MONTEREY NEWS

December 2023 Est. 1970
Vol. LIII · Number 12

Pick up at: the library (in and outside), outside town hall, transfer station

Monterey held its fourth annual "Lighting the Holidays" ceremony on Saturday, November 25. See page 16. *—Photo by Maureen Banner*

I know I could kill a person. It's not comfortable knowledge to have.
Here's a Thought page 18

So the wasps live on now, reorganized into blue jays.
Paper Wasps page 22

Some good news on roads and the grants that help pay for them.
Report About Town page 6

Everett Kreider

Inevitably, many will fail to thrive, but we may be able to get a dozen or more healthy chestnuts growing around town.
Chestnut Champions page 23

Their name for themselves is *Muh-he-con-neok*, which means "The People of the Waters that are Never Still."
Monterey Historical Society pages 20–21

"So many people are interesting…everyone I know I'd like to know more about."
Who's Who- Steve Snyder pages 12–13

The Monterey Community Center, along with the council on aging, are co-hosting a "Grief Support Group."
page 10

Back in Brooklyn, I seek to address environmental challenges—sidewalks.
Green Sidewalks pages 24–25

The select board would like to thank the town's residents for your active participation in town governance.
Town Report pages 2–3

Almost four hundred Montereyans responded to the master plan survey and it was clear that the bucolic nature of our rural community is highly valued.
Open Space and Recreation pages 6–7

Seventy-five Monterey families have already learned just this year about the vital importance of ambulance services.
Southern Berkshire Ambulance page 8

Thanks to all 116 residents who have ordered reflective house number signs. It's not too late.
House Number Signs page 7

Let's all do our part to help continue to maintain the health of Lake Garfield, this slice of heaven on earth, both through our actions and financial support.
Lake Garfield Health page 4

"Notes, as condensed versions of thoughts or ideas, are like tiny works of origami that unfold into entire stories."
Museum of Everyday Life page 29

Wreathmaking workshop page 31

Town Report of the Select Board

Fiscal Year 2023 (7/1/22 to 6/30/23)

Select Board Membership

The select board had three different compositions during fiscal year 2023 (FY23). After a vacancy was created by a resignation in May 2022, the board operated with two members (Justin Makuc and Susan Cooper) until a special election was held in August, and Scott Jenssen was put on the board in an uncontested election. Frank Abbott joined the board as Scott Jenssen's replacement after the annual town meeting in May 2023, in another uncontested election.

Town Meetings

The board called three town meetings during FY23, including specials on October 15, 2022 and January 21, 2023, and the annual town meeting on May 6, 2023.

At the October meeting, funds were transferred from free cash to pay for the cleanup of extensive storm damage at Bidwell Park and to fund the town's legal fees in the Hume v. Monterey lawsuit.

At the January meeting, electronic clickers (purchase approved at the May 2022 annual town meeting) made their debut. Town meeting approved funding to cover the fuel account as fuel prices skyrocketed, and additional funds for the Hume v. Monterey lawsuit as it was taken up by the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court.

At the May annual town meeting, the annual operating budget of $5,050,263 was approved after minor modification on the floor. Additionally, funds totaling $317,511 were approved for capital investments in the town's emergency services to keep the fleets and equipment up to date: a police cruiser, radios and pagers, a medical/rescue SUV, battery-powered hydraulic rescue tools, capital improvements for the fire station, and a replacement nozzle for the tip of the ladder. Also approved were funds to renovate the Greene Park ballfield ($10,000) and a new annual assessment due to Southern Berkshire Ambulance ($51,670). Additionally, state-maximum room occupancy excise taxes and community impact fees were adopted for short-term rentals, adding a new source of income to the town.

Thank you to everyone who attended town meeting during FY23 and engaged in good deliberation while doing the business of the Town.

Administration: Human Resources

The select board worked with the town's new HR director, town administrator, and department heads to institute the first round of employee reviews for all employees of the town in the winter/spring of 2023. The board has worked with the HR director and the town administrator to continue to improve our administrative processes: updating the employee handbook, revising the anti-discrimination and harassment policies, offering part-time employees sick leave and paid holidays, and drafting a board and committees handbook to help guide the many volunteers who commit their efforts for the good of the community.

The board also hired a number of employees for new and existing positions in FY23. In September 2022, the board hired Laurie McArthur to the new position of select board secretary, and she began to clerk for other multi-member bodies of the town after she grew comfortable taking minutes for the select board. Brian Fahey, five-and-a-half-year sergeant of Monterey's Police Department, was promoted to police chief in January 2023 after police chief Gareth Backhaus's retirement. A celebration was held to congratulate and thank Chief Backhaus for his service to the town—thirty-four-and-a-half-years serving the Monterey Police Department, including twenty-nine years as chief. After the town clerk position was vacated by a resignation in November 2022, Marie Ryan filled the position as interim town clerk and trained Chris Andrews, who was appointed town clerk in June 2023.

There were also a couple of appointments made to vacant elected positions in FY23. Ilene Marcus was appointed to the finance committee in September 2022 after a vacancy created by resignation, and Kevin West was appointed as tree warden in June 2023 because the winner of the election did not accept the position.

The select board appreciates all of the town's dedicated employees, officials, and volunteers.

Administration: Funding

The Town of Monterey was awarded $276,190 in federal funds from the American Rescue Plan Act, legislation passed in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. It was the select board's responsibility to allocate these funds.

After allocating funds to the Monterey Fire Department for a rescue vehicle to replace Rescue 5, and to Southern Berkshire Volunteer Ambulance for the town's share of new ambulance, there was $203,211 remaining to be allocated. The select board, with the help of the finance committee, created an application and accepted ideas for use of the funds through the summer until October 2022.

In November 2022, the rest of the funds were allocated to: a site analysis of the town's Fox Hill Road property, and consultation regarding workforce, senior or moderately priced housing; consultation for the renewable energy working group about bringing solar power to the Town of Monterey; aiding the application to make the village center an historic district; renovating the playground at Greene Park; and construction of a pavilion at the community center. Most of these projects have been ongoing through the end of FY23.

Hume Lawsuit

After funding was approved by special town meetings in October 2022 and January 2023 to continue to fight the Hume v. Monterey case, it was argued at the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court on February 6, 2023, with town counsel Donna Brewer (of the firm Miyares and Harrington) representing the town. The town received the decision from the Supreme Judicial Court in June 2023. The court concluded that the town and its planning board cannot prohibit the proposed RV park because Hume Camp is entitled to the provisions of the Dover Amendment, which exempt the camp from the town's zoning bylaws.

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Projects

There are many ongoing projects that the board is overseeing or involved in. In cooperation with the finance committee, the board revised the capital planning policy to help ensure that the town is prepared for all major capital outlays. The board appointed an "open space and recreation planning committee" which will work with the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission to create an updated open space plan that will give the town access to substantial grant monies. The board also moved to begin some long-delayed upkeep on the town hall building, and a review and update of our information technology hardware and processes. With the help of the diligent work of the bylaw review committee, the select board is hoping to overhaul and clean up the town's general bylaws at a future town meeting. The renewable energy working group is exploring options for the town to be involved in generating solar electricity. The Lake Garfield Working Group has been monitoring the health of the lake and recommending measures, including new technologies, to keep the lake safe and healthy for recreation.

The select board has also kept up to speed on the work of the 8-Town Regional School District Planning Board, which has recommended a merger of Monument Mountain and Mount Everett High Schools. The proposed merger would simultaneously create a new school district, and the current districts of SBRSD and BHRSD would dissolve after a transitionary period. The new school district is expected to come before town meeting in the fall of 2023. These are just some of the ongoing projects at the select board level.

The select board would like to thank the town's residents for your active participation in town governance.

— Monterey Select Board,
Justin Makuc, Chair,
Susan Cooper and Frank Abbott

Editor's Note: While none of the above text was altered, the report as it appears has been edited to conform to the Monterey News *style sheet.*

Support the *Monterey News*

For more than fifty years the *Monterey News* has helped to enrich the Monterey community with its comprehensive reporting of the events and people in town. From the latest cultural events to the wildlife report to the latest actions of town governance, the *Monterey News* has been there to inform Montereyans about the comings and goings in and about town.

However, many small town newspapers including the *Monterey News* need financial support to enable them to survive in the world of larger publications and the digital media.

Since the *Monterey News* is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, monetary donations are tax-deductible and most appreciated. Please consider supporting this request as you close out 2023. Donations may be made out to the *Monterey News*, and mailed to the Monterey News, P.O. Box 9, Monterey MA 01245-0009.

Thank for your support, enjoy the holiday season and have a safe and happy New Year.

—Kyle Pierce, Dennis Lynch, Steve Snyder, Cindy Hoogs, Bonner McAllester, Roz Halberstadter, and Janet Jensen, the *Monterey News* Board of Directors.

Update on Lake Garfield Health

Conservation Committee Permits

In Monterey, efforts to maintain the ecological and recreational health of Lake Garfield are based on what is referred to as the three-legged stool approach, a collaboration of the Monterey Select Board-appointed Lake Garfield Working Group (LGWG) working with the Monterey Conservation Commission; the non-profit Friends of Lake Garfield (FLG); and the voters of Monterey who help fund science-based projects to control invasive aquatic weeds such as Eurasian watermilfoil (EWM) while acquiring state grants to improve water quality and treat stormwater flowing into Lake Garfield.

Since Lake Garfield is a state designated "great pond," the Monterey Conservation Commission is empowered by the state to review and approve major activities like aquatic weed control and stormwater treatment that may effect the wetlands of the Commonwealth under the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act. To obtain approval for a major activity around the lake, the conservation commission requires a comprehensively prepared notice of intent (NOI) document from applicants. As an applicant, the town, represented by the LGWG, submitted a combined or "bundled" NOI to the conservation commission, which was prepared by the lake scientist Hillary Kenyon for both the control of EWM using diver-assisted suction harvesting (DASH) and the seasonal drawdown of the lake to prevent flooding. Besides flood control, the annual drawdown of Lake Garfield starting on November 1 also helps to control other near-shore aquatic weeds that might impair the recreational enjoyment of the lake. In conjunction with the approval of an NOI, an order of conditions (OOC) with special conditions, will be issued by the conservation commission.

The LGWG and FLG are currently awaiting the issuance of the "order of conditions" by the Monterey Conservation Commission. The OOC special conditions are expected to support ongoing DASH work, and to establish and monitor the drawdown depth at the Brewer Pond dam by using a water depth gauge and continuous flow monitor which has been purchased by the Friends of Lake Garfield.The data collected is planned to be made available to regulatory agencies and the public on the Friends of Lake Garfield website at FriendsofLakeGarfield.com. In addition, the OOC will require an annual lake health report from our lake scientist Hillary Kenyon. During the summer months, the FLG conducts weekly testing of lake water by monitoring temperature, oxygen content, cyanobacteria sampling and periodic phosphorus monitoring. All this information is shared on the FLG website.The removal of EWM by scuba divers continues to take place twice a year and is coordinated by the LGWG. This year FLG continued to see success with many areas completely cleared of EWM and the remaining areas show decreased density of these aquatic plants. Although scuba divers removing Eurasian watermilfoil during the spring and fall has shown success, annual funding will still be needed to control its spread. The FLG will post both the DASH report and the lake scientist annual report on the FLG website later next month.

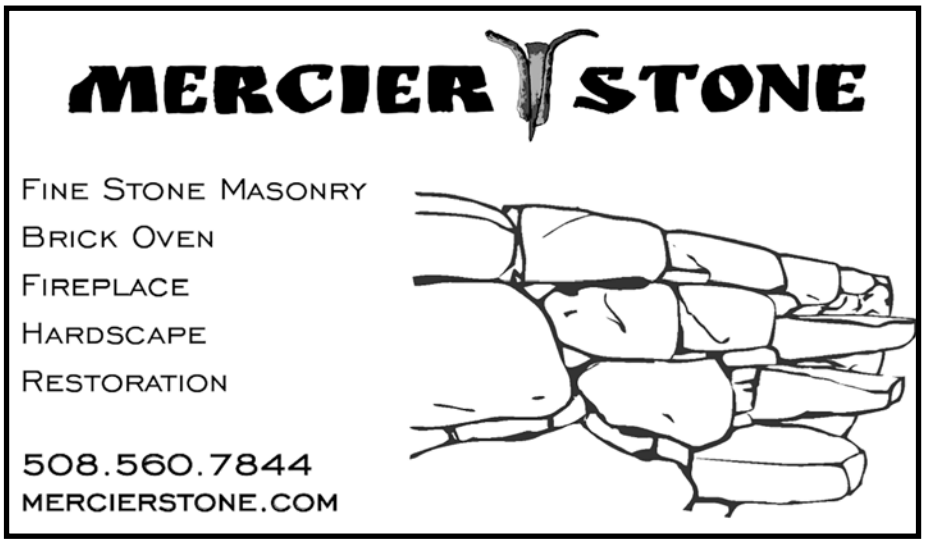
A special thank you to LGWG member Dennis Lynch for helping do the hard work coordinating the conservation commission approval and securing state grants to help maintain lake health. One such project is the below-grade construction of a stormwater control and treatment system along a section of Hupi Road to reduce the amount of plant nutrients, including phosphorus, from flowing into the lake. Grant money also supports education and the development of other stormwater treatment efforts such as the above-ground installation of rain or buffer gardens along the lakefront with the approval of private property landowners. Courteny Morehouse, from the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, has taken the lead on this initiative and has shared information on these projects through articles in the *Monterey News*.

Lake Usage Safety Issues

Sometimes the Friends of Lake Garfield receives communication from people asking about safety issues on Lake Garfield. These include swimming, the use of jet,skis, complaints about shoreline erosion caused by large boat wakes and potential accidents between open water swimmers and boats. Please note that FLG and LGWG have no jurisdiction or authority to monitor swimming or boating safety on the lake. Lake Garfield is a public lake regulated by the rules and regulations of the state Department of Conservation and Recreation.The FLG encourages all boat owners and swimmers to use common sense and use extreme caution to avoid any tragedies on the lake and be respectful of what we can do to prevent erosion on lakefront property. Keep in mind that swimming is prohibited within a public access facility (the boat ramp) by the state.

Let's all do our part to help continue to maintain the health of Lake Garfield, this slice of heaven on earth, both through our actions and financial support.

—The Friends of Lake Garfield and the Lake Garfield Working Group



The Annual Drawdown of Lake Garfield Begins

During an early morning November 1 snowfall, the incremental drawdown of Lake Garfield began at the dam located at Brewer Pond, and is planned to reach completion by December 1. Sheldon Langley is shown at the right manually opening the gate to release lake water while Pete Wilson measures the amount of water flowing through the gate. An automated monitoring device provided by the Friends of Lake Garfield also helps to control the volume of water released by constantly measuring the height of the water passing through the gate to achieve a less-than-six-foot drop in the lake.

As stated by Jim Hunt, Director of Operations, "the primary purpose of the drawdown of Lake Garfield is to prevent flooding" of properties around the lake and downstream along the Konkapot River. The secondary benefit is to improve the recreational use and overall health of the lake by exposing invasive aquatic weeds to freezing winter temperatures. As luck may have it, unexpected events can lead to a temporary slowing of discharge from Lake Garfield. For the past two years, beavers have built obstructions to the outflow of water which in turn requires additional maintenance to continue the drawdown. Not to worry—Jim and his dedicated crew have the situation well in hand.

Presented by the Lake Garfield Working Group.

—Dennis Lynch
Lake Garfield Working Group

Getting the Monterey News

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Have it mailed free of charge.

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Report About Town

Beartown Mountain Road

Some good news on roads and the grants that help pay for them.

After what seems to have been an endless delay in getting the engineering done for Beartown Mountain Road, the engineering was completed and the job was put out for bids. The bids received a lot of interest from companies throughout Massachusetts and New York. Seven companies submitted bids ranging from $800,000 all the way up to $1,400,000. The state had committed to a $1,000,000 grant. Our director of operations, Jim Hunt, was tasked with determining which company and bid represented the best value both monetarily and quality-wise for Monterey.

After checking references he settled on Rifenburg Construction, one of the largest construction companies in upstate New York. Not only had it submitted the lowest bid, but the references all spoke to quality of work and timely completion of projects. They were able to keep the bid low by contracting with a gravel quarry in Otis for the necessary fill. Gravel and the expense of hauling it was a major factor in the differences in the bids and by staying local they were able to cut their bid dramatically.

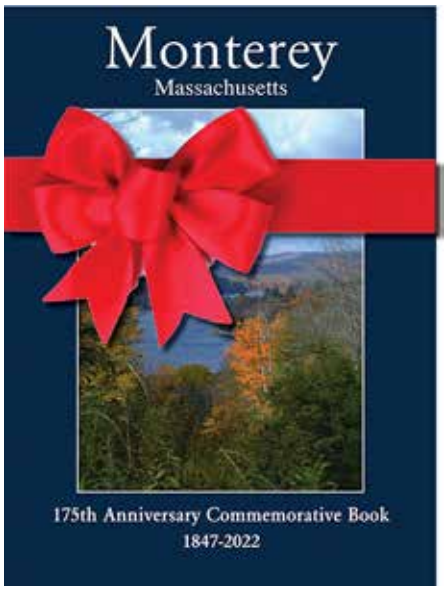
The current plan is for the work to begin in early spring, weather permitting, As the start date gets closer I'll put together more complete details of the work. It's unusual for this amount of attention to be paid to a dirt/gravel road and, because of the new techniques being used, is seen as precursor to future work on other roads both in Monterey and elsewhere in Berkshire County.

Sandisfield Road Culvert

After the successful awarding of the Beartown Mountain Road grant from the state, Jim Hunt and town administrator Melissa Noe teamed up again to apply for funds to replace a major culvert on Sandisfield Road just a short distance south of the intersection with Route 23. The town applied to the Rural and Small Town Development Fund and was one of 161 out of 338 towns that applied to get a grant. The grant totaling $446,000 will be used to replace an undersized culvert and reconstruct the area around the culvert. As the engineering progresses watch for more updates in future editions of the *Monterey News*.

A big congratulations to Jim and Melissa for a job (two jobs) well done! Now on to driving tips for the winter… (see page 30).

— Kenn Basler



The 175th Anniversary Book would make a lovely gift for folks who have been connected to Monterey during the past twenty-five years. Copies are available at the desk in the Monterey Library.

Open Space and Recreation in Monterey

Another survey coming to your e-mailbox soon!

Monterey's hardworking planning board recently completed updating Monterey's master plan, and, of course, one excellent piece of work always seems to lead to another undertaking. Almost four hundred Montereyans responded to the master plan survey and it was clear that the bucolic nature of our rural community is highly valued, with 80% of respondents calling "nature, wildlife, and scenic beauty" one of the top three reasons they live in Monterey. (You can read the full survey results on the town website via the tool bar tab on the home page, "OSPR.)

Both the state and federal government promote a large number of grants for the acquisition, improvement, and maintenance of open space, parks, and recreational facilities. A majority of the master plan recommendations focused on open space, but to access most of the state grants, Monterey needs a current, state approved "Open Space and Recreation Plan" (OSRP). Thus, the select board decided to proceed with yet another major planning venture to meet this requirement, also titled "Open Space and Recreation Plan."

The town administrator applied for and the town was awarded a MA Small Communities Grant of $9,000 (with $3,000 matching) to work with the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) to update the 2003 Monterey Open Space Plan, which has expired. The select board recruited and appointed an OSRP committee to work with Seth Jenkins (BRPC) who had previously worked with the planning board on the master plan. Current OSRP committee members include: Margy Abbott, chair, representing the planning board; Susan Cooper, secretary, representing the select board; Gerry Clarin, parks commission; Dennis Lynch, Lake Garfield working group; Rob Hoogs, historical society; Mark Andrews, community center; Jim Hunt, director of operations; and Melissa Noe, town administrator. The committee first met in August, and is meeting monthly until the draft OSRP is submitted to the state in June 2024.

We had our first public forum on Wednesday evening, November 15, in the gorgeous community room of the Monterey Library. Twenty-one folks showed up to talk about what they love in Monterey, what open space projects they are enthusiastic about, and what they might be willing to do to improve, protect, and respect the natural beauty of our home. From improving trails in our parks, to creating green corridors, to building a pavilion at the community center, to planning a walking/biking trail to link spaces in Monterey, and even to passing the Community Preservation Act to set aside money for maintaining land and even buying parcels to protect them—all these things and more are part of the Open Space Plan.

The OSRP committee will be finalizing a broader SurveyMonkey survey to go out to all Monterey homeowners and residents in January about residents' priorities for the Open Space Plan in Monterey. Be on the lookout for more information on the survey and how to access it in January.

In the meantime, for updates on the Open Space and Recreation Plan click on the OSRP directory tab at the top of the town website home page or enter montereyma.gov/open-space-and-recreation-plan. Don't just wait for the survey to let us know what you think and want, we welcome your input. Our next meeting is Tuesday, December 5. Details will be on the town website. (montereyma.gov/)

—Susan Cooper
susan@montereyma.gov

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Central School Holiday Fair and Auction

The New Marlborough Central School is once again holding its Holiday Fair. This year's fair is on December 2, too late for advertising in the *Monterey News*.

However, the online auction, with a huge selection of excellent local offerings, will be live until Wednesday, December 6, and closes at 8 p.m.

Check out the many opportunities to bid on a variety of exciting items and experiences donated by businesses, community members, and incredible supporters like you. The funds raised through the auction play a vital role in enabling us to continue providing resources and opportunities that directly benefit our students, teachers, and staff. Last year, more than $10,000 was raised through the auction and nearly $15,000 overall.

—Elizabeth Evans, secretary
New Marlborough-Monterey PTA

House Number Signs

From the Monterey Police Department:

Thanks to all the residents who have ordered reflective house number signs—all 116 of you!

If you attended the special town meeting in late October you may remember the first order of business was to vote on creating a police department revolving account established for this purpose. Thank you to all those who voted unanimously to create the account and had your voices heard.

The next step was to bring the request for a revolving account to the State for approval. We are still waiting to hear back. Knowing it would take time to create the revolving account before collecting the monies, we have not yet ordered the signs. Once we have state approval, we will email everyone who pre-ordered with directions for payment.

Anyone who has not pre-ordered a house number sign and wishes to do so, please email your name, street address (with number), and phone number to jbrown.montereypd@gmail.com.

We will continue to take orders indefinitely to help keep our community safe.

Thank you,
In Pride and Service,

—Officer Jen Brown
Monterey Police Department

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November 2023

Timothy Aluise
Elaine & Dennis Lynch

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Southern Berkshire Ambulance Squad

Editor's Note: I asked Debra Herman, who initiated a call for donations to the SBAS, to write an article about the service. We wish to thank Robbi Hart for her article on November 20 in the Berkshire Edge. *To read the full article, go to theberkshireedge.com, and search for "Southern Berkshire Ambulance."*

From January 1 through November 20, 2023, the Southern Berkshire Ambulance Squad (SBAS) has responded to seventy-five calls for help during 2023 which originated in the town of Monterey.

Perhaps you've had a quiet evening disturbed by the sound of a blaring siren from a passing ambulance. Maybe you were out driving and had to pull over to let an ambulance pass. When you hear those sirens, you know something has gone wrong for someone somewhere. But you also know that help is on the way. And you expect that help will come your way should you need it.

However, if people do not step up and donate to support the Southern Berkshire Ambulance Squad, that may cease to be the case. As reported by Robbi Hartt, the SBAS is operating with a $350,000 deficit. Hartt explains that an act of Congress dating back to the Nixon administration shifted responsibility for emergency medical services to the states. Today thirty-nine states, including Massachusetts, regard such services as "nonessential," effectively shifting responsibility to the towns which, in sparsely populated areas such as south Berkshire County, lack the call volume and the tax base to fully fund these services.

SBAS provides ambulance services to six south Berkshire towns including Monterey. It also provides paramedic intercept services to four towns with their own ambulance services. That is, SBAS provides critical support when a serious incident requires a crew with a paramedic and advanced medications or equipment.

Providing this service is expensive. Insurance reimbursements do not fully cover the cost. Emergency medical services are only reimbursed for calls that result in a trip to a hospital. Thus, many calls yield no reimbursement. The staff salaries, specialized vehicles, and necessary equipment all cost money. As reported in the *Edge*, the average cost of responding to a call is $1,000, while reimbursement averages only $450. The towns SBAS serves contribute funds to help bridge this gap, but the service still operates with a deficit. *

Ambulance service may seem "unessential" until the day comes when you find yourself in need. That day came for me a little more than two years ago. A rushed trip first up and then down the stairs in my home resulted in a sudden fall. Stunned, I found myself on the floor without a bruise or a scratch but with a mangled ankle. Fortunately, I was able to limp to the phone to dial 911. Within a few minutes, the first responders were at my door. They carefully assessed my injury and told me I needed to go to the hospital for an x-ray.

Their presence, and the care they took in assessing my injury, was reassuring. But I asked for an unusual favor before taking that ambulance trip to Fairview Hospital. Frightened by all the hubbub, my three-month-old puppy Ruby was hiding upstairs under the bed. I knew I would not be able to climb the stairs to retrieve her when I returned home, and I was not sure she could safely climb down. It took three first responders three trips up the stairs before one triumphantly returned with a scared puppy and placed her safely in her crate. I travelled to Fairview hospital knowing that all was well at home.

Prior to that day I, much like many others, received the annual fund-raising appeal from Southern Berkshire Ambulance Squad. Looking back, I'd like to think that I made an annual contribution, but I likely tossed it along with the all too numerous appeals from organizations that fundraise at year's end.

But no more. Having received desperately needed help with competence leavened by a spirit of generosity and caring, I make it a point to donate and to include a bit more than requested as my means allow. Giving those dollars marks my appreciation for the help I received but also helps to assure that should I need help in the future, that help will be available.

If you have not received or have misplaced the postcard from the ambulance squad's fund-raising appeal, you can find a "Donate" button on their website, sbvas.com. Reach into your pocket and make your contribution.

Seventy-five Monterey families have already learned just this year about the vital importance of ambulance services. No one wants to be number seventy-sixth, but if you are you want that ambulance at your doorstep providing the support and transport that you need.

—Debra Herman
Housatonic

** Monterey provided $52,000 in (current) FY 2024, which will rise to $71,122 (a 35.7% increase) for FY 2025.*

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Trust the Select Board

Over my fifteen-plus years in Monterey the town has seen some remarkable changes, especially considering the diminutive size of our population. A new transfer station, an enlarged and renovated library, a community center, substantial investments in our roads, additions to the firehouse with the housed equipment the envy of any other town our size, and the same to be said of our highway department. Accompanying these changes has been an increase of our budget from FY2009 of around $3 million, to a current FY2023 budget of over $5 million, while maintaining one of the most favorable tax rates in the county and state.

Other changes, not so visible, have also been underway. Town governance has moved to building greater professionalism and accountability. The town voted to change the roles of treasurer and town clerk from elected to appointed. (Not everyone was happy with these changes.) A search process resulted in hiring new town counsel, which proved unsatisfactory, with a second search resulting in a much better fit. A problem with the accounting and treasurer services was fixed with the hiring of a new firm. A shared human resources position was created. A revised employee handbook was created, and should be completed this month. A new organizational chart was created. The select board rewrote and clarified a range of key functions.

Over three years ago the town agreed to having a town administrator, partly to professionalize this critical role, and to hopefully relieve the select board members so they can focus on policies and necessary decisions and not day-to-day operations. And this change has had its challenges as well.

The first search was for a half-time town administrator. A seemingly promising candidate was hired. This attempt did not go well, and did not last long. A second round of searching, again for a half-time administrator, yielded several individuals who were entirely unsuited, and one or two candidates who declined. In early 2021 the select board at the time, having not found viable and willing candidates, pivoted to making the position full-time, with a significant rise in salary. Without conducting a new search for the position as full-time, full-salaried, the board hired the then-administrative assistant, Melissa Noe, as our first full-time town administrator. (This role is not to be confused with a town manager, which is a role much defined by state laws.)

A new job description was assembled, and a three-year contract offered. Ms. Noe has been working in town hall for more than the fifteen years I have lived here. As an administrative assistant she worked at the direction and leadership of the select board. She has extensive and detailed knowledge of town operations.

The town administrator's contract renewal date is approaching in early 2024. This past August the select board, in accordance with a provision in that contract for a six-month notice of non-renewal, advised Ms. Noe that they were reserving the option to not renew her contract.

Since then the board has spent considerable time rewriting the TA job description to clarify the leadership qualities necessary to manage a business on the scale of our town in accordance with town and state policies, etc. I understand the board has also conducted an extensive evaluation of the town administrator, which has involved the human resources officer, department heads, and personal interviews.

The board is now facing a significant question. Should they renew the TA contract with Ms. Noe, or should a broad search be conducted for a full-time town administrator, which was not done three years ago? Should the select board make this decision alone, or with input from others?

I trust that the basis for whatever decision the select board makes will be based entirely on what the board hopes will bring the greatest benefit to the town.

The purpose of my letter is to ask the townspeople to give the select board the trust to do what the board feels might bring the greatest benefit to the town. Nothing more than that. All the work that has been done over the past few years to clarify how the town functions in so many ways has improved town governance, our compliance with the laws, and managing our finances.

Furthermore, I hope that whatever the board decides to do, they will keep the town well informed as they move forward.

— Stephen Moore

This is a personal statement of opinion, not an editorial by the Monterey News*, which has never published editorial statements.*

Update: On Tuesday, November 28, the select board unanimously decided to post the TA position. The current contract runs through late February.

Letters

The *Monterey News* welcomes letters on a wide range of topics. Commentary on events and town affairs, notes of appreciation, or alerts for upcoming activities that might be of interest to Monterey readers.

Submit your letters to MontereyNews9@gmail.com, or mail them to PO Box 9, Monterey, MA 01245. Please include your full name and contact information.

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Monterey Community Center Calendar

Weekly, bi-weekly and monthly activities:

Mondays: *Hablemos!* 10 to 11:30 a.m. *Intermedio y superior* —to practice Spanish and meet new friends.

Simple meditation, all are welcome, 3:30 to 4:45 p.m.

Monday, January 22: (no meeting in December), Cookbook club, 11:45 a.m. to 1:15 p.m. Fourth Monday of the month. Register by emailing WendyGJ@gmail.com.

Tuesdays:

Chair yoga, 10 to 11 a.m.

Singing with Vikki True, 11:30 to 12:45 p.m.

Mahjong, 7 to 9 p.m.

Bridge and Pitch, 1 to 4 p.m.

Wednesdays:

Tai chi with David Crowe, 10 a.m. $8 per class or $30 for the month.

Transformational breathwork, 6 to 7:30 p.m. Suggested fee $30.

Wednesday, December 27:

Council on aging's "Game Time!" 2 to 4:30 p.m. Board games with coffee, tea, and snacks

Thursday, December 7: Darn yarners, at 1 p.m. First Thursday of the month.

Thursday, cancelled this month (there is one is Great Barrington): Wellness check, 2 to 3 p.m. Third Thursday of the month. With Tritown Health nurses. Checkups include blood pressure, pulse, and blood oxygen levels. No charge for Monterey residents, no appointment needed.

Thursdays, December 21 and 28: Chorus with Oren Rosenthal, 4:15 p.m.

Fridays:

Super gentle yoga, 10 to 11 a.m. Please register by emailing jamesboneparth76@gmail.com.

Bridge, 1 to 4 p.m.

Saturdays:

Coffee club, 8:30 to 10 a.m.

Ping pong, 2:30 p.m.

Sundays: Al Anon family group meeting, 9 a.m.

Music jam sessions with Mark Andrews. December 3 and 17, from 6 to 8 p.m. All skill levels are welcome, instruments and singers. If you are interested, please contact Mark Andrews at mccjamgroup@gmail.com.

Special Events

Saturday, December 2: Pie Crust 101: "It's Basically Crust," introductory pie crust workshop with Hanna Jensen on the ground floor at the church. 1 to 4 p.m. $40. Limited to eight people. Preregistration and deposit required. Please email montereycommunitycenter@gmail.com for more details and to sign up.

Saturday, December 9: Pie Crust 201: "Pastries in a Pinch" Pie crust isn't just for pie, with Hanna Jensen. From 1 to 4 (ish) p.m., on the ground floor at the church. $40. Limited to eight people. preregistration and deposit required. Please email montereycommunitycenter@gmail.com for more details and to sign up.

Mah jong, ping pong and snacks headlined the council on aging's "Game Time!" in December. On December 27 we meet again and will add Chess and any game you would like to bring. "Game Time!" is the fourth Wednesday of every month at 2 p.m., in the community center.

—Lin Saberski

Grief Awareness Week

On Wednesday, December 5, during National Grief Awareness Week, the Monterey Community Center, along with the council on aging, are co-hosting a "Grief Support Group," facilitated by HospiceCare in the Berkshires.

Beginning at 1:30 p.m., the documentary, *Speaking Grief*, will be shown at the Knox Gallery in the Monterey Library.

Following the film, Rachel Lively, bereavement coordinator, will open up a discussion on the stigma of grief, the pain of loss, and how talking to others can help to ease some of the difficulty.

Everyone is welcome to come share in this discussion.

Light refreshments will be served.

—R.J. Supa, director
Monterey Community Center

Tuesday, December 5: Grief support, 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. At the Knox Gallery, Monterey Library. Co-sponsored by the council on aging. Refreshments will be provided. See at right.

You can find more information on events at our website ccmonterey.org, or by calling (413) 528-3600, or emailing montereycommunitycenter@gmail.com.

—R.J. Supa, MCC Director,
and Nancy Kleban

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Catching up with the Council on Aging

Wednesday, December 6: If you have never attended the annual "Senior Citizen Holiday Luncheon" at Mt. Everett Regional High School in Sheffield, it's time to change that. Join the fun and see why folks return year after year. This will be our council lunch for the month of December. It's a free event, complete with a full lunch buffet by the culinary students, and choral and band performances by kids big and little. Guaranteed charming and delicious from beginning to end. Let's have a strong Monterey presence! See below for details and call (413) 229-7037 to reserve your place at the table.

And remember: Van transportation in Monterey is now available for everyone, with expanded hours and new towns added. And it's free for the entire month of December. The phone number to book a ride is (413) 591-3826.

To reach me to reserve for events, with questions about scheduled events, or suggestions for new ones, please call (413) 528-1443, extension 112, or email me at coaoutreach@montereyma.gov. Phone messages are picked up once daily Monday through Friday.

— Kathryn Roberts
CoA Outreach Coordinator/
Administrative Assistant

Coming Events

Monday, December 4: Monthly council board meeting at town hall from 10 to noon. The agenda is posted on the town hall website. All are welcome.

Tuesday, December 5: Grief support, 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. At the Knox Gallery, Monterey Library. Co-sponsored by the community center. Refreshments will be provided. See page10.

Wednesday, December 6: Senior luncheon at Mt. Everett Regional High School in Sheffield, from 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Program starts promptly at noon. All welcome. Whether you have children cooking or performing or not, this is the place to be for holiday cheer. Join us! Call (413) 229-7037 to reserve.

Wednesday, December 13: Movie night at the Monterey Library. Beginning at 7 p.m. we are showing *Love Actually*, a British romantic comedy telling the stories of a dozen couples who fall in and out of love during the holidays in London. It's a classic "jammed with characters, stories, warmth, and laughs" and stars Hugh Grant, Emma Thompson, Laura Linney, and Bill Nighy—just to name a few. The movie was directly by Richard Curtis, who also directed *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, *Notting Hill*, and *Bridget Jones' Diary*. The council will serve light refreshments.

Wednesday, December 27: Game time at the community center from 2 to 4 p.m. Bring your favorite games or play one that's new to you. Fun for all ages and a great way to spend an afternoon with friends or make new ones. The council will serve light refreshments.

Ongoing Services

Parkinson's Support Group: This month's meeting is on Thursday, December 7, from 2 to 4 p.m., at the Monterey Library. Caregivers are encouraged to attend. Call Kathryn at the number above if you'd like more information.

Transportation: For trips to Great Barrington, Sheffield, Egremont, Stockbridge, and Pittsfield (Pittsfield is for medical only, Mon & Wed). Call (413) 591-3826. Temporarily expanded hours are M-F 7 a.m. to 8 p.m., Sat 8:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m., Sun 8:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Priority given to seniors and people with disabilities.

Foot Nurse: Beverly Dunn is available for home visits. Call (413) 446-2469 to schedule an appointment. The council covers $10 of her fee.

Free Safety Vests: Vests to ensure you are visible to car traffic when walking, running or biking are available in town hall.

— Lin Saberski, chair
Council on Aging

MoMA in Monterey

The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) came to Monterey last month in the form of a virtual tour of the museum presented by Francesca Rosenberg, MoMA's Director of Access Programs and Initiatives. Francesca is also the daughter-in-law of Monterey resident Sue Epstein and that is how she came to connect with our council on aging. Francesca was live on Zoom from her office in MoMA and a near-capacity Knox Gallery was live in the Monterey Library.

In addition to explaining to the assembled group how to access MoMA programs online, Francesca projected photos of some of MoMA's classic paintings—Van Gogh's *Sunflowers* and Matisse's *The Red Studio* to name two. She then led a fascinating discussion of several lesser known works, including one by Frida Kahlo, asking us to share what we noticed and how we felt about the various paintings.

It was a stimulating hour, with quite a few in the audience artists themselves, and lots of insightful comments from all. During the delicious lunch catered by Bizalion, many were heard to express a desire for similar programs in the future. The council hears you and we will explore the possibilities!

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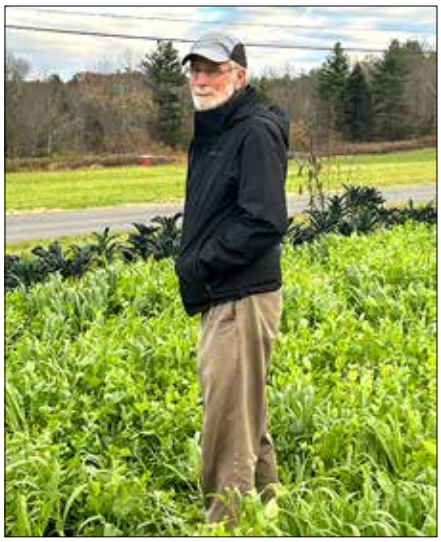
Who's Who
Steve Snyder



We had hardly settled into our chairs in the Monterey Church basement than emerged perhaps the most defining quality I noted about Steve Snyder—his curiosity about and marvel at the world around him, especially the people in it. Genuinely surprised that he'd been chosen for a "Who's Who" profile, (in fact, it took some wrangling to get Steve to agree), he offered that, "So many people are interesting…everyone I know I'd like to know more about." To this point, he reeled off the names of town folk that came to mind: Barbara Swann, who has long Quaker heritage, grew up in Japan and speaks fluent Japanese; Hy and Myrna Rosen with deep NYC roots, culturally, hospitably, and intellectually as wealthy as any couple you could meet; Susan Sellew with the rich wisdom, humor, and tenacity of a life lived close to the land that most of us only fantasize about. He continued, "I know little old ladies who drive Corvettes, shy people who are performers, people with great disabilities who are masters of life. Show me someone who isn't interesting and I'll show you questions you haven't asked." This was not polite self-effacement, that there was nothing special about him, but evidence of his genuine curiosity about others and fascination with the world around him.

Steve has lived and worked at Gould Farm for thirty-three years. He spoke of what led Agnes and Will Gould to create a community of radical hospitality* based on the precept: "From each according to one's ability; to each according to one's needs." This premise, unworkable at a macroeconomic level and disastrous at the level of a state, seemed a reasonable goal to achieve in a community the size of Gould Farm. At its earliest, if you weren't a Gould you were a guest. The egalitarian premise is that everyone has needs and everyone has abilities and disabilities (or different abilities, as Steve would say).

The mid-1960s ushered in the era of community psychiatry. Its central tenet was that mental illness arises not solely from within the individual, but from toxic conditions within the community itself. This led to a rapid growth of federally funded therapeutic communities characterized, in part, by an attempt to flatten the status hierarchy between patients and professional staff, since they are implicitly demeaning. Despite the premise that distinctions between staff and guests are inherently arbitrary, some are unavoidable and obvious. For example, only staff fill out time sheets.

But in most of the Farm's day-to-day work, whether it's forests and gardens, the kitchen, or the Roadside Store and Café, guests and staff work together to do what needs to be done. "It's the idea of people working together…recognizing that everybody flies in certain areas and crawls in others." There is a joke, Steve adds "…that the only difference between guests and staff is that guests get better and leave."

While Steve's primary responsibility is with the forests and gardens team, his long tenure at the Farm enables him to manage a diverse range of daily and seasonal activities from housekeeping to forestry. It is people working together on the tangible tasks: gardening, trail maintenance, landscaping, farming, forestry, making an ice skating pond, harvesting food on other farms that Steve finds most satisfying.

When I asked if he ever imagined he'd be at Gould Farm for thirty-three years, a wonderful but somewhat deceptive self-deprecating sense of humor emerged. With a sly smile, Steve maintained that, "The planning bone got left out of my body. My career goal was staying away from a desk." These quips bely a decidedly deep-thinking, self-reflecting man. Coming to Gould Farm, Steve said, was, "more like following an

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instinct than a conscious choice. I didn't search out a place to help people…more like a fish sensing water…I grew up in the nature of social service…helping people." Also, because the places of his happy childhood were rustic and pastoral, Gould Farm held a natural attraction for Steve.

Many generations of Snyders have worshipped and worked as members of the Free Methodist Church, a radical sect that split from the Methodists who had become more concerned with social status than the needs of the less fortunate. Steve gave a detailed historical account of the various Christian faiths, its fissures and varieties, and the conditions under which new forms emerged. Free Methodists find their mission in the basic biblical mandates; living out the kingdom of God in practical, personal, and social ways. Steve, noting the similarity to the Jewish concept of *Tikkun Olam*, that we're here to redeem what's not right in the world, actively studies these ideas with people more knowledgeable about them than he.

Steve's extended family through generations practiced medicine and teaching. When Steve was one year old, his father, in service to the Free Methodist Church, moved the family to Belgium to study French and tropical medicine and soon thereafter to Burundi, at the time a Belgian protectorate. He grew up there and in Rwanda through his grade and middle school years, learning the Kirundi language, returning as an adult to instruct teacher training and assist numerous projects. After his father's passing his three brothers' families have continued the work in central Africa and Haiti. Service to others is in Steve's and his family's nature, if not in their genes.

When I asked if he'd ever imagined doing his life over differently, he chuckled— "Whatever was missing in the planning bone was doubled-up in imagination." After a pause— "Getting married, having a family….maybe I wasn't brave enough to get married." Then he quipped, "Schopenhauer said only philosophers can be happy in marriage, and philosophers don't marry." I'm not quite sure what he meant by that, but I found it funny anyway. Steve taught high school French for two years in Illinois, finding it a tiresome job. "I struggled with a system that didn't nurture interest." But teaching in Rwanda clearly captured his interest. I asked Steve, a lifelong bachelor living alone in his home at the Farm, if he ever gets lonely? He chuckled, replying, "A couple of years ago someone from the council on aging asked whether I'd experienced isolation during the pandemic. I said, not as much as I'd hoped for." His wry sense of humor, again on display here, registered differently when he added, "I live in a community that's a social pressure cooker."

Earlier, I described Steve as a deep-thinking man; self-reflective, and curious, not only about others but himself too. He steered me to a podcast that fascinates him— "The Hidden Brain." Steve wants to know more about everyone he knows. He claims, "I'm a mystery to myself, and I'd be surprised if most people aren't." No surprise then that he considered psychoanalysis. But..too costly, too time-consuming. Knowing all this, had I been his missing planning bone, I'd have told him he'd make a terrific psychologist. I imagine Steve chuckling, "Maybe Bob, but all those desks…?"

Addendum: Quite accidentally, shortly after having written the above, I stumbled on a couple of lines from a masterpiece of a novel I'd read recently. It was open to a page where the Commandant of a concentration camp reflects on his conversations with a Russian prisoner he had been interrogating. It is a brilliant metaphor of human relationships that I found perfectly descriptive of Steve's approach to others. "What an interesting old man. Yes, once you get inside the nucleus of the atom, the forces of attraction begin to act on you as powerfully as the centrifugal forces." From *Life and Fate*, by Vasily Grossman.

— Bob Cutick

**For an excellent description of Gould Farm's origins, see the* Monterey News*, January 2023.*

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December at the Knox Gallery
Community Show—*Glow*

Our traditional wintertime community group show opens December 8! As has been the tradition, this is a show open to all Monterey artists and friends. The exhibition will be on view through January 20, 2024. There will be an opening reception on Saturday, December 9 from 5:30 to 7 p.m.

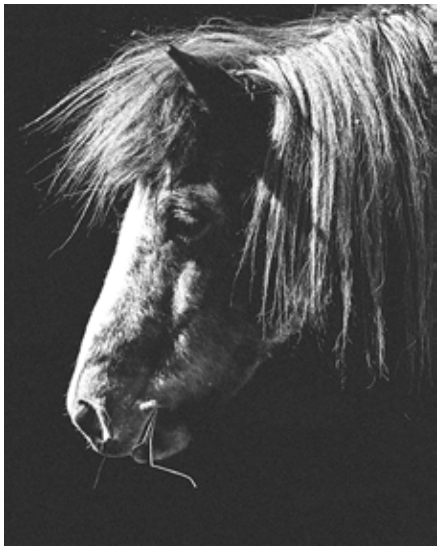
We have had an enthusiastic response to this year's theme, *Glow*, and to our continuing tradition of a community exhibition. There will be both two- and three-dimensional pieces in a variety of media, including photography, painting, clay, mixed- and multi-media. Participants include artists who have shown before at the Knox Gallery, and some who will be showing in the future. Most of the artists are from Monterey, but we also exhibit and welcome artists from several nearby towns.

Wendy Benjamin, a Monterey artist and participant, commented that this event is meaningful to her: "The community show gives me the opportunity to showcase my artwork. I had never thought of going public with my art. The welcoming, non-judgmental atmosphere that our wonderful community espouses has afforded me a space in which to share my art and the joy it brings me."

Please check the library website for details. All Knox Gallery events are admission free. Exhibits can be viewed during library hours (see back page of this issue). At present, masks are optional in the library, but we encourage visitors to check current Covid protocols before attending any of our events. Knox Gallery, Monterey Library, 452 Main Road, Monterey, MA, MontereyMassLibrary.org/Knox-Gallery; Facebook.com/KnoxGallery.

—MaryPaul Yates

Collage —*Wendy Benjamin*



Hestur —*Connor Simone*

Monday Supper Club
December 11 for "Brupper"

I was filled with gratitude as my plate piled with food at supper club last month. It was fitting, considering the theme was "Giving Thanks." Food is love, a gift of life, and the cherished recipes that expressed that offering covered the buffet table in an array of dishes such as baked beans, lentil soup, cheesy potatoes, lasagnas, chili, chicken pot pie, vegetable stew, and green salad (to name a few). I didn't do much perusing of the dessert table, but I am aware that Wendy Germain baked the first pie of her life that day...a butternut custard pie, made with crust she had made that weekend at the pie crust workshop the MCC hosted—the word at the table was the crust was as flaky as its teacher (hyuck-hyuck).

Mentioning flakiness brings snow to mind, and trying very hard to keep the salt and gravel-crusted driveway shoulders (AKA snow boulders) out of mind, fluffy, white drifts of snow bring thoughts of the holidays. What do the holidays lead to? Seeing family, celebrations, decorating, implementing the necessary changes to get into hibernation mode...and FOOD. One of my favorite memories is sitting down to breakfast on Christmas morning to scrambled eggs, bacon, pineapple, and my mom's pecan sticky buns...YUM. I'll also mention the "I can hardly sit still in eager anticipation of opening my stocking which is so stuffed it's practically making the brace it's hanging on sag" excitement. The feeling was special, and akin to lazy Sunday breakfasts, when the relaxed morning produced breakfasts of pancakes, waffles, sausages, Finnish pancake, plättar, apple cinnamon french toast, bacon...too bad today is Friday.

Getting to the point here: in an effort to make the theme non-denominational, our theme for December Supper Club will be "Sunday Brunch." We will have this "brupper" on Monday, December 11, at 6 p.m. It'll be breakfast and lunch for dinner—we'll kill three birds with one stone's throw from another.

Please RSVP at supperclubmonterey@gmail.com by the end of the day on December 10. May your (culinary) force be with you!

—Hanna Jensen

Roadside 2.0
Almost There!

Greetings Monterey Community,

It's been an exciting journey since that sunny Sunday in May when we gathered for the groundbreaking ceremony of the Roadside Store and Café along Route 23 in Monterey. We are thrilled to share this progress update as we near the completion of this much-anticipated project.

Construction: The construction of the new Roadside has been progressing steadily, and we are delighted to report that most of the building is now complete. The site, nestled in the heart of the Berkshires, is taking shape as a welcoming extension of Gould Farm, embodying the spirit of community and purpose.

What's next? The finishing touches are being put on the sidewalks, creating pedestrian-friendly pathways that invite visitors inside the new café and store, as well as outside to enjoy the patio area. Additionally, the parking lot is nearing completion, providing convenient access for guests eager to experience the charm of Roadside. Working closely with the Monterey's Public Works Department, some much needed drainage improvements were addressed along Route 23 and Swann Road. Inside the marketplace and dining room, we are focusing on the intricate details that will make Roadside a cozy haven. The interior shelving and counters are currently being fabricated, adding the final touches that will showcase Gould Farm's commitment to quality and aesthetics. The heartbeat of the Roadside will lay in its kitchen, where culinary delights will be crafted using ingredients from our garden, farm, and bakery. Soon, the kitchen will come to life with the installation of equipment, bringing us one step closer to serving you delicious meals prepared with care and dedication.

Funding Update: We are incredibly grateful for the support we've received from our community. As of now, we have raised $160,000 towards our $194,000 goal for kitchen equipment and furnishings. Your generosity has been instrumental in making Roadside a reality. If you haven't had the chance to contribute yet, don't worry—we continue to accept donations to help us reach our target and ensure the success of this vital project.

Stay connected: The Roadside Store and Café is not just a building; it's a symbol of connection, community, and purpose. We invite you to keep an eye on our social media channels for regular updates on the construction progress. We can't wait to share the completed Roadside with you and welcome everyone back to this special place that holds a unique space in the heart of Monterey.

—Stephanie McMahon
Photos by Lisanne Finston

Almost looks like the old days are here again, almost...

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Monterey Library Notes

The library will be closed on Monday, December 25 and Monday, January 1, 2024 for the holidays. It will be open all other regularly scheduled times. In the event of bad weather this winter, please check the website or call the library, (413) 528-3795, before you come to confirm if we are open. We do have a generator, so electric power outages won't close the library. Please come down to charge your devices and access the internet, or simply to warm up and use the restroom.

—Mark Makuc
Library Director

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Monterey Lit the Holidays for a Fourth Year

On Saturday, November 25, the town of Monterey turned out in force for the fourth annual Monterey Lights the Holidays (MLTH). Monteryans were treated to a musical opening number with Bonner McAllester and Joe Baker playing hammer dulcimer and guitar, followed by librarian Mark Makuc to kick off the festivities.

Allan Dean on the trumpet, R.J. Supa on the microphone.

As emcee, I was honored to introduce poet Don Barkin, who read "Good Hours" by Robert Frost as well as his own "At the Cabin." The audience was treated to the musical stylings of renowned trumpeter Allan Dean. Dean played a medley of winter-themed tunes including "Jingle Bells" and "Let It Snow" from inside the vestibule of the library.

Next, Dennis Lynch—who spear-headed MLTH four years ago as a way to get people together despite the pandemic—asked the crowd to light their candles, and then led the crowd in the countdown for the tree and menorah lighting.

Laurie Shaw, chair of the Monterey Community Center board (MCC), shared her closing statements championing the community, and invited everyone inside the Knox Gallery for warm apple cider and doughnuts. But not before Bonner McAllester led the crowd in a rousing rendition of "This Little Light of Mine." Wendy Germain captured the entire event on film, as part of her ongoing oral histories documentation of the community.

This ended a busy weekend in Monterey, with the American Chestnut Foundation hosting an at-capacity event at the MCC Saturday afternoon, followed by a chestnut roast at Tree Warden, Kevin West's house, another Monterey tradition.
(See page 23.)

—R.J. Supa, director
Monterey Community Center

Good Hours

I had for my winter evening walk—
No one at all with whom to talk,
But I had the cottages in a row
Up to their shining eyes in snow.
And I thought I had the folk within:
I had the sound of a violin;
I had a glimpse through curtain laces
Of youthful forms and youthful faces.
I had such company outward bound.
I went till there were no cottages found.
I turned and repented, but coming back
I saw no window but that was black.
Over the snow my creaking feet
Disturbed the slumbering village street
Like profanation, by your leave,
At ten o'clock of a winter eve.

—Robert Frost, 1874 –1963

At the Cabin

I shot up at the hiss—it was midnight—
and saw like shivering spring flowers the light
of candles blinking in the woods outside,
and then the glint of an ice-skate ride
like chalk across my pond's black slate
rattling each candle on its chipped plate.
As a kid I'd skated at dusk and caught
my blade on branches trapped in the ice. I fought
for balance but was ridden by my weight
down against the pond's hard cheek.
Now a woman's voice called out—I thought
to me until I heard a man speak.
Then they let their skate blades talk instead
like two who whisper fervently in bed.

—Don Barkin

Tom Mensi

The last piece of playground equipment is now in service!

Discussion for *Lunar Eclipse*

On Friday, November 3, more than twenty members of the community gathered at the Monterey Community Center to discuss the Shakespeare and Company premiere of Donald Marguelies' *Lunar Eclipse*, a two-person play about a couple in their twilight years, starring Monterey resident Karen Allen, along with Reed Birney. Joanne Bell, who was one of many locals who saw the play with the Council on Aging on October 21, suggested the discussion group, and the MCC organized the *hors d'oeuvres* and sign-up.

After everyone got their snacks, a rousing discussion ensued as visitors shared their opinions on the writing, acting, staging, and costuming of the play. Some folks shared personal stories of their own experiences in marriage and parenthood, as it related to the play.

The community center and the council on aging are looking to partnering for future outings.

—R.J. Supa director,
Monterey Community Center

Daytime Book Group

Our next meeting is on December 13, at 1:30 p.m., in the Monterey Library. This month's book is *The Tea Girl of Hummingbird Lane*, by Lisa See.

New members are always welcome.

—Beth Hoffman
bhainteriors@gmail.com

Here's a Thought

Not My Usual Way to Dive In

As I began to scroll through my photos to find something that fits my theme this month, I felt prompted to start with my recent photos. It's not my usual way to dive in. The result surfaced within a minute, again unusual.

When I saw it, joy rose in me spontaneously, more potent than the clamor of the world. All the current maelstroms reach out to snag my attention. I mean the wars and the calls for violence. When my joy at the image became words, the words surprised me: Oh! There's the "Prince of Peace."

The thought was likely acres, acres and New England stone walls, away from the painter's impulse as she created her work, but there it was. I could turn away from it, or claim it. I didn't turn away, so here we are. Me with my metaphors and you reading the paper. Confronted with, confounded by, simplicity. So I'm going to stay with simple sentences and then sign off for the year.

Life is burgeoning around us, even in winter. It goes underground, but it doesn't go away. Spring comes. Lambs are born. Lamb chops go to the market and almost nobody acknowledges their source. Or their "Source."

Lambs have mothers. This is a world where the mother trees in the forest recognize their offspring. (Google it if that's news). Ewes are at least that much connected to their lambs. Every lamb killed for my ongoing years of shepherd's pie has a mother.

I took this shot of Marilyn Orner's vital, vibrant sheep painting in the Knox Gallery one evening in November.

Everyone killed in war has a mother too. Some people killed in war are mothers. Others are fathers, brothers, sisters, friends, neighbors. It's an unpopular stance, but here it is. Let's all just stop the killing.

That's not a metaphor. I mean it literally. I mean it from a place of deep knowing that I could kill. I mean, I do. I eat lamb. I mean, I know I could kill a person. It's not comfortable knowledge to have. I learned this thirty-seven years ago.

I lived elsewhere then. I woke one April night to the ragged voice of my nearest neighbor. She screamed into the cold air. She screamed again and again. I can still hear the way she sounded. "Someone's in my house! I locked myself in the bathroom. He's trying to break the door! Call the police!"

So I did. My friend had stopped screaming before I got off the call. I didn't know why she'd stopped. Was she dead? Was she still alive? Had the intruder left because of her noise? Was the intruder heading for my house? I checked the locks again. I armed myself with a knife. I knew I could use it.

Gratefully, I didn't have to actually cross that threshold. My house wasn't his next destination. The state police assumed he went off deeper into the woods. My friend is alive and thriving. My initial response wasn't comfortable knowledge to have. It does make me more self-aware, though. Let's just stop the killing. Let's stop having killing seem like the only option.

I'm speaking to myself. What would I actually do in the direct path of violence? I don't know. Faced with violence long before that time, I did everything I could to save my life. Again gratefully, my own violence wasn't required to do that. Dr. King's words challenge me every day. "If you can't love the people on the other side of the bridge, don't walk with me. Stay home and pray."

Generally, I stay home and pray. In that way I'm more like one of the nuns in Mother Teresa's European home convent who supported her with prayer 24/7 than like Teresa herself. Both ways of spiritual warriorship are necessary. Sometimes, though, I walk the walk.

Sometimes, too, I talk the talk. In our hearts and in our shared world, let's just stop the killing.

—Mary Kate Jordan

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Monterey Welcomes
Jonathon Loy and Chris Riggleman

Immediately after purchasing their Monterey home on Beartown Mountain Road, Jonathon Loy and Chris Riggleman moved to a rent-controlled apartment in Washington Heights, New York. "We thought that we had created a perfectly balanced living situation, but no one anticipated the pandemic," Chris observed. When they felt the full impact of Covid, they pivoted. The apartment's loft was now their office and all their work became virtual. Their work lives shifted as Zoom became the daily commute.

Originally, Jonathon came to this area because he had family here. In 2013, he began to create the foundation for the Berkshire Opera Festival (BOF), in its ninth season. He is the co-founder of BOF and director of production overseeing the recitals as well as fully realized opera productions with live orchestras and superb singers. (berkshireoperafestival.org)

Jonathon has directed and produced opera throughout the United States, and also continues to work at the Metropolitan Opera as a guest director and staging staff, a half-year position.

As Jonathon's husband, Chris was introduced to the Berkshires while his professional life as an interior designer was totally based in Manhattan, working for Pembrooke and Ives. After their Covid shift, he started his own independent firm, Studio Riggleman, working primarily for residential clients in our area, including projects in Monterey, New Marlborough, Egremont, Great Barrington, and Stockbridge, and consulting on projects in Philadelphia, New York City, New Jersey, and Florida.

Jon and Chris — Photo by Asher + Oak

Chris works as a strategist on refreshing existing rooms and homes and also creating entirely new interiors. He sees the demand growing as this area becomes more of a full-time destination. (studioriggleman.com)

Their House

From 1780-1918, the Old Center school house on Beartown Mountain Road was used to educate the children of Monterey. In its last years Elihu Harmon served as the headmaster until the Spanish Flu pandemic closed it for good in 1918.

They had visited over thirty properties in the Berkshires but none grabbed their hearts like this one. Although it was out of their price range, they made an offer... and it was refused. Chris said, "From the moment that I walked into the house I just knew that this was the one."

The owner hadn't visited in years after the loss of her spouse, so the structure needed some TLC. Jonathon and Chris wrote the owner a letter expressing their commitment to be good stewards of this house. After conferring with her family, she agreed to sell them the house at a price they could afford, and they began making repairs in the spring of 2020.

Since Chris is a design professional, he created a new entry with stone stairs winding gracefully to a stone terrace. Then he successfully transformed the screen porch into a sunroom with sliding glass doors, skylights, and a new roofline.

Let us welcome these two creative entrepreneurs to Monterey!

— Linda Saul-Sena

Editor's Note: "Monterey Welcomes..." was suggested as a feature by Linda Saul-Sena, and she is getting the ball rolling with this profile. Linda will return to write others in the spring. If you would like to introduce someone who is new to Monterey, please contact the editor at MontereyNews9@gmail.com.

Cookbook Club

It was a small group in November but a spicy one as we enjoyed a few recipes from *The Mediterranean Dish*. There won't be a meeting in December but we will reconvene on January 22, 2024 to bring in the New Year with more new recipes. Cookbook to be announced. Please email wendygj@gmail.com to get on the email list.

— Wendy Jensen

Monterey Historical Society News

Mohicans – "We Are Still Here"

As mentioned last month, October included Indigenous Peoples' Day. On October19, Rob Hoogs delivered an illustrated talk about the Mohicans entitled: "We Are Still Here—Stockbridge-Munsee History, Culture and Enduring Presence."

Michael Johnson also presented a short film he made: "The Return of the Mohicans – Walking in the Footsteps of our Ancestors." The following are a few highlights from Rob's talk.

First, the name Mohicans. This is an English version of their name for themselves, *Muh-he-con-neok*, which means "The People of the Waters that are Never Still." It refers to their living along what we now call the Delaware and Hudson rivers, which ebb and flow from tidal action, and which remind them of their origins in the far Northwest along a great tidal water.

The Mohicans and their ancestors, the Lenni Lenape, lived along these great eastern rivers and hunted in the uplands including the Berkshires. Archaeological evidence establishes that there were substantial year-round villages in the Berkshires dating five to seven thousand years ago!

They had a sophisticated society of villages which combined agriculture with hunting, fishing, and foraging for nuts, berries, and tubers such as "ground nuts." Over half their diet came from their agriculture, done primarily by the women and children. (The men were out hunting for days at a time.)

Agricultural fields near village along a river.

They usually moved their villages to a new area on a five-to-ten year basis, allowing their fields to regenerate. Clearing the forest and preparing new fields for cultivation was done mostly by burning.

They knew and used over five hundred native plants for food and medicinal purposes.

They carefully managed the land, burning off underbrush in the spring and fall to encourage growth of herbaceous plants which served as food for their prey—deer, elk, moose, etc., that they hunted in fall and winter. Their land use practices created a sustainable long-term eco-system that relied on large land areas and relatively low population density.

The Mohicans' central council seat was called Esquatak —the place of the hearth—located on an island south of Albany. (The present town name "Schodack" is derived from this native place name.)

One of the main Indian paths from the Connecticut Valley to the Mohican's council seat is shown on the attached map as the New England Path. This old path was used by fur traders in the 1630s, including William Pynchon of Springfield, who established a trading post in Albany and along the Housatonic River at Great Barrington. (See the map on page 21.)

In the 1700s, this path was "improved" to allow for the establishment of the Housatonic Townships, starting with Sheffield/ Great Barrington, and Townships No. 1 (Tyringham-Monterey), No. 2 (New Marlborough), No. 3 (Sandisfield), No. 4 (Becket), and unincorporated land that became Bethlehem and Loudon (now Otis).

Before these new English settlements could be established, the Massachusetts Colony General Court required the colonists to purchase the land from the natives. This was done. However, it is fair to say that the Mohicans' concept of "land ownership" was very different from the European system of exclusive use with fixed boundaries. The natives' society relied on a doctrine of "fruitful use" of the land; families or villages had a right to use the fruits of what the land produced under their stewardship. But when they were done, others could use it. Boundaries between users were established by agreements, and confirmed on an annual basis with payments. It is similar to what we would consider a leasehold.

In any case, deeds were signed by Konkapot and other "Indian planters." Konkapot and Umpachene, sachems of two villages in Great Barrington and Stockbridge, agreed to move to a new town established for them—Indiantown (renamed "Stockbridge"). The new English settlers followed the old Indian trail to the newly chartered townships.

In 1784, only fifty years after Stockbridge was "given" to the Mohicans—supposedly to be theirs forever—most of their land had been taken by English settlers. Many of the Mohican men had also been killed in battle fighting on the side of the Continental army during the Revolutionary War.

The Mohicans were invited by the Oneidas to move to central New York. They established a new town—also named Stockbridge—where they lived successfully for another forty years—until the 1820s when the Erie Canal came through nearby.

They were then forcibly removed, traveling first to Indiana where land had been promised by the US Government. By the time they got there, that land had been sold. Many of their people then dispersed to the plains, Canada, and elsewhere. Some of the

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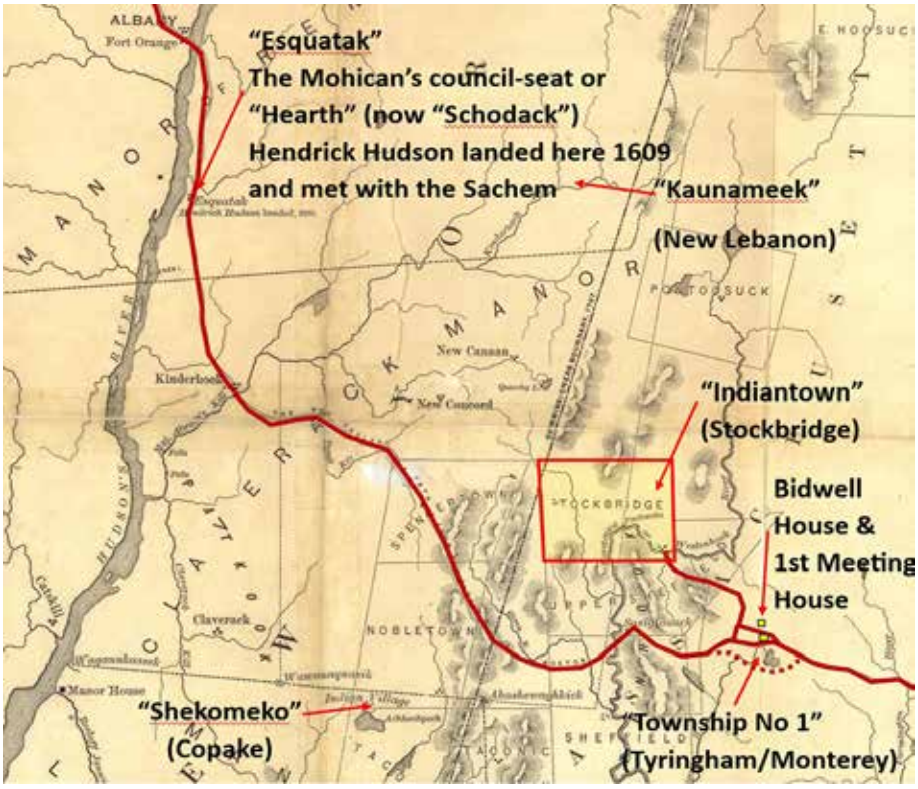

1750-60s map showing the old New England path from Boston to Albany, passing through Township No. 1 (Monterey). The road branched to go to Indiantown (Stockbridge).

tribe established a reservation in Southern Wisconsin, but they were later forced off that land by encroaching settlers. Finally, after a few more relocations, they found a home in Northern Wisconsin, near Bowler, where they live today as the Stockbridge-Munsee Band of the Mohican Tribe.

Although Wisconsin is their home today, the Hudson River Valley and the Berkshires are their ancestral homelands. And they continue to have a strong presence here, visiting often, and ensuring that their history and culture are not erased. They ask us to remember: "We Are Still Here."

If you would like to learn more, you can visit the Bidwell House Museum. With the help of Housatonic Heritage and in collaboration with the Stockbridge-Munsee Band of the Mohican Tribe, the museum has developed a Native American Interpretive Trail. This self-guided trail has signs and exhibits focusing on the Mohicans' long history and culture in these, their ancestral homelands. The museum grounds are open year round for free.

We will not have a history talk in November or December, but will be back with interesting history talks in January.

Thanks for your interest in the Monterey Historical Society.

—Rob Hoogs

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Bidwell House Museum

As we wind down to the close of 2023, the Bidwell House Museum Board of Directors and staff want to express how grateful we are to all of our neighbors in Monterey. By attending museum programs, hiking the trails, and volunteering at the museum, you have shown us how much you care about the Bidwell House. We feel so lucky to be a part of such a supportive and friendly community.

Our seasonal house tours ended in October and after a series of lovely candlelight tours in November, a winter quiet has settled over the museum. Inside, staff members are hard at work planning for a number of winter Zoom lectures along with a bevy of fun programs for 2024. To continue that work throughout the winter, we are asking for your help.

Our annual appeal campaign letter, with an update on the museum and images from this past year, went out in late November and we ask you to please consider donating to this end of the year fundraising campaign. The donations from our annual appeal allow us to keep sharing our trails, the Bidwell story and history education with the local community. If you would like to support the museum head to bidwellhousemuseum.org/donate/ and select "Annual Appeal" from the dropdown menu on the left.

Coming up in January, our winter Zoom series begins on January 10 with a performance from educator Tammy Denease, who you may remember from her portrayal of Elizabeth Freeman at the Bidwell House Museum in August of 2022. Registration for the program will open on the museum website later this month.

As we say each December, don't forget that the museum gardens and trails are open year-round for hiking, walking your dog, or even snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. Trail maps, along with information about our two self-guided outdoor walks, can be found on the front porch, the parking kiosk and on the museum website at bidwellhousemuseum.org/trails and bidwellhousemuseum.org/the-museum/guided-tours. Winter is a great time to visit the beautiful Bidwell property.

Have a wonderful holiday season!

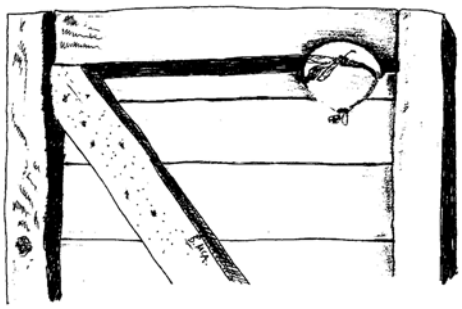
—Heather Kowalski
Executive Director

Nests High in the Trees: Piebald* Wasps

The trees have dropped their leaves, revealing much: the architecture of deciduous trees against the sky. And sunrise over a distant horizon twinkles now through those bare trunks and branches. The wind may move these, or you can move them yourself, just by swaying your own view side to side. This is a favorite moment for some of us sentimental humans. For us, the northeast summer, with leaves closing over, comes all too soon and too fast. We should move to Wyoming or Arizona. Then we would have sky galore—but maybe miss the trees and shade after all.

Who takes advantage of the cover of shade trees, up high? Our "bald-faced hornets*," with their remarkable sculptural paper nests. They often build these way up there, hidden by leaves and safe from predators. But even if some hungry upper-story predator did tear into a paper wasp nest, looking for a meal, there would be hell to pay. These social insects must protect the next generation and are equipped to do so. They can sting, even squirt their defense into the eyes of anyone within range, causing pain and temporary blindness.

We once needed to discourage a new nest a-building, so we were careful, wearing such armor as we could muster. We approached at night, in the cool, inactive time for wasps. The nest was coming along right where we were working on our own new house. We had dug a foundation place into the hillside and some brambles hung over the diggings. Our next step was to mix cement, wash and add big stones against



Paper wasps working on their nest.

our slip-forms. But here was this wasp nest. So, we put on all our rain gear, got flashlights, clippers, and a big paper bag. Goggles, as I recall. Working together two of us big humans were able to snip off the vegetation, catch the nest in the bag, pinch together the top, and dash off into the woods to fling the whole thing far away from our work site. Happy ending at least for us. We live here still, almost fifty years later. As for the paper wasps, they will have had to start over. Maybe they managed, maybe not. If they died, someone will have eaten them and benefitted. We should be so lucky, ourselves, to eat or be eaten. Or at least composted.

Lately I discovered a big paper wasp nest up the road. It has been there for weeks, but I never saw it because it was hidden by leaves. Once the leaves fell and I noticed the nest, I looked for it every day, and saw wasp-y comings and goings at its entranceway, near the bottom tip of the tear-drop shaped nest, but up one side a little. Then one day: big changes! Someone else had found the nest and plundered it. I read up and learned that blue jays will do this. And once a jay has had a good meal at a paper wasp nest the pleasure is not forgotten. This jay will remember and find another wasp nest.

What about the attacking, stinging protectors? Not present in winter. All will have died off in the nest, including the most recent larvae. The queen has left them, gone to a hibernaculum in some protected nook, cranny, or trunk, probably under bark or in split wood. She has mated and will emerge in the spring to start over. She will get to work building a new nest, finding old wood or even paper or boards which she can pull apart with her mandibles, chew up, mix with her starchy saliva, and start making paper comb where she will lay her eggs. Often a queen picks a site up in a tree, but sometimes hanging over a cellar hole in construction, or even against a building or, as in this drawing, inside the door of our garden toolshed.

She makes layers of comb, starts the eggs, and then covers the whole nest with a paper shell. When the eggs hatch, she goes foraging for food for the babies. These wasps eat all sorts of things: insects, vegetation, even raw meat. They chew these up and feed them to the babies. Some babies will become workers, some will be queens.

The colony grows. New queens develop and fly off to start colonies of their own, with growing larvae, workers, soldiers ready to drive off any interference. New eggs take six days to hatch and grow as larvae for eight more days. Then in nine or ten days they become adult workers. The average colony has four hundred workers and can be fourteen inches in diameter and twenty-three inches long, covered with a mottled grey paper envelope.

Once these remarkable sculptures are abandoned in the fall, they are not reused, and the last generation of larvae and workers die inside. This is easy pickings for the educated blue jay in search of a meal. The nest I have been watching now has two big holes torn in it and from where I stand fifteen feet below, I can see daylight right through these torn places.

So the wasps live on now, reorganized into blue jays.

We should all be so useful, and maybe we can even fly next time around.

— Bonner McAllaster

**Piebald. They have striking black and white patterns on their heads and faces and are often called "Bald-faced Hornets," short for Piebald. They are wasps.*

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Championing an Iconic Tree
4th Annual Chestnut Roast

The now functionally-extinct American Chestnut, with its bountiful nuts, medicinal properties, and straight, rot-resistant wood, was a critical resource for the indigenous people of this region, the colonists who followed them, and a whole web of wildlife.

A story passed down among the Iroquois Confederacy told of a boy who was in trouble for eating the last of his grandfather's precious chestnuts. In remorse, the boy takes a long journey and surmounts many obstacles to obtain more nuts from an ancient "grandfather" chestnut tree. When he returns to his village, he hands out chestnut seeds to all his people, encouraging them to "plant them all over, so that they can be shared with everyone."

That spirit was on display at the fourth annual Monterey "Chestnut Talk and Roast," which was celebrated, as usual, on the day after Thanksgiving, a.k.a. Native American Heritage Day. This event also offered an opportunity for participants to become "Chestnut Champions"—stewards of hybridized, somewhat blight-resistant nuts that could help reintroduce the tree to the woods of Monterey in the southern Berkshires.

At this year's event, John Meiklejohn and his colleague John Occhialini, members of the Massachusetts/Rhode Island Chapter of The American Chestnut Foundation, talked about the legendary tree, which once dominated many eastern forests, from Georgia to Maine. They also discussed the blight that killed virtually all of these trees—an estimated 4 billion of them—as well as the herculean efforts to reintroduce the species to its native range using a variety of strategies.

The two Johns arrived in Monterey with a cooler containing sixty carefully packed third-generation backcross chestnuts, the result of an ongoing decentralized effort of selective breeding to develop a blight resistant tree with most of the characteristics of the American chestnut. This has been done by backcross breeding to introduce the blight resistance found in Chinese chestnuts, a much smaller tree that evolved along with the fungus and thus developed a resistance to it.

After the talk, participants assembled on Eaton Road, where five chestnut trees

John Occhialini, left, and John Meiklejohn, third from left, of The American Chestnut Foundation, were eager to see the two chestnut specimens that were planted along Eaton Road more than thirty years ago by Mark Makuc. They seem to be thriving, in spite of cancres, the visible sign of infection by the pathogenic fungus that causes Chestnut blight.

of uncertain genetic provenance were planted some thirty years ago. Two of them have survived, despite signs of the blight, and often provide several pounds of the delicious nuts, which are roasted by Kevin West on an outdoor grill. This year, possibly due to the late frost, the bounty was not as plentiful as usual, and was supplemented with commercial nuts, possibly from Chinese or European chestnuts.

Reintroducing the iconic American chestnut to its native range has been the aim of The American Chestnut Foundation for more than forty years. The vision is shared by scientists and others who are committed to the restoration of what was once a cornerstone species in Eastern hardwood forests. The foundation has established more than 450 breeding and test orchards and planted some 400,000 new trees, with various levels of blight resistance. The effort has proved more complex than was originally hoped, said Meiklejohn, noting that a number of genes contribute to the trees' resistance. Recent efforts to introduce transgenic chestnuts, while promising, also offer various complications.

The chestnut roast was sponsored by the Monterey Native Plants Working Group, in collaboration with the community center and our local tree warden, Kevin West. The researchers will return in spring to turn over viable nuts to a dozen or more "Chestnut Champions" who can commit to caring for the seedlings and to reporting on their progress. Inevitably, many will fail to thrive, but we may be able to get a dozen or more healthy chestnuts growing around town. We hope to track their progress.

At the roast, John M. and John O. talked about the efforts to revive the American chestnut, including through seedling orchards like the one they manage in Granville. They have also worked with Doug Miner who started a seedling orchard a few years ago on the border between Monterey and Sandisfield.

If you would like to be part of the effort to restore the American chestnut, kindly contact John Meiklejohn, jmiserve183@gmail.com, to learn about volunteer opportunities at local seed orchards. And to learn more about events sponsored by the Monterey Native Plants Working Group, contact Pollinators01245@gmail.com.

—Janet Jensen

Green Sidewalks

As a frequent visitor to Monterey, my nature-starved Brooklyn eyes and spirit are nourished each time I visit your bucolic village. In my naiveté, I've assumed that being surrounded by trees, flowers, and meadows, instead of buildings, concrete, and vehicles equals a healthy ecology, and have only gradually learned that despite the plethora of flora, your little corner of paradise faces environmental challenges including invasive plants and the loss of native pollinator plants—and that some residents are seeking to address these challenges.

Back in Brooklyn, my work also seeks to address environmental challenges—those of a nature-deprived city, in the most hostile, yet most user-accessible areas—sidewalks.

Problems I try to tackle.

1. Weakened trees: Many street trees have outgrown their tree pits, or been nearly paved over, leaving the trees weak and vulnerable to premature death. Summertime drought-like conditions brought about by climate change have further threatened the health of many street trees.

By enlarging tree beds to enhance living conditions for street trees, we provide more access for roots to water and oxygen and for growth.

2. Population: The planet is losing natural spaces due to population explosion and urbanization.

Renaturing our cities by reintroducing "natural" areas with native plants supports critical and dwindling insect populations.

We recognize the value of community gardens, backyards, parks, green roofs, but sidewalks have been ignored as suitable green spaces.

3. Stormwater: Stormwater overloads happen when it rains heavily. Our sewers overflow and untreated sewage runs into city waterways.

Removing concrete redirects storm water into the ground, and this water also feeds trees.

4. Climate change, which brings about heat islands and excess carbon: Heat island effects are when the summer temperatures rise to dangerous levels, especially in cities. Concrete absorbs the sun's heat and reflects it back into the air. Concrete can be up to 50° warmer than air temperatures.

Left: A paved over tree; right: The same tree pit, roots freed, open to rain water.
Photos by Talia Willner.

It is widely recognized that there is excess carbon in the atmosphere. Soil and vegetation pull heat from the air and then cool the air through evapotranspiration (water evaporating from the soil), and transpiration (water evaporating through leaves), both are very helpful. Transpiration is more effective than evapotranspiration.*

We combat excess carbon by removing concrete from sidewalks, and installing carbon-sequestering plants and soil mixed with basalt rock dust, which expedites and enhances carbon sequestration.

5. Stress and well being: Conditions of city life cause chronic stress which diminishes our well being, promoting physical and mental health problems. Exposure to nature on our daily walks reduces stress and promotes well being.

It is difficult and frustrating work, but as you can see from some of the photos, the rewards of transforming sidewalks to gardens is manifest.

—Talia Willner

**Evapotranspiration: evaporation of water from soil. Transpiration: process by which plants absorb water through their roots and release it as vapor through their leaves. Both of these liquid-to-gas processes use heat from the surroundings and thus cool the air.*

A Berkeley Lab study found that trees can transpire one hundred gallons (378.5 L) of water every day, which has the same cooling effect as five standard air-conditioning machines running for twenty hours.

To see more of TreePEP (Tree Pit Enlargement Project) on Facebook. There are extensive photos of completed projects and community groups doing the work.

Afterword

Talia came to stay in Monterey for a month this past summer. She engaged in activities in town, made new friends, and told me about her projects in Brooklyn. Climate change, and related effects, are huge-scale problems. Talia and the folks she works with are doing what they can in a small-scale way, tackling local opportunities to improve their living climate by removing concrete paving between sidewalks and curbs, and replacing them with open soil and gardens. She sees these projects as offering immediate benefits to the communities who live in those areas, and some small, but valuable long-term benefits to our world. So I asked her to provide some information for the Monterey readers.

I also asked her to describe the process. She replied, "I'm not sure I have the stomach for it. And, it's kinda boring and frustrating to discuss the mechanics of how the work gets done. There's no way I could write about it without coming off as cynical. People always ask me tree questions, and I have to explain that I'm not an arborist or tree expert. My expertise is much more mundane—regulations! I have to work with three New York City agencies: Parks Department, Department of Transportation, and the Landmarks Preservation Commission. These agencies all have policies regarding sidewalks and their policies contradict each other and are generally antithetical to the goal of creating a more environmentally sustainable city. And—they don't cooperate or even care if they're working in opposition to each other. I've become a bureaucrat and lay attorney in order to navigate, confront, maneuver, and even instruct the agencies about their own policies and why they're problematic, and sometimes just dead wrong to get things done." >

The Pileated Woodpecker Spectacle

The pileated woodpecker is one of the highest profile birds on the North American continent. It is nearly as big as a crow, black with bold white stripes down its neck. Its name, "pileated," is derived from the Latin *pileatus* meaning "capped," as the top of its head is covered with a flaming red crest.

It drums a loud startling tattoo into the air while carving a nesting hole or search for food in the hollows of a dead trees with its razor sharp bill. As it flies rapidly between the trees of the forest it calls out with a laughing, whinny sound that is unforgettable.

As in my illustration the woodpecker tail is pressed tightly against the trunk of a tree for a better grip on the bark, resisting the outward force created by its excavating. The woodpecker is searching to find ants, especially carpenter ants and wood-eating grubs, using its tongue to extract insects out of dead wood. My drawing shows both parents with freshly caught insects in their bills. They feed them by regurgitation for about a month after hatching, until the chicks fledge and can supplement their own diet with fruits and nuts and any wood-boring beetle larvae that come into season. Their excavations in smaller dead trees can be so extensive that the trees might break as a result. (See Barbara Tryon's photo at right.)

In recent decades the population of pileated woodpeckers has increased greatly to about 2.6 million over most of the northern continent as former farmlands grew into more mature habitat, with a sufficient number of dead trees. A mated pair stays together on their territory all year round. While they rarely reuse a nesting hole, their holes provide living quarters for no less than thirty-eight additional species of animals, birds, and other wildlife. The dead woodlands come alive with their renewed drumming, laughing loudly as they move through the woods.

With much else going wrong in nature with global warming and climate change disrupting avian seasonal migration, habitat loss, declining prey insect populations, the pileated woodpeckers' conservation success is giving hope to the improved future of our wildlife and wild birds. This good news is even better because their habitat is classified as a "keystone environment," and we can look forward to their energetic drumming and laughing for decades to come.

—George B. Emmons

But Talia is working hard to make her local environment better, more livable. This connects directly to all the folks in Monterey who volunteer to make our local environment, and the town better, whether it's a new playground, rebuilding the library, building trails, making long-range open spaces plans, and more.

—Stephen Moore, editor

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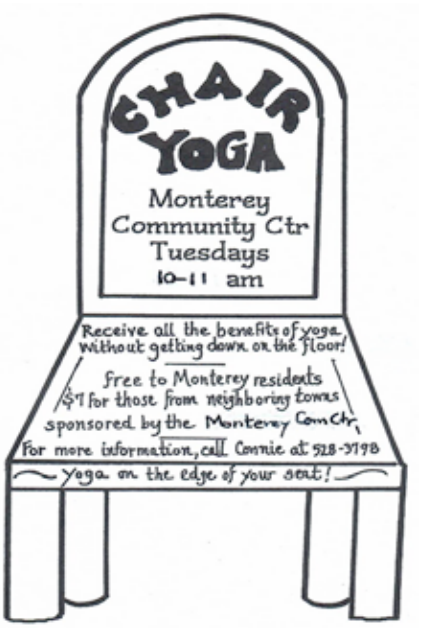
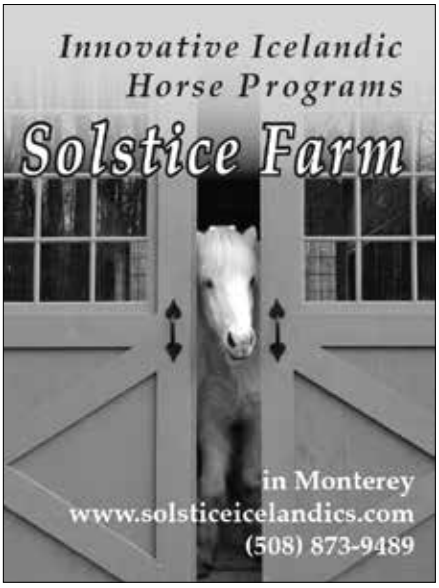
There was a gathering in front of the library on November 11 to commemorate Veterans Day, with Liz Goodman, pastor of the Monterey UCC church addressing the group. No one sent in any further reporting, but Maureen Banner sent in this photo.



Hanna Jensen (in front holding the pie) held her first pie crust workshop. Joining her were (l. to r.) Judy Kamenstein, Mark Little, Myra Rodriquez, RJ Supa, Beth Hoffman, Wendy Germain, Andrea Green, and Jan Feinman.



RJ's chicken pot pie made with his crust from the class.

Come Join the Jam

Every other Sunday at the MCC amateur musicians gather to join in music and fun. This month we'll meet on December 3 and 17. There is no pressure to be any more than people who want to get better at their instruments and enjoy each other's support. Players help each other with fingering, and singers sing as loudly or softly as they are comfortable.

I play harmonica, and wanted to find people to play with, so based on some experience at my former home in New Jersey I formed MCC Jam. The rotating group, and a number of regulars, play everything from rock to folk to "King of the Road" and there are always opportunities for those who want to take a solo if they feel so moved. Chord charts go up on the screen and if people are unfamiliar with a song we listen to a clip to get the groove.

There is a private Google group where I ask for song suggestions and provide access to the music as well as the YouTube clips. If you are interested, try us out! You can reach me at mccjamgroup@gmail.com. See the MCC website for dates or look for postings in the town Google group. Remember, music brings us together!

—Mark Andrews

Kids at New Marlborough Central School were busy making crafts for sale at the Holiday Fair that was held on December 2.

The Wilds of November

Snow came early in November here in Monterey, and covered the ground only long enough to show some good tracks and to decorate the Gould Farm cows. Bonsai Cox sent over a lovely photograph of that moment (at right).

Later in the month we had tracks and scratching on the ground in our upper pasture, also over in the state forest across Hupi Road from us. Through the years we have enjoyed the turkey scratchings, as they forage for acorns, worms, anything. These looked different, though, scraping right down to the ground leaving a bare patch quite oval in shape. Not like turkeys kicking up the leaves. This was seriously ground-oriented, and finally I found some of these bare spots with clear deer tracks. The deer had been scraping the ground. I'd never seen this before but reading up I now think they were after the dirt.

My book is *The World of the White-tailed Deer*, 1962, by Leonard Lee Rue III and I recommend it most highly. I have the other two books Rue wrote for the Living World Books series and they too are remarkable: raccoons and red foxes. Thanks, Mom and Dad, for getting these for me when I was a young teenager.

Rue writes "Deer consume soil for the sake of the salt it contains," and among his many black and white photographs in this book there is one of quite a hole dug into the ground by deer eating dirt. Small rocks and pebbles are left, plenty of soil is gone.

Deer hunting season is upon us as the *Monterey News* goes to press. We have posted our place as a wildlife preserve. Let them eat their dirt in peace and safety.

Liza Catino, who keeps an eye on the wildlife around Lake Buel, sent a short video of a beaver swimming along parallel to the shore, hauling a long sapling or branch. Probably this was headed for the winter food larder somewhere near the beaver's house. Winter comes and seals off the surface of the pond or lake with ice, but beavers survive thanks to their underwater storage of branches and saplings, and to the underwater and under-ice door or tunnel out of the beaver house. That sapling will have a sharp end where the beaver cut it down with excellent teeth. Chisel teeth, some call them. Near the house, before the ice forms, the beaver will swim down under and jam this sharp end into the mud at the bottom of the pond. The twiggy ends and leaves may stick up above the surface and later be caught in ice, but all winter the beavers can swim down and snip off lengths of fresh branches, pieces short enough to maneuver through the tunnel-door into the beaver house. Inside there is a shelf up out of the water, and there the beaver sits, nibbling off bark. When a piece of sapling is all stripped bare, the beaver takes it back down and out into the water and lets it go. It floats up under the ice and is carried by the slow current towards the dam. In spring we like to go pick up some of these sticks and use them for perches on our bird feeder. Or maybe handles for feather dusters. They are handsome and handy sticks with beaver tooth marks all along.

Liza tells me that she sees the beaver swimming by, still. Lake Buel has not yet frozen up.

The local hibernators, at least the bears and chipmunks, have not gone to ground. Some folks have started putting out birdseed. Many take their feeders in at night. Joe and Cora Baker saw a bear recently up along Mt. Hunger Road, under an apple tree at the old Oswald place. Our cat brought in a chipmunk in late November. See my drawing on page 31.

Joe has also seen a tick recently on his own left eyebrow, so these little eight-leggeds have not gone into their dormancy yet, either. Joe also reports two golden-crowned kinglets in Beartown State Forest near the Mount Hunger cemetery, and I saw a flock of turkeys carefully examining the ground along Route 23, moving along together for social eating. There were about twelve of them, not all the same age or size.

Bonsai Cox sent a photo of a "flotilla of ducks" on Stevens Pond at a distance, about fifty of them. Joe suggests they might be ring-necked ducks, but I couldn't see much detail other than sheer numbers.

Julie Shapiro reports a bobcat, near Hupi Road down by the old summer camp. She says it was a small bobcat.

Thank you for your observations and your interest!

— Bonner McAllester
bonnermca@gmail.com 413-528-9385

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Travelogue
The Museum of Everyday Life

If you just happen to be driving north or south on Vermont Route 16, maybe twenty-seven miles south from Canada, you'll pass this singular museum.

It is indeed dedicated to "everyday things." On the day I visited, there were displays on lists and notes, pencils, toothbrushes, bathing, mirrors, knots, scissors ("The Pivot and the Blade, an intimate look at scissors")… probably more. It is not large, it is not polished to the cosmopolitan viewer. Its collections are largely used items people have submitted in response to a call for categories of items.

Pencils: This exhibit included: a collection of at least a dozen used pencils, submitted by an artist, graduated from nearly new lengths down to stubs no more than one inch long, all sharpened by pocket knives: a black and white photo from a 50s-era movie about aliens with a man bent over holding a giant pencil with two hands: flexible novelty pencils; a string of five flat carpenters' pencils expertly knife-sharped on a flat side, cleverly displayed. A side display had all manner of one- and two-bladed manual pencil sharpeners. Some erasers. But then expository texts, as accompanies each exhibit subject, about the utility of pencils, their history, and some interesting philosophical thoughts that might not have occurred to the casual user. (They're just pencils after all—right? Who "thinks" about pencils?)

Knots: Of course—sailor's knots and splices, with a set of fids (knot tying tools) in graduated sizes designed for splicing; along with shoelaces, neckties and bowties, displays of various ways women in many cultures tie long wraps of fabric into garments, lovers knots given as gifts. By now you must be getting the idea of the nature of these displays.

Lists and Notes: From the full page of illuminating exhibit text is this example of the thought that goes into these exhibits:

"Lists, as accumulations of things, suggest infinity. Notes, as condensed versions of thoughts or ideas, are like tiny works of origami that unfold into entire stories. Each list or note can evoke a novel's worth of narrative; each suggests a time, a place, a situation, a mood, a feeling, a circumstance."

Other subsets of Lists and Notes includes: Unfinished Lists, To Do Books (with samples of course), Small Format To Do Lists; Passing Notes; Medieval Maginalia, and more.

And a note about the displays themselves. Curious, spindly armatures of bent wire (straightness eschewed in favor of frivolity); pencils hung between small slats from a picket fence; much-used frames, from some other purposes over years; a donation can made from a twenty-five-gallon milk can with a face created with welding bead on the top, a gaping smile revealing the slot into which to drop your donation, big shiny padlock on the side. In the background a short sound loop of "silbo gomero," a technique of whistling capable of traveling three to five kilometers between the rugged mountains of the Canary Islands, developed hundreds of years ago, and is its own language; lighting clearly without benefit of a professional lighting designer.

My son and I spent maybe ninety minutes there. Without his presence I could have easily doubled the time. This is a curiously curated collection of unsurprising artifacts, mindful time having been given to thinking about the significance of these everyday things in our everyday lives.

— Stephen Moore

Visit the museum website at museumofeverydaylife.org, and watch a short video at Vimeo.com.122361592.

Passing Notes
The thrill of passing notes in school has not disappeared with advent of new technologies. Who can forget stealthily folding a miniscule piece of paper underneath your desk while looking at the teacher with rapt attention, then boldly catapulting it to your neighbor's desk without being detected?

Unfinished List
On the opposite end of the spectrum from the exhaustive enumeration of the Laundry List, we find The Unfinished List. While the Laundry List aims to include everything possible down to the minutest detail, an unfinished list suggests infinity by the fact of its incompletion – a galaxy of possibility blossoming at the edge of its open parentheses. This Unfinished List was found by a Vermont couple after their tenant moved out of an upstairs apartment.

MontereyMA.gov

Our town website is a great way to access information about the town.

— Justin Makuc, Chair
Susan Cooper and Frank Abbott
Monterey Select Board
(justin@montereyma.gov)
(susan@gmail.com)
(frank@montereyma.gov)

For all meetings of town public bodies, go to the calendar on the home page. For agendas (with meeting location) and minutes, go to the individual board or commission tab.

Town Contact Information

Emergency! 911
Town Administrator:
528-1443 x111
admin@montereyma.gov
(for town boards and misc. questions)
Assessor: 528-1443 x115
assessors@montereyma.gov
Building Department: 528-1443 x118 buildingsafety@montereyma.gov
Community Center: 528-3600
calendar@ccmonterey.org
Fire Department (non-emergency): 528-3136
chief@montereyma.org
Highway Department: 528-1734
dpw1@montereyma.gov
Library: 528-3795
montereylibrary@gmail.com
Police Department (non-emergency)**:** 528-3211, Alt./Emergency 528-3211
mpdchief@montereyma.gov
Post Office: 528-4670
SBRSD (Schools): (413) 229-8778
Tax Collector: 528-1443 x117
montereytax@yahoo.com
(for questions about your tax bill)
Town Clerk: 528-1443 x113
clerk@montereyma.gov
Town website: Montereyma.gov, under each department, for office hours.

Driving in the Winter

Driving in winter conditions, especially in the Northeast where snow and ice are common, can be challenging for new-to-the-area drivers. Here are some important tips to help you navigate safely:

1.Prepare Your Vehicle

- Ensure your vehicle is in good condition. Check the brakes, tires, battery, and heating system.
- Consider switching to winter tires for better traction in snowy and icy conditions.
- Keep your gas tank at least half full to prevent fuel line freezing. The added weight will also help with control and braking.

2. Slow Down

- Reduce your speed, especially on snowy or icy roads. Drive at a speed that allows you to maintain control of your vehicle.
- Leave plenty of space between your car and the one in front of you for extra stopping distance.
- If you have a four-wheel-drive car, keep in mind that the four-wheel drive will help with moving forward and control but not with braking.

3. Avoid Sudden Movements

- Accelerate, brake, and steer gently. Sudden movements can cause your car to skid.
- If your car starts to skid, steer in the direction you want to go (the direction of the skid) without overcorrecting.

4. Use Your Lights

- Turn on your headlights, even during the day, to increase visibility.
- Use your fog lights or low beams in heavy snow or fog to avoid blinding other drivers with high beams.

5. Clear Snow and Ice

- Before driving, clear all snow and ice from your vehicle, including windows, mirrors, lights, and the roof. We've all seen snow and ice sheeting off a car ahead of us. In fact, in Massachusetts it is against the law to drive with snow on the roof after a storm. Keep an ice scraper and snow brush in your car.

6. Know Your Brakes

- If your car has antilock brakes (ABS), apply steady pressure to the brake pedal during a stop. If you don't have ABS, use a pumping motion to avoid locking the wheels.

7. Stay Informed

- Read on pages 11–12 in the November issue for how the Monterey Highway Department attacks the storm-covered roads and allows them to do their work without interference. Stay off the roads until they are plowed.
- Check the weather and road conditions before you start your journey. Wait for better conditions if possible.
- Listen to traffic reports for updates on accidents, road closures, and detours.

8. Pack Essentials

- Carry a winter emergency kit with items like a flashlight, blankets, extra clothing, non-perishable food, and a first-aid kit.
- Have a charged phone with a car charger in case you need to call for help.

9. Plan Your Route

- Choose well-traveled routes that are more likely to be plowed and treated.
- Let someone know your travel plans, including your estimated arrival time.

10. Practice Safe Maneuvers

- Avoid using cruise control on slippery surfaces.
- Be cautious on bridges and overpasses, as they tend to freeze before other roadways.

11. Stay Calm and Patient

- Winter driving can be stressful, so stay calm and focused.
- If conditions become too treacherous, find a safe place to pull over and wait for conditions to improve.

12. Learn from Experience

- Pay attention to what works best for you and adapt your driving style accordingly.
- Remember that winter driving requires patience and caution. If you're ever unsure about road conditions or your ability to drive safely, it's better to delay your trip or seek alternative transportation. Safety for yourself and others should always be your top priority.

— Kenn Basler

Police Emergency Contacts

- For real emergencies, call **911**.
- For non-emergencies to contact the Monterey Police Department, call:

528-3211

Wreathmaking workshop

The annual wreath making meeting was a jolly busy atmosphere with its wonderful pine sent in the air. Fifteen people were happy to learn how to make a wreath from scratch and others came equipped with their clippers and ribbons to join this "kick off-holiday event."

We had coffee, tea, muffins, and music, and a lot of nice exchanges about life, traditions, different cultures, and customs.

In the end everyone left with a wreath, a swag, or some beautiful self-made ornament. Happy Holidays!

—Catherine Hurst

One wreath made it all the way to the home of French Fry in Middlefield, MA.

Calendar

MCC events page 10
Council on Aging events page 11

Saturday, December 2: Gould Farm Holiday Fair, 10 a.m.–2 p.m. See page 3.

Tuesday, December 5: Grief support group, 1:30–3:30 p.m., MCC. See page 10.

Wednesday, December 6: Senior luncheon, Mt. Everett high school. 11:30 a.m.–2 p.m. See page 11.

Saturday, December 9:

Pie Crust 201 workshop. See page 10.

Knox Gallery opening, *Glow*, community exhibit, 5:30–7 pm. See page 14.

Monday, December 11: Monday Supper Club, church basement, 6 p.m. See page 14.

Wednesday, December 13:

Daytime Book Group, 1:30 p.m., library. See page 17.

Movie night at library. 7 p.m., showing *Love Actually*. See page 11.

Note: Library will be closed Mondays, December 25 and January 1. See page 16.

Monterey News

The *Monterey News* editorial address is PO Box 9, Monterey, MA, 01245. We invite signed letters, articles, drawings, poetry, and photographs. Submissions or inquiries may also be emailed to montereynews9@gmail.com or telephone us at (413) 329-7912

Bonner McAllester's chipmunk. Well, at least one of them!

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Contributions from local artists this month:
George Emmons, p. 25; Bonner McAllester, pgs. 22. 31.