



THE SANDISFIELD TIMES

Friends Holds a Fundraiser

THE BEGINNING OF A LONG TRADITION

By Times Reporters

A little over four months ago, a group of community-minded residents founded Friends of Sandisfield Fire Department, a nonprofit dedicated to our Fire Department and EMS.



Overhead with View
Heart & Soul Summer Social as seen from the second floor of the newest barn at the Sandisfield Orchard. Check out that view! Photo: Josie Miner

Cont'd on p.3



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Meet Derek Boomsma, New DPW Chief

HE'S OFF TO A GREAT START

By Ron Bernard & Bill Price

Small towns like Sandisfield often struggle to maintain good roads and find and retain employees to keep them that way. Many factors, including the pool of qualified and motivated people, job satisfaction, and perceived better prospects elsewhere contribute to high turnover and instability.

Since 2015 Sandisfield has had four DPW heads as well as periods with interim supervision. Lack of management continuity has affected planning and communication. It has also resulted in staff turnover, operational inefficiencies, and deferred maintenance. And lost opportunities in the form of state grants.

But there is good news. The new boss, only ten months into the job, is turning things around.

People are taking note. One frustrated resident said simply, “He returns phone calls.” That may seem like a small thing but in terms of management style, it is both revealing and refreshing.

We wish Derek well because if everything goes according to plan, Sandisfield roads may have a very different look and feel and be something to be proud of.

Last month The Times had a chat with our affable new DPW Superintendent, Derek Boomsma. Following is the paraphrased interview.



DPW Superintendent Derek Boomsma.
Photo: Bill Price

Cont'd on p.4



Make Way for Ducklings

Alec Blume, of the bridge house near the Library, caught this family of Common Mergansers swimming upstream behind his home. In a post on ConnectSandisfield/Facebook, he wrote, "The first time I checked, there were sixteen ducklings."

Letter from the Editor

A NEW LOOK FOR THE TIMES

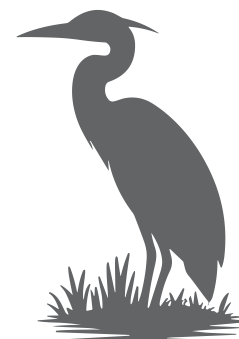
By Bill Price, Editor

You may have noticed that we've done a little face-lifting. We've changed the masthead and opened the typeface a bit, hoping to make our paper more welcoming and gentler to read. We're a home-town paper after all, and our face ought to reflect the community we represent.

Formerly our masthead was anchored by the state seal of the Commonwealth – dignified, official, and as cheerful as a jury summons. It served us well since our founding in 2010, sixteen years ago. But it seemed time for a new look.

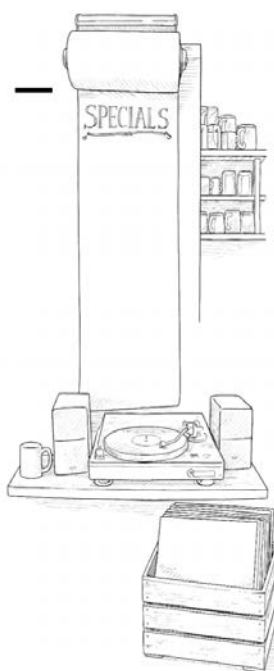
Our motto was Reliable, Regular, Relevant. That was partly correct. Over time we certainly made enough errors to question the notion of Reliable. We certainly were Regular — eleven issues a year for sixteen years, never missed one, and still chugging along. And we tried to be Relevant; sometimes we were and sometimes not; relevance is in the eye of the reader.

Our new masthead, with its airier typeface and the "Welcome to Sandisfield" sign, feels more like the paper we want to be – and more like the town we cover: warm, open, glad you stopped by. 



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food ♦ coffee ♦ community

FoSFD Holds a Fundraiser

Cont'd from p.1

Just days ago, on July 25, FoSFD, the new nonprofit dedicated to our Fire Department and Emergency Medical Services, hosted its first-ever fundraiser, Heart & Soul.

The nonprofit aimed to raise enough money to purchase 15 Automatic External Defibrillators (AEDs) that would be placed in public places and to train at least 15 percent of Town residents in basic CPR and in the use of the portable AEDs. By achieving both of these objectives, our Town would be designated as a HEARTSafe Community.

When you consider Sandisfield's size in terms of mileage and our aging population, we can greatly increase the odds of saving a heart attack victim. Our EMTs now respond within minutes, but having defibrillators strategically placed around town and people who know how to use them could be critical when every minute counts.



Parking Worked Fine

Cars and pickups lined both sides of New Hartford Road for about a quarter of a mile.

Photo: Bill Price

At Sandisfield Orchard

The fundraising event was hosted at one of the Town's jewel destinations, Sandisfield Orchard. Owner Emily Melchior (recovering from a broken leg) and Calvin Rodman gave the Friends committee carte blanche regarding setting up on their beautiful property, including the use of their apple shack and commercial kitchen. Along with their delightful children, Myrna, Walter, and Sara, Emily and Calvin were very gracious hosts.

As attendees entered the orchard, they were met by talented fiddler Eric Martin whose welcoming tunes set the tone for the day. After a warm period of greeting friends and

neighbors, guests feasted on MadJack's BBQ with all the trimmings, followed by prize-worthy apple desserts.

Judges of the apple desserts were three brave men: Ben Hubbard, Dominic Konstam, and Lance Barber. Lance is a well-known actor (George Cooper, Sr., for 7 seasons on the TV series "Young Sheldon"). After his chores at the contest, Lance took selfies with guests and signed autographs.

The apple dessert winners: First place: Diane Caswel Christian. Second place: Karlene Blass. Third place: Janey Snyder. Congratulations to all the bakers!

After the judging, Fire Chief Mike Grillo and Friends President Patricia Hubbard explained the mission of the nonprofit and how all monies donated will be used for community initiatives. Some guests generously donated on the spot.

After the speeches, one of Sandisfield's own firefighters, Tom Curwen, donned his kilt and played the bagpipes.

Friends thanks our many volunteers, including members of the Fire Department who helped set up and break down.

Figures are still being calculated and will be reported in the next issue of The Sandisfield Times. We can, however, confirm that just over 230 people attended, including one woman who arrived horseback.

As Craig Storms summed it up in his response to a post by Christine Nadelman on Connect Sandisfield/Facebook about Heart and Soul, "Beautiful day. Beautiful event. Lucky us."



Eric Martin is a fiddler and staff member at Gould Farm who entertained folks as they arrived to the big event.
Photo: Richard B. Migot



Apple Dessert Contest judges Ben Hubbard, actor Lance Barber, and Dominic Konstam took their job very seriously. *Photo: Richard B. Migot*

Meet Derek Boomsma, New DPW Chief
Cont'd from p.1

Who are you?

I live in Becket where my family has been for generations. Before coming here, I owned a general construction company. We had projects all over South County including some in Sandisfield. I am knowledgeable about heavy equipment and the conditions and demands of operating in this area. I am also familiar with recruiting and motivating employees. This job



The DPW complex behind Old Town Hall, the garage and offices, the salt shed, and our V-Shaped Snowplow (retired).

Photo: Bill Price

requires every bit of that experience.

What did you see when you walked in the door?

This is my first job that primarily involves roads, so I wasn't sure what to expect. I thought the department was under performing due to lack of direction. For example, vehicles were in poor condition – a result of improper maintenance scheduling. Also, communication within the department and with Town Hall was poor. On the other hand, the garage is a very good facility and there is a good crew.

What about the roads here?

I drove all over town. The dirt roads were in rough shape. I was surprised at how much mud there was and so many chronic problems.

How will you approach solutions?

Anyone who runs a company understands that survival requires good planning and tracking. Here department planning had been lacking for some time. That is one of my priorities. [Derek displayed a system for tracking current projects and a logbook with neat, detailed notes about everything.] I am also very mindful of the budget. Good planning prevents surprises and over runs which makes the select board's job easier.

I also stress effective communication. I have to say that I am impressed by and grateful to the Select Board and

especially Town Manager Janey Snyder because they recognized my inexperience with municipal functions. They are always available and their advice has always been helpful. DPW is automatically scheduled on the agenda once a month and as needed. This way everyone is prepared, and we have good communication and clear direction.

What will you focus on in the near term?

We have been flat-out concentrating on fixing the equipment, starting with new tires on all the vehicles. Some assets will be retired. As for the roads, people will notice more gravel being applied, especially at mud season. With regard to problems like pot holes, we aim for repairs instead of just patching.

The most urgent situation is the failing twin bridges in West New Boston. Dodd Road and Town Hill Road up to Yanner Park are under design and engineering phases. Another priority is a certain section of South Beech Plain Road which should be redesigned and hard surfaced.

We're paving Silverbrook Road from 57 to Fox Road and paving the Town Hall parking lot this year.

I am committed to address residents' complaints and I invite suggestions. Although I am in the field three-quarters of the time, I will respond to every call as soon as possible.

I devote about ten to fifteen percent of my time to grant research and writing and regular paperwork. We have just been awarded \$250,000 for improvements to South Beech Plain Road and a grant potentially worth up to \$150,000 to fix culverts. I wouldn't call it 'easy money' but there are grants available.

It just takes an effort to reach for them. I do the research and feed the details to Janey and she prepares the narratives. This has worked well. We have six grant proposals under development. Ultimately the plan is to pave more roads. There is an unpaved road grants category at the state that is awarded every other year. We will pursue that.

As for the employees, I will do my best to motivate our team and to keep it staffed at five, including me. Ralph Leavenworth came back as foreman about the same time I started, and we have Dave McQuin, Joe Dieterle, and our terrific new hire, Garrett Hopkins. And I have to acknowledge our office administrator, Connie Cooper, AKA "the boss." And Tim Garcia, our Transfer Station Attendant. It's a great crew.

Asked if there are any regrets about Sandisfield, Derek thought for a moment and said, "The Silverbrook Café is gone. That is sad to see. What good times we had there years ago." 

From *The Berkshire Eagle*, July 1, 2026

How One Town in Berkshire County Brought Its Tax Rate Down

SANDISFIELD IMPROVED ITS FINANCIAL HEALTH AND REDUCED THE LOCAL TAX BURDEN.

By Stephanie Zollshan, *The Berkshire Eagle*

Reprinted with permission.

Eighteen Berkshire County towns saw average single-family tax bills rise by more than \$1,000 between fiscal 2020 and 2026, with Great Barrington up more than \$2,000, according to state data.

In contrast, Sandisfield's average tax bill fell during the same period.

In fiscal 2020, the average single-family tax bill was \$3,590 — six years later it dropped by \$101.

The estimate for fiscal 2027 is \$3,726, an increase attributed to changes to the fire department.

Town officials say the savings come from a series of changes that ranged from renegotiating a regional school district agreement and adopting a split tax rate to overhauling emergency service operations and

finding efficiencies in day-to-day municipal spending.

"We're really proud of where we're at and what we've been able to accomplish in the last couple of years," Town Manager Janey Snyder said.

The progress comes after a tumultuous period for the town that included public safety controversies, payroll fraud investigations, leadership disputes and a butt-dial lawsuit.

Through the controversies, town officials have taken a closer look at how departments operated and where taxpayer dollars were being spent.

School assessments are among the largest expenses facing any

Berkshire County town, and one of Sandisfield's biggest savings came from renegotiating its regional school district agreement with Otis.

"That was the angle — can we get them to understand that and give us a break," Select Board Chair Steve Seddon said. "The leadership there was pretty hesitant initially. It's a big deal to try to change an agreement that was solid."

Sandisfield officials threatened to pull out of the district and send their students to other public schools if the amended agreement didn't pass. For fiscal 2026, the agreement raised Otis' average single-family tax bill by about \$36 per year while lowering Sandisfield's by more than \$300, saving the town about \$318,300.

"Ultimately, the School Committee was successful in renegotiating the RDA that got the assessment down," Seddon said. "I think it was more that people were afraid of change, but they're good partners, they wanted to see it continue, so that was a big part of it."

The town also adopted a split tax rate beginning in fiscal 2025, shifting a greater share of the tax burden

Cont'd on p.6



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**For blueberry season we are open
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sandisfieldorchard.com

How One Town in Berkshire County Brought Its Tax Rate Down
Cont'd from p.5

onto commercial and personal property owners while lowering it for residential taxpayers.

"The idea was that by doing this, we lowered the cost for the senior population," Seddon said.

The change was not without consequences. The town's largest pipeline company saw its tax bill increase by more than \$100,000, and other businesses also absorbed higher costs. The tradeoff is the reason some communities choose not to adopt a split rate.

The town also found savings by restructuring municipal operations, particularly within its public safety departments and Department of Public Works.

After years of disputes and controversy involving the fire and police departments, the new fire chief, Michael Grillo — who has an ongoing personal tax fraud case in Connecticut — found ways to bring in missed income opportunities. One of the most significant changes came in the ambulance service.



A revamped billing system recovered roughly \$350,000 in revenue that had previously gone uncollected because of billing issues. The town also increased the number of non-emergency medical transports, creating an additional source of revenue while maintaining a 100 percent emergency response rate.

Meanwhile, the Department of Public Works reduced costs by performing more maintenance in-house rather than relying on outside vendors.

"Now we have a DPW super who's down there, and the guys are doing their own maintenance and upkeep, and it also gives you a better finger on the pulse of what your equipment's doing, so I think it's really a group effort of a lot of different people chipping in to work at all those different parts," Seddon said.

With those savings in place, Seddon said town staff pay has increased by more than 30 percent since 2021.

"Everybody in Town Hall is paid more based on the realities," he said. "It's not like we were taking money out of one person's pocket to make the budget lower; it was more that once

you really dissected the budget, there were things that just didn't need to be in there, and there were efficiencies that weren't being sought after."

Those efficiencies included reevaluating contracts and vendor relationships rather than continuing to use outside services simply because the town had always used them.

Officials acknowledge that major investments will still be needed in the coming years and that taxes are unlikely to remain flat forever. But they hope the changes made over the past several years will allow future increases to be more gradual and predictable.

"It's just a group effort where everybody's just trying to find ways to be efficient now," Seddon said. "We're just really lucky that we have that dynamic in town, and I'm looking forward to staying on the path that we are. I'm anticipating that eventually we will see more of an increase, just as nothing's getting cheaper, unfortunately." **ST**

**SANDISFIELD AVERAGE
SINGLE FAMILY TAX BILL**

Fiscal Year	Tax Bill
2027	\$3,726
2026	\$3,489
2025	\$3,629
2024	\$3,791
2023	\$3,643
2022	\$3,654
2021	\$3,603
2020	\$3,590





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Open Space Plan Survey

YOUR RESPONSE IS IMPORTANT

By Times Reporters

This is the first time Sandisfield has participated in the State's Open Spaces program.

A local steering committee is working with the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) to prepare a plan for Sandisfield's open spaces that will include recreation opportunities, conservation, and public enjoyment. The plan will be completed by early next year and submitted to the State.

Sandisfield is a small town which means every response carries weight. The committee is counting on you because the more individuals and households respond, the more reliable the data and the better the decision-making.

The first and most important step is to gather residents' and stakeholders' opinions, preferences, and suggestions about potential opportunities.

The Commission has developed an online survey based on experiences in other towns. It takes only about ten minutes to complete. A robust public response is crucial to this plan. Everything in the Plan flows from the opinions, needs, and wishes expressed by residents.

How you can help to realize your vision.

Take the survey right away, today if possible.

It is easy to do. A flyer with a QR code has been inserted in this issue. Simply scan the QR code and it will take you to the survey.

Or the questionnaire can be accessed by going to the website: www.surveymonkey.com/r/SNDOSRP.

Also, there is a public computer at Town Hall, and staff members ready to assist. Come in any time during regular hours. But please do this soon.

There is a place at the conclusion for verbatim comments including suggestions. These are highly encouraged and much appreciated. 

See the insert
with this month's
issue to respond
to the Open Space
Survey.

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FISH & CHIPS
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KELLIOKE KARAOKE
AUG 5TH & 21ST 8PM

SPINDLE!
MUSIC BINGO
AUG 10TH & 24TH 6PM

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**CAR
& BIKE
MEET**
MONDAYS
at 6PM

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TRIVIA
EVERY
THURS
7PM

KNOX HAPPENINGS

AUG 1ST ACOUSTIC THUNDER 8PM

AUG 7TH DAVE O MUSIC 6PM

AUG 8TH BRB BLUES 8PM

★ AUG 8TH AMVETS 250TH ★
CELEBRATION PARADE 12PM

AUG 14TH NATE MARTEL 6PM

AUG 15TH CHALK DUST BAND 8PM

AUG 16TH BLUES JAM 2PM

★ AUG 22ND DISCO NIGHT ★
DANCE & COSTUME PARTY 8PM

AUG 28TH TREVOR DAVIS 6:30PM

AUG 29TH BERKSHIRE BAND 8PM



Acclaimed Author to Speak at the Arts Center

By Suzanne OConnell

Do you wonder why the U.S. government is doing so little to combat the growing climate crisis?

Come to the Sandisfield Arts Center on Saturday, August 22, at 10 a.m. to hear Harvard professor **Naomi Oreskes** discuss “How Free-Market Thinking Has Blocked Climate Action—and Other Things We Need.”

Oreskes is a renowned science historian and author/co-author of nine books. Her book *Merchants of Doubt* examines



Professor
Naomi Oreskes

how fossil-fuel interests adopted tactics pioneered by the tobacco industry to sow doubt about the harms of burning fossil fuels.

The Big Myth traces how American businesses spent decades promoting the belief that unregulated markets are inherently beneficial and government action inherently harmful. That powerful idea, Oreskes argues, has helped obstruct meaningful action on climate change and other urgent public problems.

She has accumulated many honors for her work including a Guggenheim Fellowship, the Stephen H. Schneider Award for Outstanding Climate Science Communication, the 2025 Volvo Environment Prize, and election to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Her TED talk, available on You Tube, “Naomi Oreskes: Why We Should Trust Scientists,” has been viewed almost 30,000 times. *Merchants of Doubt* is the basis for a documentary by the same name that is available for streaming on www.youtube.com/watch?v=OuPSNHje4yg.

Visit sandisfieldartscenter.org for tickets. \$20, with limited \$10 tickets for community members.

The American Story in Song At THE ARTS CENTER, AUGUST 29

By Times Reporters

Created for the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, a presentation at the Sandisfield Arts Center Saturday, August 29, at 7:00 p.m., will provide a unique look at American history. Admission is free to all.

Songwriters and musicians, Jon and Li Waterman have performed their music and history programs as the duo “Sultana” in venues throughout New England as part of a series called Live Music Making History Live.

The series was designed to encourage the celebration and exploration of history through music. The program is supported in part by a grant from the Sandisfield Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Mass Cultural Council, a state agency.



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SAT. AUGUST 8 10 AM FREE

STARDUST: THE PERSEIDS ARE COMING!

Astronomer **Carol Ives** helps us delve into the world of star stuff as seen from Earth on Saturday morning. Followed by meteor viewing Wednesday.

WED. AUGUST 12 8:30 PM

THE PERSEIDS ARE HERE!

Join us on the hill behind the Sandisfield Orchard at 8:30 pm to see the Perseids meteor shower. Bring bug repellent, blanket and binoculars if you have them.

SUN. AUGUST 16



**DANIEL MANACHER YOUNG
ARTISTS 2025 & 2026
PRIZE WINNERS**

Opening reception 4-6 PM. Works of the 2025 and 2026 winners of the Daniel Manacher Young Artists Prize. Judges: 2026, Virginia Overton, 2025, Josephine Halvorson. **Closes August 30.**

FRI. AUGUST 21 7 PM

**FOUR FABULOUS FRIDAYS: OPEN MIC
SERIES** (See June 19 listing for description.)

FREE

FREE

DONATION

SAT. AUGUST 22 10 AM \$20

**HOW FREE MARKET THINKING
HAS BLOCKED CLIMATE ACTION
(AND OTHER THINGS WE NEED)**

Book talk with celebrated historian and Harvard University professor **Naomi Oreskes**.

SUN. AUGUST 30 2 PM FREE

**POETRY READING WITH AMY
DRYANSKY AND HANNAH FRIES**

Poet **Amy Dryansky**'s third book, *Ambergris*, is just out. Poet and essayist **Hannah Fries**' new book, *A Forest Language*, is a collection of lyrical essays.

FOR DETAILS, RESERVATIONS, AND UPCOMING EVENTS, PLEASE CHECK OUR WEBSITE. SANDISFIELDARTSCENTER.ORG

NOT your Ordinary Yard Sale!



Fri, Sept 18 9 am - 5 pm

Sat, Sept 19 9 am - 4 pm

Antiques & better quality household & garden items & equipment, furniture, artwork, crafts, jewelry, plants & much more!

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Baked goods, hotdogs, popcorn and beverages available for purchase.

"Ring the Church Bell" for a \$5 Donation

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Proceeds will go towards a new roof for the church!

New Boston Congregational Church,
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To volunteer donate, or for more info,
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www.newbostoncongregationalchurch.org



*** Now seeking donations of items. ***
Call Ron at 413-269-0012,

"Not Your Ordinary Yard Sale" is Back Again

**2ND ANNUAL CHURCH YARD SALE,
SEPTEMBER 18-19**

By Ron Bernard

The New Boston Congregational Church will hold a festive yard sale again this fall, with the proceeds going toward a new roof and repairs to the belfry. The current roof is at least 40 years old and losing shingles. (See our ad to the left.)

Last year's theme, "Not Your Ordinary Yard Sale," lived up to the billing and will be used again for an even better fun time. The sale far exceeded expectations because a generous public donated heaps of items in many categories, so many that first day shoppers had to edge their way through packed aisles and tables. About 200 came during the three days of the sale.

Acclaimed fire performer, the "Dame of Flames," Ali O'Donnell of Boston, will thrill attendees with a free show on Saturday afternoon. Bring the kids.

Planners are asking friends and neighbors to rummage again through their attics, basements, and barns for those wonderful things they will never use and their adult children won't take.

Plants were a hit last year. Gardeners: please donate some beautiful plants for new homes.

For more information or to arrange for a pick up, call Ron Bernard at 413-269-0012/Ronbernard@aol.com, or Steve Hoekstra at 413-335-4656.

Every donation is accepted and appreciated.



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Ticks, Ticks, And More Ticks

THE VAMPIRES OF THE WOODS

By Tom Christopher

It has been quite a year for ticks throughout New England, certainly in my corner of Sandisfield. In late June, for example, when my wife took a visiting friend for a walk on the Yanner Park trail, they each picked ten ticks off their clothes and skin upon their return.

I spend most of my days outdoors in my vegetable garden and little orchard and though that is less favorable habitat for ticks than undisturbed woods, I nevertheless have to remain vigilant. I make a careful survey at night with my wife's help before I go to bed. Even so, I sometimes awaken to feel a tick crawling on me.

In short, ticks and the diseases they may bring with them are having a significant impact on my enjoyment of Sandisfield's greatest attraction, our beautiful landscape. I know a number of people who, because of their fear of ticks, refuse to venture off safe terrain such as sidewalks and short-mown lawns.

In search of a more effective response to this problem, I contacted Dr. Richard Ostfeld of the Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies in Millbrook, New York. Dr. Ostfeld, or Rick as he preferred to be called, has been studying the ecology of ticks and of tick-borne diseases for more than 30 years.

In a conversation that I recorded and subsequently played on my weekly radio program, "Growing Greener," Rick quickly disabused me of some misconceptions.

There are three principal species of ticks in Massachusetts, the black-legged tick, the American dog tick, and the lone star tick. At each stage in their life – larva, nymph, and adult – ticks of all these species use a meal of blood drawn from

some other, usually warm-blooded creature, to fuel its growth and development. In particular, adult females cannot produce the eggs that are the foundation of the next generation, without such a meal.

It is in drawing this blood that the ticks both acquire and transmit diseases. Feeding on an infected animal as a larva or nymph makes the ticks carriers, and when an infected adult female feeds before egg laying, she may transmit the disease to her blood source such as an unfortunate hiker. The diseases vary with the species of ticks and include at least nine different pathogens ranging from ehrlichiosis and Rocky Mountain fever to Alpha Gal Syndrome, which has gained a lot of attention recently because of the allergy to red meats it causes.

The most serious of these diseases by far is Lyme Disease; the Centers for Disease Control estimates that it infected 476,000 Americans last year.

The black-legged tick, the species that transmits Lyme Disease, is often called "deer tick" because that animal is one of its hosts. Like many other people who spend time in the woods, I had noticed that the explosion in the deer population over the last few decades had accompanied a spread of Lyme Disease and I assumed that these two events were linked.

Not so, Rick Ostfeld told me. In fact, it is the white-footed mouse that most often serves as the source of blood and Lyme Disease infections for the black-legged tick.

White-footed mouse populations have expanded throughout our region, according to Rick Ostfeld, as humans have fragmented the local forests through building and development and reduced numbers of mouse predators such as foxes

and owls. By dividing the natural landscape into building lots, we have also separated mouse populations into islands of interbreeding individuals. Once the Lyme Disease bacteria infects one mouse, it tends to become general through that isolated population as the mice are not harmed by that pathogen. This increases the chances of black-legged ticks in the areas becoming carriers and sources of infection to people.

Is spraying your yard with a pesticide to reduce the tick population an effective way to reduce your threat of infection?

According to Rick Ostfeld, it is not. In partnership with Dr. Felicia Keesing of Bard College, he conducted a 5-year experiment in treating whole suburban neighborhoods with either baited boxes that applied a pesticide to the mice within a yard or spraying the yard with a fungus known to be fatal to ticks. Some yards were left untreated to serve as a control and contrast the outcome of a lack of treatment.

What Ostfeld and Keesing found was that although the fungus had little effect on tick populations within a yard, the baited boxes would reduce it by a half. However, the reduction in tick numbers had no significant effect on the chances that human inhabitants would become infected with Lyme Disease.

And, Ostfeld warns, the pesticides commonly used by pest control companies to spray yards for ticks, even the organic ones such as cedar or peppermint oil, also have a negative impact on a variety of other creatures such as pollinators, predacious insect that control pests, and your pets.

Ostfeld said that any effective response to tick-borne diseases would involve not exterminating ticks but rather protecting and treating individual people. He endorsed a measure I have adopted, of wearing clothing treated with permethrin

Cont'd on next page

Cont'd from previous page

when I go out into the woods or fields. He emphasized that we need to focus more on developing and using substances that we can apply to ourselves that will repel or kill ticks when they climb onto us – as any dog owner can testify, such an approach works.

Which prompted me to ask why are there several Lyme Disease vaccines approved for my dog Finn and none for me?

Dr. Ostfeld noted that there had been an effective vaccine for humans available from 1998-2002, but that relatively few people chose to use it and when the public raised the issue (without proof) that it might exacerbate autoimmune arthritis, the manufacturer took it off the market. Pfizer, he noted, is in the final stages of developing a new vaccine which is proving 70 percent effective with no major safety concerns so far but given the current anti-vaccine campaign in the United States, Ostfeld fears that it too will not reach the public.

If readers want to listen to the whole of my conversation with Dr. Richard Ostfeld, they can find it online at podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast 



New Boston Historic District

Welcoming signs at three gateways to the New Boston Village Historic District were installed last month. Locations are on Rt. 57 at the Library, on Rt. 8 southbound at the triangle in front of the New Boston Inn, and Rt. 8 northbound opposite the American Legion. Thanks to Dave McCuin and Joe Dieterle of the DPW for doing an excellent job installing the signs.



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Events at the Library this month.

The Food Pantry at the Library is open during library hours. Donations of food items can be dropped at the Sandisfield Library during those hours.

We want to thank EVERYONE who has graciously donated to our little food pantry. We greatly appreciate all your help and kindness.

Arts & Crafts at the Library this month.

Planning an August event- beach party before the end of the summer. Times and activities to be determined.

Latest additions to the library shelves

ADULT FICTION

The Divorce by Freida McFadden, a fast-paced, psychological thriller that follows Naomi, whose perfect life is shattered by her husband. Naomi becomes dangerously obsessive in her quest to uncover her husband's new girlfriend's secrets.

Mad Mabel by Sally Hepworth. The novel is genre defying, part psychological thriller and deeply moving, a character-centered mystery with a touch of dark humor.

The Things We Never Say by Elizabeth Stout. A high school history teacher plans a life altering event until an accident shifts his perspective.

You Won't Get Free of It - Stories of Mothers and Daughters by Rachel Aviv. A collection of essays exploring mother and daughter relationships through the stories of searching, sacrifice, and hidden truths.

Catch the Devil: A True Story of Murder, Deception, and Injustice on the Gulf Coast by Pamela Colloff. A dark tale of a remorseless and brilliant liar that made lethal by a legal system more concerned with making convictions than serving justice.

Additions to the Children's section

Mayowa and the Sea of Words by Chibundu Onuzo

The Unlikely Tale of Chase and Finnegan by Jasmine Warga

The Wise Pickle by Sarah Howden

Whale that was Unexpected by Casey Lyall

Need a Notary?

The Library can do that too! Give us a call for an appointment or stop by during regular hours.

Museum Passes

Don't forget the Library has passes to several local museums!!

- Springfield Museums - all FIVE Museums!
- Clark Museum
- Hancock Shaker Village
- Norman Rockwell Museum
- Mass Moca
- Venthall
- Forest Park in Springfield
- Magic Wings in Deerfield

We recently added the Trustees - passes to wonderful places to explore. Check it out at the library. \$1

Did You Know This?

THE CULTURAL COUNCIL IS A TOWN JEWEL

By Alexcia Adams

Did you know that over \$5,000 a year is provided by the Commonwealth to provide cultural programming for Sandisfield?

Applications are sent in online by organizations or individuals. A committee of local residents that makes up the Sandisfield Cultural Council reviews the applications and awards grants based on the set criteria.

You are invited to participate by...

Enjoying what was funded, such as

- August 29 at 7:00pm attend for free The American Story in Song at the Sandisfield Arts Center. <https://sandisfieldartscenter.org/event/the-american-story-in-song-a-program-by-jon-and-li-waterman/>
- Borrow for free a musical instrument from the Guthrie Center
- Celebrate culture at the September 26th Latino Festival in Great Barrington

To see a full list of awarded grants, visit massculturalcouncil.org/local-council/sandisfield/

Submitting a grant application

While we always have more requests than we can fund, good ideas are always welcome. Grant applications will be welcome starting in early September through mid-October. Go to: <https://massculturalcouncil.org/communities/local-cultural-council-program/application-process/>

Explore joining the committee

The state requires we have a minimum

Cont'd on next page

Cont'd from previous page

of five residents on the committee to receive this funding. We have people rotating off in upcoming years and are in danger of losing our funding if we don't have a few more people join. We meet two or three times a year and this is a great low-key way to help support our town.

If you're interested in learning more, please email Cultural-Council@sandisfieldma.gov or reach out to any current members: Alexcia Adams, Karema Almeida, Ashley Nikituk, Emily Gallagher, or Katherine Murray. 



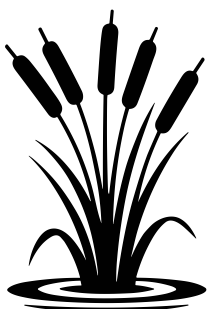
Letters to the Editor

To The Sandisfield Times editor:

Thanks for your article on the "retirement" of Liana Toscanini in the July 2026 Times.

Sandisfield is fortunate to have such a competent and energetic person return to her "home town" where she will continue efforts to make good things happen in Sandisfield.

*Roberta Myers
Monterey, California*



Too many cooks in the kitchen

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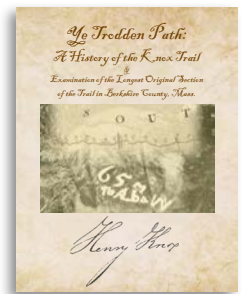
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APPOINTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

PLANNING BOARD & BOARD OF HEALTH

From the Town Website, www.sandisfieldma.gov

The Town of Sandisfield is seeking interested residents to fill vacancies on the Planning Board and the Board of Health.

Please note, both Planning Board and Board of Health members are elected positions. However, in accordance with MGL Ch 41, Sec 81A, an appointment will be made jointly by the Select Board and the remaining members of the Planning Board/BOH following a recent resignation. The appointed individual will serve until the next Annual Town Election in May 2027, at which time the position will appear on the ballot for the remainder of the unexpired term.

The Planning Board is responsible for reviewing matters related to zoning, land use, subdivision regulations, and long-range planning for the Town. The Board also conducts public hearings and reviews certain development proposals and special permit applications. The Planning Board meets once per month on the second Tuesday of each month.

The Board of Health is responsible for protecting and promoting public health in the community. The Board oversees matters such as septic systems, private wells, nuisance complaints, housing and sanitary code enforcement, and other public health issues as provided by state law. The Board works closely with the Town's Health Agent to address complaints and enforce applicable health regulations. The Board of Health meets as needed, generally on the second Wednesday of each month.

Interested registered voters should submit a letter of interest to the Town Manager's Office, Manager@sandisfieldma.gov, by August 6, 2026 at noon. ^{\$1}



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It's Your Turn

By Karen Garfied
New Hartford Road

"It's your turn for face painting,
I'm holding your place."

"It's your turn for face painting,
come over here, Grace."

Are we all just holding
our children's place in line?
Guiding and strategizing,
reading the signs?

We're trying too hard
to make it all seamless
when the world is the opposite,
bumpy and gleamless.

It starts in preschool,
writing the essay
to go to the right kindergarten
so they don't go astray.

3rd grade Manhattan Projects,
built by the dads,
well-meaning of course
but really, so sad.

I wish I could say
I resisted the tutors,
banished college counseling,
bought the worst computer.

But of course I played along
in this rat race of childhood.
What else would I do,
start logging red cedar wood?

My kids are now older,
decisions all theirs.
I stand at the sidelines
with clean laundry and
prayers.

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Comings and Goings



JOAN V MASON

MARCH 30, 1936 — JULY 14, 2026

Joan Viola Mason, of New Hartford Road, Sandisfield, passed peacefully at home with family by her side on July 14, 2026 at the age of 90.

Born in Hempstead, New York in 1936 to Charles Howard and Millicent (Driscoll) Meier, she grew up in Lynbrook, graduating from Lynbrook High School in 1953. She went on to study Home Economics at the University of Vermont, graduating with her Bachelor of Science degree in 1957. While at "UVM," she was a proud member of the Alpha Delta Pi sorority and remained a life-long supporter.

Joan married David Michael Mason in 1963, and they were happily married for 48 years until his passing in 2011.

Joan taught home economics at Valley Stream South High School on Long Island, eventually stepping away to caringly raise her daughter Debbie, which she viewed as her life's work and one of her greatest accomplishments.

As a young girl, Joan and the Meier family spent weekends and summers in the Berkshire mountains of western Massachusetts, where she fell in love with the Sandisfield area's natural beauty and serenity. Joan and Dave eventually purchased property from her grandmother, and in the 1960s they built a home that would be their sanctuary "Honey Hill Acres." The home was just up the road from the house where Joan had so many fond memories as a child.

The family spent years visiting their treasured mountain retreat on weekends and summers, where they enjoyed hosting family and friends. Upon retirement in 2003, they moved from Long Island to live full time in Sandisfield.

Throughout her life, Joan enjoyed a wide range of hobbies, including cooking elaborate recipes she found in magazines, sewing clothes for her grandchildren on her treasured Singer sewing machine, and keeping the various birds around her home (and other wild life, as it turns out) very well fed with her many bird feeders.

Aside from the years Joan spent in her beloved Berkshires, perhaps her greatest joy was her role as "Nana" to her two grandchildren, Renee and Avery Levin. She traveled many times out to California to spend time with them as they grew up. She particularly enjoyed her time with the kids on-board Aaron's and Deb's boat at California's Catalina Island and Newport Harbor, and joining them on family vacations to Florida's North Captiva Island, Orlando's Disney World, Washington DC, Boston, Buffalo, San Francisco, and New York City. When Renee & Avery moved to the east coast after college to start their careers in New York City, they would frequently make the trek to spend quality time with their Nana.

Whether hosting her grandkids or daughter and son-in-law, Joan didn't spend many holidays alone. She relished the opportunity to have family cook recipes together, turn simple grocery shopping trips in Great Barrington into multi-hour affairs, go out for Chinese food at Koi and Italian food at Four Brothers, and enjoy the Goshen Fair, Granville General Store, and York Lake.

Besides her devotion to her family, Joan's life was defined by her generosity. She was a proud supporter of causes including the ASPCA, various wildlife conservancies, and charities in support of military families. She was a lifelong lover of cats, rescuing and adopting several throughout her life and enjoying their quiet companionship.

Aside from her parents and husband, Joan is preceded in death by her older brother Charles Howard Meier, Jr (Lt. Col., U.S. Air Force, Ret.) (Elisabeth).

Joan is survived by her beloved daughter Deborah Joan Levin, son-in-law Aaron Levin, her grandchildren Renee Levin and Avery Levin, her younger brother Louis A. Meier III (Col., Air National Guard, Ret.) (Barbara) and many nieces and nephews.

A grave-side service to honor Joan's remarkable life was held July 17, 2026, at Sandisfield Cemetery.

Donations in memory of Joan may be made to Hospice Care in the Berkshires, c/o Finnerty & Stevens Funeral Home, 426 Main St., Great Barrington, MA 01230. To send remembrances to her family please go to www.finnertyandstevens.com

Comings and Goings



**SCOTT
WORCESTER**

SEPTEMBER 4, 1958 –
JUNE 30, 2026

Scott C. Worcester, 67, of Dodd Road, Sandisfield, died Tuesday, June 30, 2026.

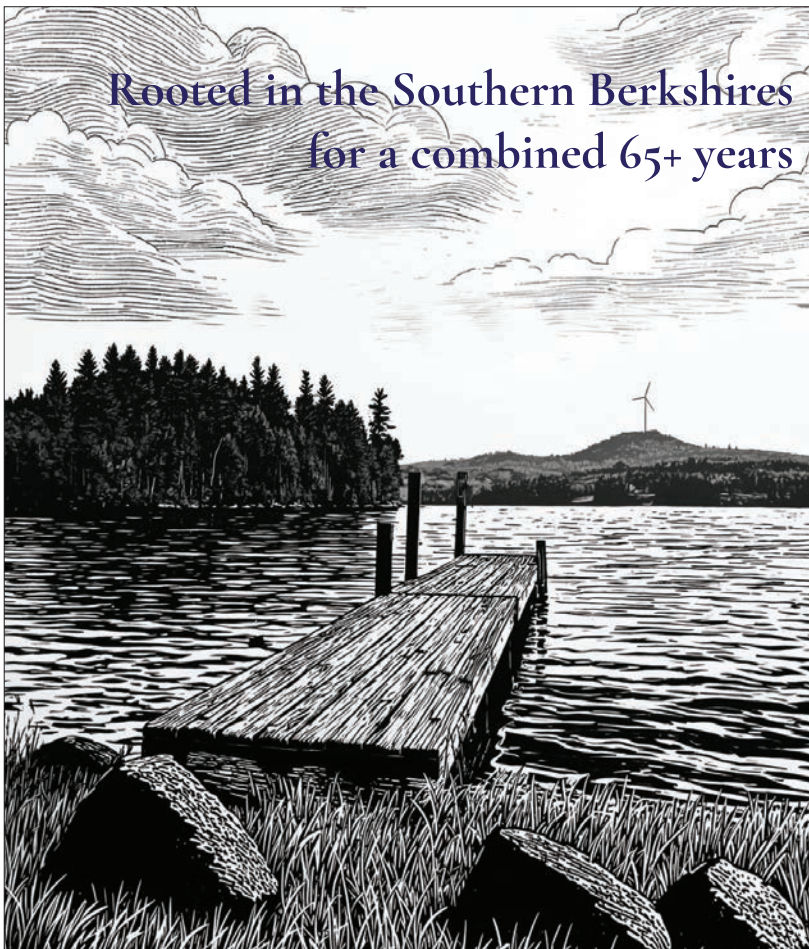
The beloved husband of Catherine "Cathy" (Derby) Worcester, Scott was born in Farmington, Maine, the son of the late Ellis and Connie (Jacques) Worcester. He enjoyed reading, fishing, and shooting pool. An avid gardener, Scott loved taking care of his home and garden.

In addition to his wife, Cathy, survivors include two daughters, Kelly Thompson and Kara Halterman; three grandchildren, Issac Halterman, Kevin Thompson, and Kemaala Thompson, all of Torrington; and three sisters, Sheree Starr and Linda Piechowski, both of Winsted, and Annmarie Worcester of NC.

Services were held July 8 at Gleeson-Ryan Funeral Home in Torrington.



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NOW HEAR THIS!

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

August

Stardust: The Perseids Are Coming!

on Saturday, August 8 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at the Sandisfield Arts Center. Astronomer Carol Ivers will delve into the world of stars as seen from Earth. The Perseid meteor shower is an annual, prolific celestial event, usually peaking around August 12 and 13 with up to 100 bright, swift meteors per hour. For tickets to the program, visit sandisfieldartscenter.org. Free.

Worship Service on Sunday, August 9 from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. at the New Boston Congregational Church located on Route 57. Stay for fellowship after the service. All are welcome. For more information and to view the calendar, visit newbostoncongregationalchurch.org.

Stardust: The Perseids Are Here! On Wednesday, August 12 beginning at 8:30 p.m. at the Sandisfield Orchard on New Hartford Road. Bring repellent, blanket, and binoculars if you have them.

Daniel Manacher Prize for Young Artists Reception on Sunday, August 16 from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. A showcase of the winners of the 2025 and 2026 Manacher Prize for Young Artists. Free.

Clam River Hike on Wednesday, August 19 from 9:30 to 11:00 a.m. sponsored by the Osher Livelong Learning Institute and Berkshire Natural Resources Council. Participants will hike the Wolf Tree Trail and the northern loop of the trail system. Follow the top of the ridge above the river in a dense hemlock grove. Hikers will park at Town Hall and carpool to the Hammertown trailhead. Registration (berkshireolli.org) opens August 3 at 9:00 a.m. It is strongly recommended to bring hiking poles and wear good hiking shoes.

Fabulous Fridays: Open Mic Series on Friday, August 21 at 7:00 p.m. at the Sandisfield Arts Center on 5 Hammertown Road. Seasoned performer or just starting out, share your talent! Music, poetry, comedy or whatever. Or just come and enjoy

some live entertainment. Performers should arrive 15 minutes early to sign up. Donation.

The Big Myth: How American Business Taught Us to Loathe Government and Love the Free Market on Saturday, August 22 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at the Sandisfield Arts Center on 5 Hammertown Road. Book talk with celebrated historian and Harvard University professor Naomi Oreskes examines the enduring myth advanced by business elites and media allies to promote hostility to “big government” and faith in unfettered markets. Visit sandisfieldartscenter.org for tickets. \$20, with limited \$10 tickets for community members.

The American Story in Song-A Program by Jon and Li Waterman on Saturday, August 29 at 7:00 p.m. at the Sandisfield Arts Center on 5 Hammertown Road. This program is supported in part by a grant from the Sandisfield Cultural Council. Visit sandisfieldartscenter.org for tickets. Free.

Worship Service on Sunday, August 30 from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. at the New Boston Congregational Church located on Route 57. Stay for fellowship after the service. All are welcome. For more information and to view the calendar, visit newbostoncongregationalchurch.org.

Poetry Reading with Amy Dryansky and Hannah Fries on Sunday, August 30 from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. at the Sandisfield Arts Center on 5 Hammertown Road. Free.

RECURRING EVENTS

A Farm and Garden Show with Sandisfield Residents Bill Taylor and Jaye Alison Moscardiello streamed every Monday from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. at berkshireradio.org.

Sandisfield Select Board Meetings are currently through Zoom and in-person at 6:00 p.m. on Mondays (every other during summer) unless otherwise posted. Please visit sandisfieldma.gov or call 258-4711 for information.

Playgroup on Tuesdays from 10:00 to 11:30 a.m. at the Otis Town Hall. Sponsored by South Berkshire Kids. No pre-registration is necessary. Led by Nina Carr. This fun program includes free play, crafts, stories, and songs! A great time to meet up with friends and meet new friends! For confirmation of dates, please call Nina Carr (258-3314). Free!

Coffee Hour on Wednesdays at 10:00 a.m. at the Council on Aging, Town Hall Annex. Snacks and conversation! For more information, contact Nina Carr (258-3314). Free.

Chair Yoga with Wendy Larsen on Wednesdays at 2:00 p.m. at the Town Hall Annex, sponsored by the Council on Aging. For more information, contact Nina Carr (258-3314). Free.

Food Pantry on the 1st and 3rd Saturday of the month from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Sandisfield Library, lower level.

SAVE THE DATE

“Not Your Ordinary Yard Sale” on Saturday and Sunday, September 18-19, at the New Boston Congregational Church as a fundraiser. The 2nd Annual Church Yard Sale.

Sandisfield’s Annual Pig Roast, on Saturday, September 19, at 5:00 p.m., at the American legion Hall, Rt. 8 in New Boston. Sponsored by Recreation Committee.

Oktoberfest, on Saturday, October 3, from 12:00-4:00 p.m., at Looking Glass Gardens, Dodd Road.

Birds of Prey, on Saturday, October 11, Looking Glass Gardens, 10:00 a.m.

EVENTS IN SURROUNDING TOWNS

COA Coffee Social every Monday at 9:00 a.m. at the Tolland Public Safety Complex. Open to all Tolland and neighboring town residents. Coffee, pastries, and good company! Free.

Sunset Music Series & Car Cruise every Thursday evening in August from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. at the VFW on 104 South

Canaan Road in North Canaan. Food, cars, motorcycles, music, and fun.

Sheffield Farmers Market on Fridays from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m. on 125 Main Street in Sheffield. Local food and live music.

Great Barrington Farmers Market every Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on 18 Church Street in Great Barrington. Produce, baked goods, food vendors, crafts, and music.

New Marlborough Farmers Market on Sundays from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on the Village Green. Farm bounty, baked goods, handmade items, on other offerings.

Kids' Fishing Derby on Sunday, August 8 from 9:00 to 10:30 a.m. at the Berkshire

National Fish Hatchery on Hatchery Road in Monterey. Open to children ages 13 and under. Learn to fish and compete for prizes. No child goes away empty-handed.

Ice Cream Social for Children on Sunday, August 9 at Chesterwood in Stockbridge. In partnership with High Lawn Farm featuring story time with children's book authors, lawn games, and ice cream. Free to all attendees!

Desperate Catskill Mountain Boys-Outdoor Concert on Saturday, August 22 at 5:00 p.m. at the Monterey Community Center. Featuring Monterey resident Marshall Messer on blues harmonica alongside a talented ensemble, the

band explores original and traditional ballads, blues, and rock. Bring a chair. Free.

Eric Martin & Jon Suters Live on Sunday August 23 at 2:30 p.m. outside under the tent at the Monterey Community Center. Live acoustic music with guitar and fiddle. Bring a lawn chair or blanket. Free.

Greg Glassman Quartet-Live Jazz on Saturday, August 29 at 6:00 p.m. under the tent at the Monterey Community Center. Jazz trumpeter Greg Glassman alongside other seasoned performers. Bring a lawn chair. Free.

AUGUST AT THE NEW MARLBOROUGH MEETING HOUSE



David Nasaw with WAMC's Joe Donahue | August 8, 4:30 pm

Discussing Nasaw's recent book *The Wounded Generation*, on the impact of World War II on the soldiers who fought in it. Free admission for veterans.



The Mammals | August 22, 4:30 pm

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2026

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*Thanks to everyone who has donated
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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. 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.

The Times is distributed free of charge to all Sandisfield postal address and boxes. Free copies are available at the following town locations: The transfer station (Wed/Sat/Sun), the Library, and in New Boston at A&M Auto, the Farmington River General Store,

Sandisfield Orchard, and the New Boston Inn. The Times is also available in West Otis at the laundromat, the library, and Paige's Place; in East Otis at Katie's, Pappas, and the Knox Trail Inn. Also at the Monterey Library (outside box) and the Roadside Cafe, in Colebrook at the post office, and in New Marlborough at the Southfield Store. Back copies are available for purchase.

The Times can be mailed to your home (non-Sandisfield addresses only) by paid subscription (see form at left) or you can read it (free) online as a PDF document at www.sandisfieldtimes.org. Classified ads, 30 words or less, are free.

We welcome submissions, comments and suggestions, including letters to the editor by the 15th of the month prior. Maximum 300 words. 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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