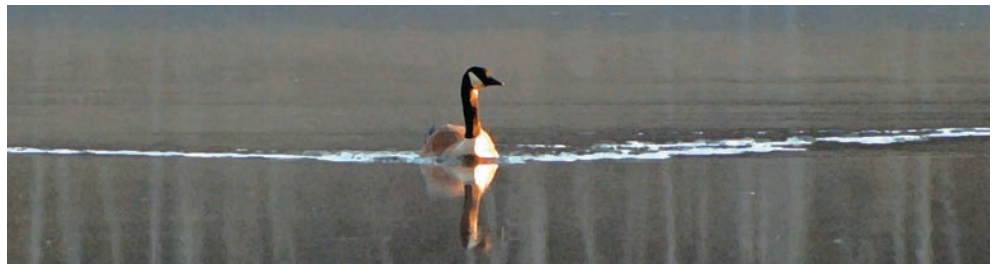
**Help Wanted:** Full-time positions New Boston Inn. Waitstaff, dishwasher, kitchen help. Call Barbara at 413 258-4477, Thursday-Monday. 🍷

*The Sandisfield Times is your community newspaper. Depending on space we will print classified ads, free for 30 words or less. Send to editor@sandisfieldtimes.org or via mail to PO Box 584, Sandisfield, MA 01255.*

## mRNA

The urgency of life has stopped.  
The go, go, go  
Has become stay, stay, stay  
A single strand on mRNA  
Has turned civilization  
Into disarray  
It's an isolation virus.  
It's a stay at home virus.  
It's a keep your distance virus.  
It's a "don't go out to dinner" virus.  
It's the only way to SLOW IT DOWN.

*Karen Garfield  
New Hartford Road*



*The Beaver Pond. Suzanne Avery, Otis*

### Aggressive Bear (or Bears) con't from p. 2

three people yelling at it "the bear continued trying to climb in the barn windows and doors." Catherine wrote, "It finally walked down toward the river between us and the library." Her remaining sheep, she said, were terrified and hoarse from their own screaming.

About forty friends and neighbors posted comments on ConnectSandisfield, one remarking that it might have been "the same bear that got to Ed Deming's goat a few weeks ago. Broke it's horn off but the goat lived to tell the tale."



*Maybe not the sheep killer, but this bear roamed West New Boston in early May.*

*Photo: Amanda Leavenworth, ConnectSandisfield*



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# NOW HEAR THIS!

*Edited by Laura Rogers-Castro. Please send notices for Now Hear This! to editor@sandisfieldtimes.org.*

## JUNE EVENTS

**Please note: Be sure to check to see if the events are still scheduled as listed due to the uncertainty of the Covid-19 pandemic**

**COA Wednesday Weekly Gatherings** from 11:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the Council on Aging, basement level at the Sandisfield Town Hall Annex on Rt. 57. Cancelled until further notice.

**Chair Yoga** on Wednesdays at 2:00 p.m. at the Council on Aging, basement level at the Sandisfield Town Hall Annex on Rt. 57. Free. Cancelled until further notice.

**New Boston Church Service** at the New Boston Congregational Church, Rt. 57, will be back as soon as it is safe to do so.

**Tai Chi/Qigong Class**, Council on Aging. Innovative approach to resuming class. Beginning Thursday, June 4, at 11 a.m. to noon, join Barbara Penn's class online via ZOOM. Please join us. Contact Barbara at barbarapenn@centurylink.net and follow a link she will send you to join the class.

**Foot Care Clinic**, Wednesday, June 19, basement, Town Hall Annex on Rt. 57. Expected to begin at 9:00 a.m. Sponsored by Council on Aging. Please call Linda Riiska for

information and an appointment, 258-4816.

**Sandisfield Annual Town Meeting** on Saturday, June 20 at 10:00 a.m. at the Department of Public Works building on 3 Silverbrook Road. Rain date: June 27. Every registered voter may attend, speak, make parliamentary motions, and vote. Non-voters are invited to attend and speak at Town Meetings but may not make parliamentary motions or vote. Masks are necessary to participate.

**Sandisfield Town Election** on Monday, June 22, from 2:00 to 7:00 p.m. at the Old Town Hall on 3 Silverbrook Road. Disposable pencils will be available to mark ballots. Masks are necessary to participate. In addition, the State has given municipalities permission to vote early from home. See related article beginning on page 1.

### EVENTS/OUTDOOR FUN IN OTHER TOWNS

**Naumkeag** on 5 Prospect Hill Road in Stockbridge announces its grounds are scheduled to be open by reservation in a controlled manner to limit overcrowding. For current information, please visit thetrustees.org.

**Ashintully Gardens** on Sodem Road in Tyringham is open on Wednesdays and Saturdays from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. Explore the beautiful grounds and remains of an old mansion. Social distancing guidelines must be followed. Free.

**Bartholomew's Cobble** on 105 Weatogue Road in Sheffield is open for hiking 7 days a week. Social distancing guidelines must be followed. \$5.

### ONLINE EVENTS

**Otis Recreation Center offers online fitness classes**, including Cardio Blast with Heather Rufo Bilotta on Mondays at 9:00 a.m., Chair Yoga with Connie Wilson on Wednesdays at 10:00 a.m., and Mat Yoga with Connie Wilson on Fridays at 11:00 a.m. Visit townofotisma.com for more information.

**Stockbridge Library Events Song & Rhyme Time with Miss Jenney** on the Stockbridge Library Facebook Feed. Also, special programs, including a Virtual Speaker Series and Online Poetry Readings through Zoom Meetings. Visit stockbridgelibrary.org for more information and the schedule.

**The Trustees of the Reservation offers virtual fun** for all ages, including videos on Gilded Age history, virtual tours of properties, poetry, and more. Please visit thetrustees.org for more information.

### VIRAL

Begin again, Finnegan.

The world has fallen down in patches.  
Not so much as a love affair  
Will hold forth on these sad afternoons.

It's no wonder people weep  
When bells don't ring  
And sugar sleeps.

*Val Coleman  
West New Boston*

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### CORRECTIONS

The front-page article of our May issue misspelled the surname of the business manager for Farmington River Regional School District. He is Eric Jesner, not Jensen.

Gary Leveille, author of last month's article on glacial erratics, was misidentified as president of the Great Barrington Historical Society. He is currently the society's archivist.

Also, in May, a story about extending the property tax deadline cited the incorrect URL for the Town's website. It is, in fact, www.sandisfieldma.gov.

# THE SANDISFIELD TIMES



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*The Times is grateful to readers who  
have donated in May.*

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*James Chague*

*Susan Diamond*

*Jay & Lorraine Greenwall*

*Patricia Manion*

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*William Pinney*

*Lynn Rubenstein*

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*Simon Winchester*



The Sandisfield Times is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization staffed by volunteers from the Sandisfield community and funded by individual and business sponsors. Its mission is to connect the community through reliable, regular, and relevant information. The paper is published 11 times each year, with a joint January-February issue and monthly issues thereafter.

Donations of any amount are needed to ensure the continuation of this newspaper. Please send checks to: The Sandisfield Times, P.O. Box 584, Sandisfield, MA 01255 or donate online at our website: [www.sandisfieldtimes.org](http://www.sandisfieldtimes.org). Donations to The Sandisfield Times are deductible under section 170 of the Federal Income Tax Code. Donations do not include subscriptions. Subscriptions do not qualify as donations.

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Copies are also available in Otis at Berkshire Bank, Katie's Market, Papa's Fuel, Otis Library, Otis Rec Center, Farmington River Diner, Otis Poultry Farm, Otis Woodlands (May-September), Knox Trail Inn, and the Laundromat. Locations in Monterey include the Library and the Roadside Café. Also available at the Southfield Store in New Marlborough, at the general store and post office in Colebrook, and at the library of NW Connecticut Community College in Winsted. Back issues are available for purchase.

The Times can be mailed to your home by paid subscription (see form below left) or you can read it (free) online as a PDF document at [www.sandisfieldtimes.org](http://www.sandisfieldtimes.org).

We welcome submissions, comments and suggestions, including letters to the editor by the 15th of the month prior. We may edit for space, style or clarity. We will try to publish Public Service Announcements when we have room, with priority given to Sandisfield organizations. No portion of the The Sandisfield Times may be reproduced without permission.

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obituary and family announcements, photos (600 dpi if possible)  
and advertisement queries to [editor@SandisfieldTimes.org](mailto:editor@SandisfieldTimes.org).*