

OTIS OBSERVER

Your Town, Your Neighborhood and You

December 2023 Vol IX Issue 87

Notice Diane Dyer

By Sandy Balayan

It took an unfortunate golf cart accident to slow down Diane Dyer, but when talking to her she seems back to her old tricks once again. Diane is a doer. A volunteer. A get-things-done kind of woman. Her positive attitude and love of her community has made her a standout in Otis. There probably are not many residents who don't know the Dyer name and the reputation of Diane and her late husband Bill. They are indeed among the finest people in town. Living almost in the center of Otis, Bill and Diane have always felt a strong need to work for their community while raising their four children and working in the center of town for many, many years. At 86 years young, Diane still has her hands in a million projects and gives tirelessly to her many causes.

Her pet project of the moment is her activity on the building committee for a new library in town. Diane started a Friends of the Library group, helping the library in any way possible and raising funds for a new building. She has been on the library board for many years in the past and is a familiar face at all library sponsored events. You could see her at PTO meetings, election check at the Otis Town Hall or any number of volunteer jobs in town. She loves being on the board of the Council on Aging and her chief job is planning the trips the seniors take. She is the first one aboard the bus and says this particular job fits her lifestyle



Diane Dyer

Photo: Sandy Balayan

well. "To put yourself out there you have to put in the work. I enjoy volunteering and taking part in the events I help plan," says Diane.

So how did a young Brooklyn native end up living her life in Otis? As a child, Diane's family had a place here and she would come up often to ski in the winter and camp in the summer. On one of these trips, in 1958, she met a young and handsome man, Bill Dyer, at a testimonial for Dr. Erbe. Bill was smitten immediately and he asked Diane to go out for coffee. The rest is history, but as you can imagine, it has been a wild ride. Bill was an adventurer and life in Otis was a lot different than Brooklyn. After an adjustment period during which Diane almost got on a Greyhound bus bound for New York, the city girl agreed to try living in this very remote place. She was lonely and sad and often alone

Continued on page 5

AMVETS Christmas Fund Drive

AMVETS Post 77 would like to extend a heartfelt "thank you" to everyone who contributed to our Christmas fund drive last year. We were able to provide \$7,600 in Amazon gift cards to dozens of families in the area, allowing them to make a difficult time a little brighter for their children.

We hope that you can help again this year. The goal is to raise enough money to make sure all of the children have a Great Christmas and with your help we can do it. We want to wish everyone a very happy holiday season.

Please contact Tom Soules at **(413) 429-1119** with any questions about this program and to discuss eligibility to receive a gift card. Donations can be sent to AMVETS Post 77, PO Box 587, Otis, MA 01253. Please make checks payable to AMVETS Post 77. ☺



*We Are
Deeply Grateful
to All Our Supporters
for Donating to Our
Ninth Anniversary
Annual Appeal*

(Anonymous 3)

Bob & Heidi Bailey

Jan Cantler

Robert Cooper

Deborah Cullings

Del Balso Family

Roy De Barbieri

Mary & Chris Guidette

Edward McCormick

Donna & Robert Rich

Rosemary Schneider

Kenneth & Phyllis Taylor

We happily welcome any size donation,
from \$1 on up.

Donations can be sent to

Otis Observer

PO Box 533, Otis, MA 01253
or online at

www.otisobserver.com

A Message from the Town Clerk

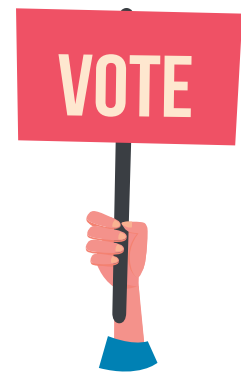
Preparing for 2024

Soon it will be a New Year and 2024 will be a busy election year. I encourage you to make sure you are registered to vote and also check what party you are registered in. You can call me at **(413) 269-0100, x112** and/or make changes online at **registertovotema.com**. In Massachusetts there are three political parties: Democratic Party (D), Republican Party (R) and Libertarian (L). If you are enrolled in any of these three parties you may only vote in that party's ballot during primaries. If you are registered as Unenrolled (U) or if you are enrolled in a political designation you may choose any party's ballot at primaries.

Around **January 15th** the Massachusetts Elections Division will be mailing every registered voter a vote by mail ballot application. If you would like a mailed ballot for one or all elections complete the form and mail it back. Please take your time when filling out the form to be sure your selections are what you intended. Add a phone number so you can be contacted if our office has any questions. If you are an unenrolled voter it is extremely important to select what party ballot you would

like for primaries. You can return the form by mail or drop it off at the Town Hall.

The Presidential Primary will be March 5th with polling hours from 7 a.m. - 8 p.m. The last day to register to vote and/or change your party enrollment is February 24th from 9 a.m. - 11 p.m. and 3 p.m. - 5 p.m. **In-person early voting will be held in the gym at the Otis Town Hall on Saturday, February 24 from 9 a.m. - 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. - 5 p.m., Tuesday, February 27 and Thursday, February 29, from 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.**



On **January 3rd** year-round households will be mailed their Annual 2024 Street List Form (census), Town Calendar, and Dog License Form. It is very important the Census Form is returned to keep your voting status active. Please verify the information is correct and make any necessary changes to the form. Add members to the household who are not listed. Make sure you sign and date the form. Forms should be returned within 10 days of receipt. You cannot register to vote or change your political party via the street list form.

Lastly, please remember to be kind and have patience with our election workers. They do an amazing job and we could not successfully run elections without them. We look forward to seeing you in 2024.

Please reach out to me with any election questions or concerns. I am happy to listen and assist. ☺

Lyn O'Brien, Town Clerk

KNOX TRAIL INN & AMVETS POST 77

Good Thomas'
MUSICAL BINGO TOYS FOR TOTS FUNDRAISER!

Your \$20 Donation for 4 Bingo Cards will go directly to the Toys for Tots Fund

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 3RD 2-4 PM

DOING GOOD FEELS GOOD!



OTIS LIBRARY NEWS

By Brad Havill

One of the best things about the libraries is that they provide a place for new opportunities to come together: exploring unfamiliar books and discussing timeless works that feed conversation as well. November events at the Otis Library reflected these two ideas.

The much anticipated **Cookbook Club** recently held its first meeting. Unlike our other book club, where participants obtain individual copies of a common book for later discussion, this book club works a little differently in that we choose a specific cookbook that remains at the library. Patrons interested in taking part come into the library and choose a recipe which they then take home. They make their chosen recipe exactly as it is written in the book and without any substitutions. When later we meet, we bring in our prepared recipes and try them, potluck style. This is a chance for us to say what we liked about each recipe or what we would have liked to be different. The lemon meringue cheesecake that I prepared is a keeper and a new favorite in our household!

As we eat, we then pick a new cookbook for the next meeting. Fortunately, the book does not have to be one the library owns. This is one of the many wonderful things about being a member of CWMARS since we can borrow from over 150 libraries across central and western Massachusetts. The variety of cookbooks out there is staggering! We had a good turnout for our first event, and there were few leftovers, a real testament to its success. Due to so much happening during December, we will be back in January with the hopes of an even stronger showing for our second club meeting. Our January meeting will be on the 12th from 12:30-1:30 p.m. in

Continued on page 20



COMING TO

OTIS TOWN HALL

DECEMBER 15th, 10:00AM – NOON

COVID & FLU CLINIC



Do you need to be seen for a sick visit, or wellness check?

Do you need the updated COVID vaccine?

The MHU team is here to help with your medical needs.

Our team can also assist with signing up for SNAP benefits, Mass Health, and more.

1 NORTH MAIN STREET OTIS, MA

To schedule an appointment call (413)528-0457.

Walk-ins welcome.

1st Annual Community Tree Lighting Event

SAT., DECEMBER 2ND

4:30 PM

OTIS TOWN HALL

Bring the entire family!

**Hot Chocolate Station,
Holiday Caroling, and
a visit from Santa!**

Farmington River Regional School FIRE Fund Grant Recipients

The Farmington River Regional Excellence Fund (FIRE Fund) is pleased to announce the grant recipients for this year's funding cycle. Six projects were submitted by the October 15th deadline; all met the criteria and all will be fully funded. We appreciate and congratulate the individual and group efforts of all those who applied. These projects will enhance the learning experiences of all our kids and families at FRRSD.



Funding for the projects will be supported by a grant from the FIRE Fund, a fund of the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation. The following programs and initiatives will be funded during the current school year:

- The 18th Century Comes Alive at Farmington River School, Christopher Keller, Teacher, Grade 5
- Amelia Park Children's Museum, Rebecca Hamill, Teacher, Pre-K

- Family Math Night and Family Literacy Night, Katherine Graham-Silk, Teacher, applying for staff subcommittees
- Social-Emotional Learning Assembly with Jon Berman, Cecily Goulange, President, applying for the PTA
- Enhancing Playtime: Recess Equipment for Healthy Futures, Laurie Flower, Principal FRRSD

According to Katherine Graham-Silk, "The Farmington River Regional School District is so excited that our FIRE Fund grants were approved! We cannot wait to host a Math and Literacy Night for the students and their families. Our goal is to bring our school community together in a fun way to celebrate a love of reading and math as well as give families practical ways they can practice these skills at home. Our first event will be a **Math Family Night** that will take place on **Wednesday, January 18th**. We hope to see you there!"

The six projects will cost \$5,000 to implement. For more information on the FIRE FUND: <https://berkshiretaconic.org/grants/farmington-river-initiative-for-regional-excellence>.

To donate: FIRE FUND https://berkshiretaconic.fcsuite.com/erp/donate/create/fund?funit_id=1415 (🔗)



Emergency Shelter Volunteers Wanted

We are looking for a list of volunteers to assist with our emergency shelter if conditions warrant its opening. The shelter is located at Otis Town Hall.

Areas needing help, depending on the severity of the emergency:

- Setting up the shelter

- Checking in and out residents needing to use the shelter
- Preparing meals
- Cleaning
- Providing company to the shelter guests, maybe by doing a puzzle, etc.

If interested, please call or email Lyn O'Brien. **(413) 269-0100, x112** or email clerk@townofotisma.com.

As entire families may occupy the shelter we may request a CORI check on all volunteers. (🔗)

★ DINE IN OR TAKEOUT

*HOUSE SPECIAL PRIME RIB
(thursday-saturday)



Weekly
Specials

- SHEPERD'S PIE
- FIRE-GRILLED SALMON
- GREAT SALADS
- THE BEST BURGERS
- MAC & CHEESE
- CHICKEN PICCATA
- SPECIALTY PIZZAS & GRINDERS
- CHICKEN BROCCOLI ALFREDO
- GRILLED RIB EYE

Great appetizers & more!

★
Book a
private
party
with us!



INDOOR CORNHOLE EVERY WEDNESDAY
KNOX TRIVIA EVERY THURSDAY

Check out our full menu & event info at:
knoxtrailinn.com

Like us on Facebook

Follow us on Instagram @theknoxtrailinn

★ UPCOMING EVENTS ★

Dec 2nd DJ Sancho Returns! 8-11pm

DEC 3RD TOYS FOR TOTS FUNDRAISER
MUSICAL BINGO 2-5PM
\$20 DONATIONS TO PLAY



★ DECEMBER 16TH ★
KNOX ANNUAL XMAS PARTY!

It's an all day party with tacky attire
complimentary treats & great music by:

EVAN LANOUE 2-5PM PICK-UP LINE 8-11PM

Dec 17th The Hilltown Blues Jam 2pm

DEC 19TH POLAR EXPRESS MOVIE NIGHT!
Get in your jammies & snuggle in with us @5pm

CELEBRATE NEW YEARS EVE AT THE KNOX!

OPEN WED-FRI 5-9PM ★ SAT 12-10PM ★ SUN 12-9PM ★ 413-269-4400 ★ 1898 EAST OTIS RD (RT 23) EAST OTIS, MA

Notice Diane Dyer
Continued from page 1

in the middle of nowhere. They first lived in a wooded area on Algeria Road and, after awhile, nineteen-year-old Diane, who was suffering from culture shock, insisted they move to the big city. To Westfield they went and it wasn't long till Bill realized his job at NCR and the lifestyle they were living was not for him. Back to Otis, and at this point, Diane dove into her life here raising her children and adjusted to this life, and began to love it.



The first job she did for the town was driving a school bus for their own company. After a few years, their contract was terminated when someone underbid them and they sold off the buses. After a successful night crawler business turned into a supply store for fishermen, Diane decided to open a shop with all kinds of fishing lures, night crawlers, Otis memorabilia, fudge, etc. They built what is now the Farmington River Diner in 1974 to expand the business and turned it over in 1978 as the long hours were getting to be too much. In fact, Diane coined the phrases "Notice Otis" and "Otis the place to be" and printed them on numerous items in the store.

Diane would come up with all the ideas and Bill would make them happen. One such idea was a maple syrup display with a real tree trunk that Bill rigged a water feature into. People actually would put their finger in the water and taste it, thinking it was maple syrup! Another anecdote from that time was when Diane was asked by UPS to testify in Washington DC to help get truck delivery in Otis vs. having to pick up packages over a certain weight in Springfield. She was wined and dined by UPS after being flown to DC. Then UPS started delivering in Otis, thanks to Diane.

Diane says she has no regrets. There was never a dull moment with Bill and she said, "If I spoke up and nixed his ideas I would have missed out on a lot of things." Their 60-year adventure ended when Bill passed away in 2020 but Diane keeps her fond memories alive with her wonderful family. "Life is an adventure. If you don't live it now, when will you? Enjoy the ride, and try not to fall out of a golf cart," Diane shares, laughing. ☺

PICKLEBALL UPDATE

The Otis Recreation Commission has voted to pay for floor tape for pickleball courts in the school gym. Once the floor is ready, they will set up a regular schedule to use the school gym for pickleball and possibly lessons in the future.



Gingerbread House Workshop



SATURDAY DECEMBER 9TH
OTIS TOWN HALL

TWO SESSIONS:

Session 1 - 11am-12:30pm

Session 2 - 1pm-2:30pm

(a third session may be added at 3pm, if needed)

COST:

**One FREE house per family for
Otis Residents/Taxpayers**

**\$15 charge for each additional house
and non-Otis residents**

Payments must be received at the
Otis Town Hall by Monday, December 4th.
Town Hall hours 8am-3pm, Mon. through Thurs.
One North Main Road, PO Box 237, Otis, MA 01253

REGISTRATION REQUIRED!
(No Drop-Ins)

TO SIGN UP: Visit <https://tinyurl.com/5ad8njvf>
or scan QR code.



Registration closes Monday, December 4th.

Otis Council on Aging

By Eila Bell



Dede Loring and Elsie De'Voti celebrate their birthdays at the Otis Senior Center in November

Photo credit: Eila Bell



The puzzle ladies at Otis Council on Aging conquer another challenging puzzle; left to right: Evie Loring, Janice Hawley, Dede Loring and Jane Bernasconi

Photo credit: Eila Bell

December 2023 Happenings at Otis Council on Aging

Exercise class every Monday 10:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Food pantry every Wednesday 9 a.m. - 11 a.m.

Out to lunch is canceled this month.

December 6th - The **traveling foot nurse** will be at the center 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.

December 13th - The trip to "**A Carpenters Christmas**" at the lovely Aqua Turf Club in Southington, CT. Bus departs Harmony Hall in Otis at 9:15 a.m. and the Big Y in Lee at 9:45 a.m. Please call Diane Dyer at **(413) 269-6335 or ddyer555@ hotmail.com** for information.

December 15th - **Brown Bag** 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.

December 15th - The **CHP Wellness Van** will be at Otis Town Hall 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.

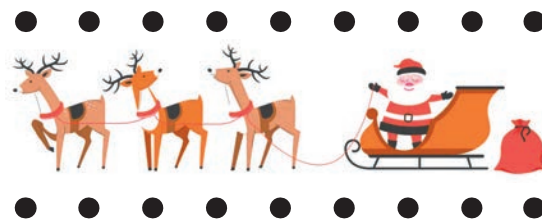
COVID and Flu Clinic will be held.

December 20 - We will have our **holiday lunch** at the Country Club of Pittsfield at 12:00 noon. The cost is \$25 per meal with a choice of stuffed chicken breast or braised beef short rib. Doors will open at 11:30 a.m. Please call Eila Bell at **(413) 623-8932 or eilabell2@aol.com**. Sign up closes on Dec. 4th. The center will close at 11 a.m.

December 25 - The center is closed for the holiday.

December 27 - Sheryl Iodice, a **registered dietitian from Elder Services**, will be at the center to talk about healthy eating habits. ☺

This page is sponsored in part by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs.



Laugh with Carolyn

Our resident joke teller, Carolyn Lawry, shares another one of her gems with us this month. Long known for sharing whatever tickles her funny bone with family and friends, Carolyn is a delight to talk to and loves to share her great sense of humor with the readers of the Otis Observer.

While working for an organization that delivers lunches to elderly shut-ins, a young mom brought along her four-year-old daughter. She was intrigued by the various appliances of old age, particularly the canes, walkers and wheelchairs. The mom noticed the young girl staring at a set of false teeth in a glass on a table. Bracing for the inevitable questions, the mom was surprised when the little girl looked up at her in amazement and whispered, "The tooth fairy will never believe this." ☺

RALPH E. MORRISON

413-258-3381



A & M AUTO SERVICE

COMPLETE AUTO & TRUCK CARE
IMPORT AND DOMESTIC

24 HOUR HEAVY DUTY & LIGHT TOWING & RECOVERY
FLAT BED SERVICE

ROUTE 57/EAST

SANDISFIELD, MA 413-258-3381



Massachusetts Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program's Winter Heating Season to Begin November 1st

Applications are now open for eligible Massachusetts households to apply for financial assistance this heating season (**Nov. 1, 2023 – April 30, 2024**).

The **Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities** (EOHLC) is pleased to announce November 1 as the start of the **Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)** 2023-2024 winter heating season. LIHEAP is a free, statewide service funded by the federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program that helps eligible households stay warm during the winter months by paying a portion of winter heating bills.

Applications for home energy assistance are currently being accepted online at **toapply.org/massliheap**, and income-eligible households may receive financial help to offset heating bills from November 1, 2023, through April 30, 2024.

Both homeowners and renters can apply online or through local administering agencies for LIHEAP assistance. Households must meet specific eligibility requirements to qualify for aid, which will be paid directly to their heating vendor.

Eligibility is based on several factors, including household size and combined gross annual income of residents 18 and older. Qualifying households – including those with the cost of heat included in the rent – can receive assistance for all sources of heat, including oil, electricity, natural gas, propane, kerosene, wood and coal.

“The Massachusetts home energy assistance program is free, because no resident should have to worry about heating their home during the wintertime,” said Ed Augustus Jr., Secretary of Housing and Livable Communities. “High fuel costs can have a devastating effect on household budgets and can even endanger Massachusetts’ most vulnerable residents. We encourage anyone who needs heating assistance to explore their eligibility by applying online or visiting the nearest administering agency. And to please share the information with loved ones or neighbors who could benefit from this free resource.”

For more information, or to **find your local LIHEAP agency**, visit **www.toapply.org/MassLIHEAP**. ☎

About EOHLC

The Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) was established in 2023 to create more homes and lower housing costs in every region. EOHLC also distributes funding to municipalities, oversees the state-aided public housing portfolio and operates the state's EA family shelter.



Next Meeting:

Tues., December 12th, from 4:00 - 5:30

Location:

Roosevelt Room, Otis Library
or by Zoom
email for zoom link:
info@otislibraryma.org

Book:

The Covenant of Water
by Abraham Verghese

Books available at the Otis Library
for anyone to borrow. All are welcome
to join the book discussion!

BERKSHIRE HATHAWAY
HomeServices

BARNBROOK REALTY
SHANNON MARGRAF
shannon@barnbrookrealty.com
413-212-1107

trust
integrity
stability
longevity



The Reel World of Films

By Eileen W. Cohen

We've reached the final month of 2023. December's 31 days are filled with festive holidays, traditions, feasts and parties—a time when families and friends come together to celebrate the season. And if you're looking for some stimulating and thrilling entertainment, consider going to the movies. This month has an exciting slate of potential blockbuster films heading your way.

Pop star singer/songwriter Taylor Swift had the highest grossing music tour of all time (*The Eras Tour*) and last month, in the form of a concert film experience, this event was shown on the big screen playing at the nation's

largest theater chains including AMC, Regal and Cinemax. The film was just as long as the “marathon” concert (2 hours and 45 minutes) which included songs from all of Swift's albums. This month, another female super pop star, Beyoncé, a Grammy winner, will bring her *Renaissance World Tour* to the big screen. This dazzling concert film with eye-popping props, costumes and choreography, runs about 2 hours and 30 minutes. The film showcases Beyoncé's rehearsals together with behind-the-scenes footage of her touring the globe as well as some intimate moments with her children and husband, Jay Z. The film will appear in theaters only on Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays for about four weeks starting on December 1 (to coincide with World AIDS Day). The talents of Taylor Swift and Queen B—two culture figures whose “musical versatility and artistic reinventions” on stage will surely entertain audiences of all ages.

In 1982, novelist Alice Walker wrote a story about an African American teenager, raised in rural Georgia in the early 1900s, who “triumphs in the face of adversity, particularly the struggle against gender inequality and racism.” The book became a Pulitzer Prize winner. In 1985, legendary director, Steven Spielberg, directed the movie, *The Color Purple* (adapted from the book of the same name) that launched the screen career of Whoopi Goldberg and introduced Oprah Winfrey in her first movie role. (She is also one of the producers of this new musical.) Then came the 2005 Broadway production and the revival in 2015 and now there is a musical film version of this sweeping story, due to open on Christmas Day. Fantasia Barrino-Taylor, an R & B and hip-hop singer who rose to fame in 2004 after appearing on the television show “American Idol,” will star in the title role of Celie, whose journey through life leads ultimately to her independence. Aside from the music, the movie will incorporate “magical realism” into this version of the story giving audiences a chance to go inside

Celie's imagination. *The Color Purple* story has been described as “deeply compassionate and beautifully imagined” so if you're planning to see it, exploring elements of pain, struggle, resilience and bravery, bring along a box of tissues.

Hollywood A-lister, George Clooney, who is usually in front of a camera on the silver screen, is behind the camera directing the film adaptation of Daniel James Brown's 2013 non-fiction novel, *The Boys in the Boat*. In his research, the author found this story to be, “one of those rare stories that just got better, more complex and rewarding.” Back in the 1920s in the United States, rowing was considered the number one sport and this story is about a crew of nine strong and tough kids who came from struggling working-class families and rowed for the University of Washington team. “It was the only way these boys could stay in college.” The movie will showcase the team's epic quest for the Gold Medal at the 1936 Summer Olympics held in Berlin, Germany. Forty-nine nations competed and the United States walked away with fifty-six medals. No spoilers here if the rowing team won the gold. At the heart of this biographical sport drama is a story of perseverance, optimism, fairness and “the ability to confront adversity together.”

And if having memorable, emotional moments at the movies is your thing, then keep an eye out for *Aquaman*, *Wonka*, *Ferrari* and *Godzilla* as you experience a plethora of action, adventure, fantasy, special effects and drama.

Keep warm and safe and until next time ...
Ⓜ



Eileen is a retired NYC school administrator and college professor. She is a part time Otis resident and an ardent cinephile with a love of creative writing, cooking and grandparenting.

KWIK^{Color} PRINT
INCORPORATED

EXPERIENCE • SPEED • QUALITY

- Full Color Digital Printing
- Full Color Envelope Printing
- Large Format Printing
- High Speed Copying
- Laminating
- Inline Bookletmaking
- Perfect Binding
- Folding
- Perforating
- Mailing Services
- Graphic Design Services

35 Bridge Street
Great Barrington, MA 01230
Ph: 413.528.2885 Fx: 413.528.9220
typesetting@kwikprintinc.com
www.kwikprintinc.com



OTIS FOOD PANTRY UPDATE

By Terry Gould

As we jump with both feet into the holiday season, the Otis Food Pantry is ready for a bit of fun. Thanksgiving hasn't happened yet, but by the time you read this, angels will have treated neighbors to Thanksgiving dinners and the elves from the pantry will have become "Dashers" and delivered meals to approximately 30 households numbering close to 60 individuals. Thank you to all the OWLS and Elves who made this possible and thank you, thank you, thank you to the Knox Trail Inn for preparing the feasts! The food pantry took part in the preparations for the school's annual Thanksgiving baskets with help from Berkshire Grown and Berkshire Bounty who provided fresh fruit and vegetables to round out the meal baskets.

This is also a reminder that the pantry is holding its third annual **Holiday Recipe Sacks campaign**. It will be distributed on **Wednesday, December 20th**, during our regular pantry hours. We ask that folks put together a simple family favorite recipe, placing all the ingredients into a bag with the recipe stapled to the outside of the bag. Make it something simple that you remember and enjoyed as a family. The pantry will purchase

extra eggs and stick butter to add to any recipes as needed. This bag should be delivered to the pantry on Monday the 18th or Tuesday the 19th for distribution on Wednesday the 20th. We do this for fun so that our families will have a new recipe to try together and perhaps start a new tradition.

Winter is here and comfort food is always welcome; pastas and sauce or soups, rice mixes, and the ever needed, peanut butter and jelly.

Baking supplies are very popular at this time of year. Many families bake together during winter months and enjoy finding flour, sugar and other supplies on our shelves.

Once more, in 2023, thank you to the businesses and neighbors of the Otis community who make the Otis Food Pantry possible. Friend us on Facebook at Otis Food Pantry or email at otisfoodpantry@gmail.com. Cheers! ☺



The Massachusetts Department of Transportation (DOT) is pictured here installing catch basins in front of the abandoned Terranova property on Route 8, just south of the town center. Recent sidewalk upgrading (also done by the DOT) altered the pitch of the roadway which often led to flooding on Main Street. The catch basins will capture and redirect any excess water away from the roadway.

Photo credit: Frank Tolopko



sandisfield
ARTS CENTER
5 HAMMERTOWN ROAD, SANDISFIELD, MA

Season's Greetings
and best wishes for a happy, healthy,
and joyous holiday season!

SANDISFIELDARTSCENTER.ORG

Knox Trail Inn in Good Hands

By Sandy Balayan

One might say that **Brooke Tame** has been preparing for this moment since she was a little girl. A fascination with the atmosphere of restaurants and bars made her declare at 10 years old that this industry would be her life's calling. Fast forward eight years to college when she went right into one of the best hospitality training facilities in the country, Johnson and Wales University. Her education there and her internship experience at Sunday River ski area in Maine also contributed on her journey. As of October 31, 2023, she has realized her dream of owning a restaurant as she took the helm of the Knox Trail Inn in East Otis, MA.

Brooke has done everything the industry requires: hotel desk, housekeeping, restaurant service and bartending, etc. She has experienced it all and is ready to roll up her sleeves and face each new day. "You can't ask someone to do something you are not willing to do yourself. I take this very seriously and will be anywhere I am needed," says Brooke in her new role as sole owner of the Knox.

In July, Brooke took over as General Manager to learn the ropes knowing that she would be taking over as owner by November 1. Brooke and her dad, Mike Tame, had been looking around at restaurant properties in the area and they connected with the five owners of the Knox and the rest is now history. As of April 2023, Brooke had signed this deal and she knew her takeover would be easier if she experienced the last few months working hard as the General Manager. "The partners were so supportive and helpful. It's been a very smooth handover and I thank them tremendously," Brooke said.

Brooke and her family have had a home in Otis for over twenty years. Brooke has spent virtually all her life on the slopes of Otis Ridge and around the Reservoir. She loves the area and after looking at properties and what her future would

hold, buying the Knox made sense. This is her home and she has been part of this community since she was a little girl. Although she never imagined she would live here full-time, this opportunity presented itself and the slow pace and less hectic world we all enjoy in the Berkshires seemed incredibly enticing. Brooke is living now in what is her "happy place" and fully committed to making this her permanent home.



Brooke Tame
Photo: Mike Tame

Building on the success of the previous five partners who had spent seven seasons perfecting the Knox, Brooke will continue all of the fun events the Knox has been offering like indoor corn hole, musical bingo, live music, trivia, horseshoe leagues, etc. She welcomes suggestions for events and hopes people will continue to consider the Knox as their home away from home. "The Knox has become quite a community gathering place and I intend to keep that environment alive and well. All are welcome and I look forward to meeting

those I haven't had the opportunity to meet as yet. Come say hi when you can." This message comes from the heart of Brooke Tame. She knows how much this beloved restaurant means to the local clientele she will be servicing.

Pete Sullivan, who is about to start enjoying his retirement now as one of the five previous owners, has the utmost confidence in Brooke. Pete says, "We are leaving the Knox in very good hands. Brooke is young, energetic, has great skills and knowledge of this industry and most importantly, she understands the community. Her taking over is actually the best outcome for all of us and I believe it will be a seamless transition." Pete is not far away and is happy to be there for the takeover to pitch in if he can.

Another tireless worker is Brooke's dad Mike, who has become the maintenance and building advisor in his retirement. He and his wife Kerri Tame are behind their daughter's efforts 100% and are so proud of this accomplishment at such an early age. Brooke clearly is thankful for their support and love and any expertise they can share.

At just 25, this woman is proving that you can realize your dream by working hard and persevering. We wish her luck and invite the community and area residents to come visit Brooke and spend an enjoyable evening at the Knox in front of the fire. Good food, good drinks and good friends sharing and enjoying life together, what could be better. ☺

An illustration of a woman named Deena Stearns. She has long brown hair, is wearing a red headscarf, a red apron over a white shirt, and yellow gloves. She is holding a vacuum cleaner. The background is blue with white stars. The text "Deena Stearns" is written in a cursive font to the right of her. Below the illustration, there is a dark blue box with white text that reads "Miss Dee's House Cleaner and Personal Organizer". At the bottom of the box, it says "Otis Resident" and "1-413-429-7794".

Miss Dee's House Cleaner
and Personal Organizer
Otis Resident 1-413-429-7794



OPEN EVERY DAY

7AM - 9PM



152 S. Main Rd. (Rte. 8)
Otis

SOAP & SUDS LAUNDRY

BEER ★ WINE ★ LIQUOR
Domaney's



Fine Wine ★ Unique Beer ★ Discount Liquors
Temperature Controlled Wine Room ★ Cigar Humidor

66 Main St. Great Barrington, MA 01230

p. (413) 528-0024 ★ f. (413) 528-6093

www.domaney.com



Ned Wilson - Otis, MA

NABCEP PV Technical Sales

TS-102415-004308

NABCEP PV Installation

PV-041115-004308

• 413 854 1453 •

ned.wilson@sunbugsolar.com

www.sunbugsolar.com



CHAFFEE
CONSTRUCTION INC.
Custom Building

413-429-5972 • 413-854-8028

www.chaffeeconstructioninc.com

email: Chaffeeconstruct@gmail.com

DON CHAFFEE

— Specializing In —

New Homes

Remodeling

Custom
Woodworking

Kitchens
Baths

Framing
Roofing

Additions
Windows

Siding

Decks

Rot Repair

20 YEARS EXPERIENCE
LICENSED | FULLY INSURED
CSL 113610 • HIC 200076

The Rural ETHICIST

The Friend in the Moon

By Katharine Adams

Another stroll around the sun and once again, we dwell within the months of moon.

Age being a teacher, I'm learning there is good in embracing rest and going inward. Although admittedly, "there's maybe a little too much rest going on," the dents in my couch might insinuate.

How do you like to spend the long winter evenings in Standard Time? Most of us aren't crazy about the early cloak of afternoon. But long, dark mornings are the alternative, if Daylight Savings Time stretches into winter. Whether Standard or DST, available light needs to be shaved off one end of the day to bolster the other.

Regardless how we mark time, resolving to power on and accentuate the benefits of short-day season is maybe among those life challenges that "keep you flexible," as a wise friend observes, widening my eyes in epiphany.

For example, ever find you've had to spend a night squished to sleep—in this case, onto the short end of a spare twin mattress, tugged only half way out from beneath a bed above, where it's normally stowed?

You accept this condition to reduce disruptions at midnight; otherwise, pulling the entire mattress out requires turning it 90° while bumped up against closet bi-fold doors, negotiating teen sneaker boxes, actual sneakers and other teen storage items on the floor, in the dark.

So you tell yourself it's only a handful of hours: *you can do this*. You reason with yourself you'll sleep better keeping an eye out. You tend to sleep curled on your side anyway, you say.

Normally, you snooze on expansive real estate; even so, you curl up to fit in a

nautilus shell. So sleeping on a cushion should afford a decent nap, you hear yourself think. These are all rationales that thread their way through your otherwise rational mind.

But on this exceptional night, hunkering down amid the sneakers, you are surprised to find you wake a lot, flipping to-and-fro. This experience suggests having one's legs confined to a small space, with no option to briefly stretch out, downgrades the quality of slumber.



Moon shadows
Photo: Katharine Adams

And Lord forbid you have any remote fear of baseboard-crawling, sock-loving, dust-emerging eight-leggers taking a moonlit stroll to check the likes of *you* out. Such intrusive concerns do not instill a deep slumber.

Maybe these temporary accommodations are ones you've rigged as a parent, tending a child; maybe you're escaping smoky hang-time, having cajoled a petulant wood stove?

No matter the reason, it's a temporary inconvenience—even while spending the next day rubbing your eyes. Negotiating minor discomfort can be a good thing.

"Ahh," my friend winks, upon hearing my story, "it keeps you flexible."

In other words, open. Adaptable. Appreciative.

On winter nights when I realize there's a full moon, I go stand transfixed at my window over the long, frosty blue shadows etched by bare trees onto the snow. Sometimes, I try to capture this sublime, forbidding and desolate scene in a photograph.

Native American culture influenced many of the full moon's nicknames. Over time, some names entered the popular American culture.

January's Wolf Moon is so named for howling canines, while February's flurries inform the Snow Moon. In March, the Worm Moon is named for little trails in thawing ground; it is more commonly known as the Sap Moon, for flowing maple trees.

April's Pink Moon refers to early blooming wildflowers, and May's Flower Moon reflects the profusion of spring blossoms.

The Strawberry Moon of June celebrates its berry explosion, and the regrowth of male deer antlers describes July's Buck Moon.

Come August, the Sturgeon Moon suggests the abundance of that species; while September's brilliant Harvest Moon guides farmers to take advantage well past dusk.

October's Hunter's Moon finds fattened creatures of the fields, while the Frost Moon of November senses those first crispy evenings. Finally, December's Cold Moon ushers in the deep freeze.

A selenophile feels an unexplainable attraction to the moon. In synchronous rotation with Earth, the moon always shows the same face. And as our only natural satellite, its surface appears light while reflecting the sun.

Like friends dropping humored philosophies when we least expect, we keep their illuminations in mind like a mantra. What are friends for? ☾



Local Experts. *Global Reach.*



Celebrating over
20 years as your local
real estate experts.

Thank you!

GREAT BARRINGTON 413-528-6011 | LENOX 413-637-0006 | LANCEREALESTATE.COM



**BE PREPARED.
BE EDUCATED.
BE OUR CLIENT.**

**Elder Law & Estate Planning | Personal Injury
Real Estate Law | & More**



Sean T Powers | Mary Paier Powers | Dennis P. Powers

The Powers Law Group LLC possesses over 65 years of legal experience in the fields of elder law & estate planning, long-term care planning, real estate and personal injury. PLG serves all of Western Massachusetts and Northern Connecticut.

**mary@powerslawgrp.com
www.powerslawgrp.com**

West Springfield Location
680 Westfield Street,
West Springfield, MA 01089
Phone: 413-781-9659

Springfield Location
1391 Main Street, Suite 806
Springfield, MA 01103
Phone: 413-363-2269

ASTROLOGY ✨

Fire in Our Belly

By Hilary Harley

A fire stirs in our belly as December starts. Under the festive Leo Moon, the first weekend of the month is terrific for all holiday events, shopping and creativity. We feel lighthearted and hopeful. *Bring on the JOY.*

In Sagittarius, Mars and the Sun prompt us to explore, learn and *understand*. Don't fence me in, says this duo. We're on a quest for freedom and the truth. We may not know the destination; but we also know we cannot stay put or stay the same. Instead, flow with the strong current of life. On Tuesday, December 5th, Valuable Venus shifts into psychological Scorpio, aligning with Saturn. Our intuitive senses tingle. We *feel* what is accurate, especially in our relationships. Trust your instincts.

Follow messages and signs guiding us to follow our own personal truth now. Otherwise we live a lie. The quest for truth and freedom are emphasized by the New Moon in Sagittarius on Tuesday, December 12th. December's New Moon is especially potent as Motivating Mars joins the Sun-Moon duo. Mars drives the point home. We are held to account. Are you skating by, living someone else's idea for your life? Or are you answering the call of your heart?

Any ongoing legal matters move forward now. Watch for key court rulings to be

handed down at mid-month. Some may feel exposed or caught red-handed. You have nothing to fear if you are living responsibly. Underscoring the call for accountability is Messenger Mercury, turning retrograde in Capricorn on the day after the New Moon. Capricorn spelling out the rules in black and white: you either did it or you didn't. If you thought you could get away with something, this planetary combination has other ideas. You have until the end of the month and year to reflect. *How could I live more truthfully, soulfully?*



On a more day-to-day level: *do your holiday shopping early, before mid-month*. Do *not* wait to purchase gifts. Take advantage of any pre-holiday sales before Mercury turns retrograde on the 12th. This includes purchasing any electronics, phones, tablets, laptops OR booking travel plans; book flights, hotels and car rentals in early December.

Otherwise, this is one time when Mercury's retrograde comes at a relatively convenient time. As we approach the winter solstice, life shifts into low gear. We naturally turn inward during the colder, darker months. Their onset encourages the RE words indicative of Mercury's retrograde: reflection, reclaim, renewal, rebalance, refresh, return, restore, review, relax ...

Slow down during the final weeks of December, from the 12th through New Year's Day. Conveniently, Mercury turns direct motion on January 2, 2024 as we kick into overdrive; back to work, life and school. Until then, though, watch your words and practice patience with technical glitches that are the hallmark of Mercury's reverse gear.

The winter solstice on Friday, December 22nd, marks the Sun's entrance into responsible Capricorn. Pay attention to announcements this holiday weekend as we approach the Full Moon on Tuesday, December 26th. In the current world, filled with so much uncertainty, the family-oriented Cancer Full Moon reminds us of the importance of health, home and loved ones.

Days later on December 29th, Valuable Venus enters Sagittarius heightened by Jupiter's direct motion on New Year's Eve. We seek people who encourage our growth as we approach the 2024 fresh slate. Endlessly rich possibilities abound. Are you excited or intimidated by the opportunities ahead? Be sure to align with what can be rather than what once was. ☯

Ransom & Daughter Home

Custom Window Treatments
2nd Home Services
House Cleaning
Upholstery



www.ransomanddaughter.com ★ ransomanddaughter@icloud.com
413.717.2639 ★ 413.717.2521



Otis resident Hilary Harley is a counseling astrologer and hosts *Mystical Messages* podcast. She is an art aficionado, a community volunteer, the mother of two daughters and owner of an elderly Tibetan Terrier.



NAME THAT OTISITE



Here are the many responses of our community to the question "Finish this sentence: I remember before there were ..."

- Cell phones.
- Color televisions.
- Any televisions.
- Cars in every driveway.
- Stores open on Sundays.
- Streaming services and there were only three networks. If you missed the broadcast there was no way to watch it.
- Such cheap groceries that going out to eat was actually more expensive than eating home. Now it seems it is the opposite.
- Private phones and we all had party lines.



- Blinking traffic lights in Otis center and we only had stop signs.
- Vacant buildings in Otis center and we had stores, a restaurant and an antique business there.
- Post office buildings in East Otis; Arnold Hall was the postmaster and the mail in East Otis was picked up at Hall's General Store. ☺

"Otis Memories" is an ongoing way to share your Otis memories with the community. If you have an idea for an article or think one of these memories would be a good feature, let us know. We also welcome old photographs. Send memories and ideas to otismemories@gmail.com. Looking forward to hearing from you!



Can you solve this month's contest mystery? If you are the first to identify the couple in this photo, you will be the winner of the contest and win a prize!

Try your luck with this picture. Remember, if there is more than one winner, first in gets the prize. Good luck!

Please send your name, phone and email address to lynnegeane@gmail.com. Open to Otis residents only. Members of the *Otis Observer* staff are not eligible to enter. ☺

PHOTOS NEEDED!

Care to join in on the fun? Do you have a family photo you would share with the *Otis Observer*?

Scan a photo and send to Lynne Geane at lynnegeane@gmail.com with identifying information, your name, phone and email address. Or we'd be glad to pick up your photo, scan it and return it to you.

You could be in on our contest. Who will guess the identity of your photo?


Happy Holidays!
from the staff at the
Otis Observer




FRRSD PTA News

Cecily Goulange

It's been a busy fall with the PTA at Farmington River Elementary School! Family apple picking and trick or treating events in Otis and Sandisfield kept members and other community kiddos connected, and well-fed.

PTA members have been busily planning for December activities, which lead us into a well-deserved winter break at the end of the month. Our annual **Holiday Shop**, during which the PTA sets up shop

in the school to provide a holiday shopping experience for all students, is scheduled for **Tuesday and Wednesday, December 12th and 13th**. Tables bursting with gift options for family, friends and pets fill the library and students visit to shop for loved ones, giving them an opportunity to surprise even the family members in their own home at Hanukkah and Christmas. Volunteers are always welcome to help set up, wrap gifts and break down at the end of an exciting two days.



The PTA is also gearing up to serve a delicious baked potato dinner the evening of the **Holiday Concert** at FRES. The event, which received rave reviews for its inaugural service last year, will once again offer families and community members an affordable dinner of loaded baked potatoes, with a side of holiday cheer and winter wonder. The evening acts as an opportunity for families to sit together and connect with one another during the busiest time of year, and is eagerly anticipated by many PTA families. A 50/50 raffle adds to the fun and raises money to support the PTA's efforts like this dinner.

Interested in volunteering and joining in the fun at these events? Curious about PTA membership or our events? Email pta@frrsd.org to learn more. ☺

Concerned about your infant or toddler's development?



Give us a call and we can set up an appointment to talk with you about any concerns you may have.

Certified Therapists
offering evaluations & visits
at your home, in our center,
or through telehealth.

Dept. of Public Health Certified
Early Intervention Program.

924 S. Main Street
Great Barrington
413-717-4083

pediatricdevelopmentcenter.org

Historical Photo



Warren Orlando Hawley
(1833-1908)

Photo provided by:
Ed Strickland, who has been
a source of interesting and
valuable Otis town folk to
the Otis Observer.

This historic image comes
from Ed Strickland's great
grandmother's photo album,
Celina (White) Strickland.

Hawley was born Jan. 7,
1833 in Otis and died Feb.
3, 1908 in Otis. He married
Sarah Jane Smith on the
23 of November 1856 in
Dalton. They appear in
the 1860 and 1870 census
in Amboy, (Lee County),
Illinois. In the 1880 census
he is back in Sandisfield

living with his father. He is in Otis in the 1890 (Union veterans census) and 1900 census. He enlisted as a Sgt. in Co. I, 98th Illinois Infantry on Aug. 14, 1862, reduced to private on Oct. 31, 1864 (there must be a story there) and was mustered out Jun. 10, 1865 at Nashville, TN.

OTIS HISTORY

The Strange, the Unimaginable and the Macabre of Otis History

By Peter Cameron

There have been many strange, tragic and violent incidents in Otis's history. Murders, drowning accidents, a triple homicide, even a resident cannibal were associated with Otis. We will get to all of that, but I confess that I have an ulterior motive for this column, which will become evident later.

On July 25, 1919, eight boys and three adults drowned in a boating accident on Big Pond. The boys were campers at the Springfield Boy's Club camp, located on the Big Island in the lake. The three adults were counselors at the camp. Investigation revealed that the boats were overloaded, and a violent thunderstorm caught them by surprise, swamping the boats. The camp was closed immediately after the accident.

The next story comes by way of *The New York Times*. A reporter visited Otis on June 14, 1879, looking for a self-avowed cannibal living here. He hiked into the woods with a deputy sheriff to meet John Smith. When approached, Smith admitted to being a cannibal. He grew up in northern New York state and ran away from home at 15, going to sea. He was shipwrecked in the South Pacific, on an island occupied by a cannibalistic tribe that worshiped idols. He became one of them, acquiring a taste for human flesh. He was rescued, returned home, married and resumed his life. He denies stories that he ate a man in New Jersey. He does admit he offered to work for a man in Blandford in exchange for his daughter, a rather buxom lass, who he planned to feast on. He worshiped a carved idol on a cliff face every Sunday at 10 a.m., this

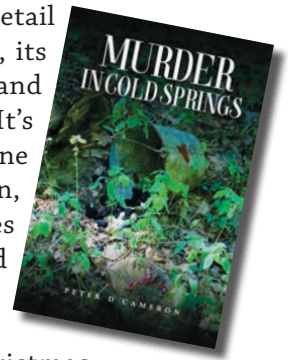
ritual left over from his time in the Pacific. As the reporter watched, Smith caught a toad they happened upon and ate it raw in front of them, all the while smiling.

On September 19, 1876, at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Jephtha Hazard in Otis, during a driving rainstorm, the couple offered shelter to a passerby. After the rain ended, they asked him to move on. The man, described as a "tramp," seized a club and beat them both, her to death. The husband managed to escape to his neighbors. The neighbor responded, grappled with the man, who now had a hammer in hand, and subdued him. The "tramp" told authorities the couple had looked at him the wrong way.

On September 26, 1916, Edward Gilmore murdered his mother and sister by shooting them with a shotgun, then turning the gun on himself. The motive for the double murder, suicide, was determined to be the refusal of his mother and sister to move from Otis to Winsted, CT, where Edward had secured a job at the Gilbert Clock Company.

My final story may be the worst of them all. On September 13, 1862, on a quiet Sunday morning, Emily Jones aged 24, along with her son aged 4, and daughter aged 2, went missing. The next day their bodies were discovered bludgeoned to death, Emily raped. I won't go into any more detail because there is a better option for that. On September 28th my book, *Murder in Cold Springs*, was published.

It goes into detail about the crime, its investigation and its conclusion. It's available online from Amazon, Kindle, Barnes and Noble and Waterman's. It would make a great Christmas present.



Merry Christmas and happy holidays to all. Please remember to keep our troops and first responders in your thoughts and prayers this holiday season. I have been both and can tell you how lonely it gets during this time of year. ☹



Peter Cameron is an Otis, MA resident and a retired policeman. He is a graduate of Central Connecticut State University with a B.S. in History with a concentration in U.S. Colonial History.



For All Your Hair Care Needs

New Contact info:

413 427-2656

**(text or call & leave message)
or email: hairinotis@gmail.com**

Corner of 1 B Dr. & 129 Ridge Ave.
East Otis, MA 01029

Appointments Only Donna Argiro

Klondike Camping Resort

Private Camping Community • Sites for Sale
www.KlondikeCampResort.com

Rt. 8 North, Otis MA

Pierogi Move Over, Pelmeni Is in the House

By Stephanie Skinner

There are so many chefs here, says the young man standing in line in front of me. And indeed, looking around at the assorted crowd, there were lots of cheffy types; white double-breasted jackets, houndstooth pants topped by T's with logos, plenty of artfully disheveled hairdos and many interesting tattoos and piercings. This was understandable. We were, after all, at the Chefs' Warehouse show in NYC.

"Well, I'm not a chef," I say.

"Oh, what are you?" he asks.

Not too long ago this would have been easy to answer but not so much since I sold my media company. "I'm in the media," not bothering to caveat the whole thing. "What do you do?"



Pelmeni

Photo: Stephanie Skinner

"I make dumplings." I look at him more carefully now; bright eyes, closely cropped hair, wiry frame. Is he part Asian? And then there's a trace of an unplaceable accent. "Well, I am a dumpling fanatic," I say. "I would go very far for a good dumpling!" This is especially true since I simply don't make them.

"Where do you make your dumplings?" I ask, wondering if there is a dumpling place within walking distance right now ...

"New Jersey," he says, presenting his card which says Eugene, of Luda's Dumplings. "Send me an email. I'll send you some dumplings. You can write about me!"

And then we entered the event and I forgot about this conversation as I sampled my way through perfect produce, smoky bacon, martinis with blue cheese stuffed olives (a step too far for early afternoon, you decide.), knee buckling teeny slices of snow aged Waygu, killer kombucha and mozzarella stretched on the spot. Zoftig ducks and chickens, and whole sides of beef were on display. It's a lot to take in. This is where fine dining chefs go to meet makers of uncompromisingly perfect ingredients. And where I go to find out what's going to be trending in restaurants in 2024. It's a tough job, but I am up to the task.

At home the next day, I sift through cards and brochures I picked up and come across Eugene's card, Luda's Dumplings. I pull up his website, and



Just out of curiosity...

If I could sell my house for \$_____, I would list my home this spring.

Text your answer to, or call 413.528.4859

**THE MARKET IS CHANGING
THE TIME TO LIST IS
NOW**

The Brockman Group

Jared Kelly
413.854.1504

Chapin Fish
413.528.4859

448 Main Road, Monterey
413.528.4859
brockmanrealestate.com



William Pitt

Sotheby's
INTERNATIONAL REALTY

williampitt.com

Great Barrington Brokerage | 306 & 308 Main Street | 413.528.4192

Lenox Brokerage | 34 Church Street | 413.637.4402

Each office is independently owned and operated

that is when I realize I have so much to learn.

Apparently, I didn't understand the meaning of the word dumpling, because here was a word I had never heard before, pelmeni.

My dumpling reality had been very parochial. I had immediately imagined Chinese dumplings including har gow, shumai, or the aptly named potstickers found on every Americanized Chinese menu. I love them all. But like light dawning on Marblehead, I realized that, of course, all cuisines have some version of dough stuffed deliciousness or hand formed dumplings; pierogis, raviolis, chochoyotos, arancini, kreplach, sambusa, tortellini, bolinho, danwake, fufu, gyoza and on and on, because every cuisine needs comfort food.

What is so brilliant about dumplings is their versatility in making use of

what's locally available. Fried, steamed, sauteed, floating in soup, stalwartly soaking up juices in a stew, smothered in gravy, dipped in to fiery sauces or filled with blistering hot soup, they are all what dreams are made of.

Who doesn't love dumplings? If you see a hand raised at that question, assure them that they simply have not met their dumpling love.

Pelmeni are Eastern European dumplings, specifically Russian. The name translates to "ear bread" presumably because of their traditional shape and size. According to Eugene, they are most often served with butter and scattered herbs, or in a broth, and very often with sour cream. They are fast food dating back to Mongols emerging from China and marching across Northern China.

Eugene sent me three packages of pelmeni; pork – which had a filling

reminiscent of a Chinese wonton, potato – which managed to be light and airy and could be either a main or a side dish, and chicken – which are perfect for the sour cream treatment.

I understand that frozen pelmeni can be found in stores quite readily in NY and NJ with concentrated communities of Eastern Europeans. Only pierogis are widespread in Western Massachusetts, however. I suppose I could try to make my own pelmeni ... but the best part of getting older is admitting what other people do better than you and letting them do it. My hands may occasionally make delicious things, but they are not for the handling and folding of delicate dough. I believe that the making of pelmeni, like many traditional foods, is a skill passed down through families. So I'm happy to buy them from Luda's. If you want to too, here's their url: www.Ludas.us. Let me know what you think! ☺



119 South Main Road
Otis, Massachusetts 01253

413-269-6874
Luda



Hilltown Storage

OUTDOOR STORAGE
CARS • BOATS
CAMPERS

INDOOR STORAGE

STORAGE UNITS
10' X 12'
AND
10' X 20'

413/854-8028 **42 EAST OTIS RD.**
OTIS, MA 01253



JODY'S
Floor Sanding

When Quality Counts ...
Call For Free Estimate

- **SANDING**
- **REFINISHING**

Environmentally Safe Finishes Available

30 Years Experience
Fully Insured

JODY MARGRAF
PO Box 390
Otis, MA 01253
413-269-7141

Otis Library News
Continued from page 3

the Roosevelt Room when we will explore *Healthy Food for the New Year* by Oprah Winfrey. So please come and bring your suggestions so we can try out a broad range of new recipes.

If you are hungering for more book clubs, then do not forget the upcoming **December Book Club** meeting on the 12th from 4-5:30 p.m. to discuss the book *The Covenant of Water*, a multi-generation story set in Kerala, India, by Abraham Verghese. While a selection for Oprah's Book Club, sadly any snacks at this meetup will not be the main focus.

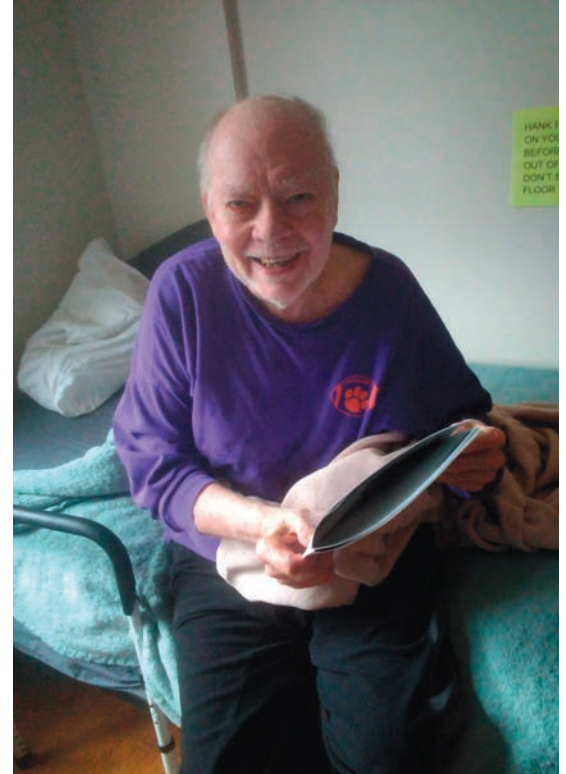
Always inspiring conversation are banned books. A banned and challenged books display was up for the month of October and created a lot of dialogue. So many of the titles on display were books that many of us have read in our younger years, and it was fantastic to have conversations about what books are banned and the reasons for doing so in places throughout the country.

Additional happenings for December include free books, those that we need to weed from our shelves to make space for new books. Normally held in November, we are changing it up, and these items are free to Otis residents.

Finally, the library has begun hosting forums in the library so that we can really get a sense of the needs of our community. This is part of an ongoing initiative to obtain information to serve the community better, the first forum was hosted on Thursday, November 30th. The purpose of this particular forum will be to bring together parents of young children and teens so that we can see how we can best meet the needs of these community members. We want to hear about what books or programs might be of interest, what times are best to schedule programs, and what non-academic materials, items, or games should we be looking at to promote the growth of Otis youth.

Keep these future events—November Forum, December Book Club and January Cookbook Club—in mind. Season's Greetings from the Otis Library! ☺

Reading the Otis Observer



Hank Wingate, an active member of the Otis community, board member of the Otis Library and Museum for many years and volunteer field superintendent with the Otis/Monterey youth baseball league, now lives at The Landing at Laurel Lake in Lee. Hank can be reached at 413-243-4747.

Photo credit: Steve Graves

**ALL PROPANE IS THE SAME
OURS IS CHEAPER!!**

100 GALLONS OF PROPANE FREE to new heating customers*

*** Using 750 gallons per year. Call for details.**

Call Toll Free M-F 8am to 4pm

www.hlfuel.com



**HL Propane
Co. Inc.**

518-794-9066

Route 20, West Lebanon, NY 12195

AREA EXPERT

CONNECTING BUYERS AND SELLERS
IN EVERY PRICE RANGE



Jeff Wilkinson

413-269-4500

Jeff@

StoneHouseProperties.com

I have been a real-estate agent since 1986, specializing in residential real estate and land in southeastern Berkshire County and adjacent Hampden and Hampshire Counties. We reside in beautiful Becket, MA where I am a long time member of the Zoning Board of Appeals and just finished serving on the Town Administrator search committee.

Prior to entering real estate sales, my profession was building, a profession I continued for many years in conjunction with being a real-estate agent. Many clients have found that background very helpful, whether preparing a house for sale, or discussing the possibilities of a potential purchase or repairs that might be needed.

It is my philosophy that the path to success is through helping clients to the best of my ability. In doing so, I have made many wonderful friends over the years. If you have questions about buying or selling real-estate, please feel free to call anytime to discuss them.



SOLD
SANDISFIELD



SOLD
SANDISFIELD



SOLD
OTIS

OUR TRADITION OF EXCELLENCE

What We Do For You

Matching Buyers And Sellers For 40 Years

When we began in 1984, our goals were quite simple: Provide the very best professional service to our buyers and sellers, and treat each transaction as if it were our own.



PROPERTIES

STONEHOUSEPROPERTIES.COM

(413) 528-4211 35 RAILROAD STREET, GREAT BARRINGTON, MA 01230

(413) 232-4253 38 MAIN STREET, WEST STOCKBRIDGE, MA 01266

(518) 392-0332 6 MAIN STREET, CHATHAM, NY 12037

Leading REAL ESTATE COMPANIES OF THE WORLD®

LUXURY PORTFOLIO INTERNATIONAL

The *Otis Observer*, staffed by volunteers and funded by individuals and businesses, is published 11 times a year with a combined January–February issue. **Donations are needed to continue publication, and can be sent to Otis Observer, PO Box 533, Otis, MA 01253. Donations are tax-deductible as this newspaper has 501(c)(3) status.**

The *Observer* is available in **Otis** in outdoor boxes at Katie’s Country Store, the Transfer Station, and the Otis Library as well as indoors at Papa’s Healthy Food & Fuel, Knox Trail Inn, Bruce’s Hardware, Farmington River Diner, Grouse House, the Otis Poultry Farm, Soap & Suds Laundry, Berkshire Bank and Town Hall. **Sandisfield:** Town Hall, the Library, and New Boston Inn; **Lee:** Lee Library; **Monterey:** Library. **Mailed and Gift Subscriptions**—complete form on the inside of the back cover or online at otisobserver.com.

We reserve the right to edit for space, style and clarity. No portion of the *Observer* may be reproduced without the express permission of the publisher. The *Observer* is not responsible for errors and omissions.

The *Observer* provides news and opinion articles as a service to our readers. Many articles come from sources outside of our organization. Where possible, the author and the source are documented within each article. Statements and opinions in these articles are solely those of the author(s).

The *Otis Observer* and its principals, officers, staff and volunteers disclaim any liability whatsoever for inaccuracies found in its content.

We invite submissions, news tips, photos, comments and suggestions including letters to the editor. For consideration they must be received by the **15th of the month prior to publication.**

CONTACT US:

Submissions otisobserver@yahoo.com

Advertising ooobserverads@yahoo.com

Calendar listings

ooobservercalendar@yahoo.com

Inquiries ooobserverinfo@yahoo.com

Letters to the Editor

ooobserverletters@yahoo.com

Memories otismemories@gmail.com



Prepared by Sue Brofman

For inclusion in the Calendar, please send notices to

ooobservercalendar@yahoo.com

Note: Check events calendar townofotisma.com for up-to-date notifications/cancellations.

DECEMBER

1. **Otis Town Hall is open from 8 am – 3 pm, Monday - Thursday. Town Hall**
2. **Town Hall will be closed on December 25 for Christmas**
NOTE: Town offices and meetings are subject to change Christmas week
3. **Council on Aging Center will be closed on December 25 for Christmas**
4. **Otis Winter Library Hours effective October 14**
 - **CLOSED Sunday, Monday, Tuesday**
 - **Wednesday – 11 am - 5 pm**
 - **Thursday – 12 pm - 6 pm**
 - **Friday - 11 am - 5 pm**
 - **Saturday – 9 am - 1 pm**
5. **Otis Food Pantry open every Wednesday 9 – 11 am**
6. **Rec Center - Temporarily Closed**
7. **StoryWalk, children and adults will enjoy a reading of “The Unwelcome Guest” by Rebecca Sheir from Circle Round, illustrated by Mert Tugen, while taking a walk along the Farmington River Trail.**
8. **Farmington River School Closed December 25 through January 1 for December Break**

Sat., Dec. 2, 9, 16, 23 and 30, 9:30 – 10:45 am, **Mat Yoga, Connie Wilson**, Ages 16+, Kripalu Yoga, all levels, Otis Town Hall, call or email Otis Rec Center for more information **(413) 269-4541, otisrec@verizon.net**

Mon., Dec. 4, 11 and 18, 10 am – 2 pm, **Council on Aging Open**, Otis Town Hall, for information call Eila at **(413) 269-0103** or email at eilabell2@aol.com

Mon., Dec. 4, 11 and 18, 10:30 – 11:30 am, **Council on Aging Fitness Class** with Michelle from Soules Fitness, Otis Town Hall, for information call Eila at **(413) 269-0103** or email at eilabell2@aol.com

Mon., Dec. 4, 7 – 8 pm, **School Committee Meeting**, Farmington River Regional Elementary School

Mon., Dec. 4, 7 - 9 pm, **Zoning Board Meeting**, Otis Town Hall

Tues., Dec. 5, 12, 19 and 26, 10 am, **Otis Play**, parent/child playgroup best for children birth – 5 years of age, this is a free program, no registration required, Otis Town Hall

Tues., Dec. 5, 4:30 – 6 pm, **Historical Commission**, Otis Town Hall

Wed., Dec. 6, 9 am – 2 pm, **Council on Aging, Foot Nurse** by appointment, Otis Town Hall, for information call Eila at **(413) 269-0103** or email at eilabell2@aol.com

Thurs., Dec. 7, 14, 21 and 28, 10 - 11 am, **Chair Yoga, Connie Wilson**, Ages 12+, Otis Town Hall, call or email Otis Rec Center for more information **(413) 269-4541, otisrec@verizon.net**

Sat., Dec. 9, **Gingerbread House Workshop**, One FREE house per family for Otis Residents/Taxpayers, two sessions: 11am-12:30pm and 1pm-2:30pm (a third session may be added at 3pm, if needed). All payments are required to be received at the Otis Town Hall by Monday December 4th. To sign up, please visit <https://tinyurl.com/5ad8njvf>

Mon., Dec. 11, 9 am, **Council on Aging Board Meeting**, Otis Town Hall

Mon., Dec. 11, 2 - 4 pm, **Board of Assessors Meeting**, Otis Town Hall

Mon., Dec. 11, 6:30 - 8 pm, Recreation Meeting, Otis Town Hall

Mon., Dec. 11, 7 - 9 pm, **Planning Board Meeting**, Otis Town Hall

Tues., Dec. 12, 4 - 5:30 pm, Otis Library Book Club, "The Covenant of Water" by Abraham Verghese, inquire at info@otislibraryma.org for more information, Otis Library

Wed., Dec. 13, **Council on Aging, A Trip to "Carpenters Christmas"** at the Lovely Aqua Turf Club in Southington, CT. Bus departs Harmony Hall in Otis at 9:15 am and Big Y in Lee at 9:45 am, for information contact Diane Dyer at (413) 269-6335 ext. 5, or email Diane at ddyer555@hotmail.com

Thurs., Dec. 14, 6 pm, **Otis Library Meeting (In person and Zoom)**, inquire at info@otislibraryma.org for more information, Otis Library

Thurs., Dec. 14, 7 pm, **PTA Meeting (Zoom)**, Farmington River Regional Elementary School

Fri., Dec. 15, 10 am - 12 noon, **Council on Aging Brown Bag Program**, Otis Town Hall, for information call Eila at (413) 269-0103 or email at eilabell2@aol.com

Fri., Dec. 15, 10 am - 12 noon, **CHP Wellness Van Clinic**, if you need to be seen for a sick visit or wellness check, or, if you need a COVID vaccine

or booster, call (413) 528-0457 to schedule your appointment, Otis Town Hall

Tues., Dec. 19, 6 - 9 pm, **Conservation Commission Meeting**, Otis Town Hall

Wed., Dec. 20, 12 noon, **Council on Aging, Holiday Luncheon** at the Country Club of Pittsfield, all are welcome, Cost \$25. Call Eila at (413) 269-0103 ext. 5 by December 4 for reservation and menu choice.

Fri., Dec. 22, 7 pm, **Farmington River Regional Elementary School, half day of school**

Tues., Dec. 26, 6:30 - 8 pm, Town of Otis **Select Board Meeting**, Otis Town Hall

Wed., Dec. 27, 10 am - 12 noon, **Registered Dietitian from Elder Services**, Sheryl Iodice will be at Council on Aging to talk about healthy eating habits, Otis Town Hall



Happy Chanukah

Check out our website

OtisObserver.com

for back issues,
donations, renewals,
and subscriptions!

Mail? Email?

Don't miss your copy of the Otis Observer!

Seasonal residents who wish to continue getting the 00 monthly should let us know if they would prefer the online version (in color) or the paper copy mailed.

Please fill out the subscription form BELOW and return it as soon as possible or online at otisobserver.com. For more information contact us at oobserverinfo@yahoo.com.

Want to Renew or Subscribe to the Otis Observer?

To have the *Otis Observer* mailed to your home, complete the form below and make your check payable to the *Otis Observer*, for \$15 (annual subscription fee for 11 issues) and mail to **PO Box 533, Otis, MA 01253**

Name _____

Delivery Street Address/PO Box: _____

City, State, Zip _____

Winter Address _____

From ____ / ____ / ____ To ____ / ____ / ____

Email: _____

Check either one or both boxes:

Mail printed edition to me

Email the electronic (PDF) version

Renew my subscription

The Historic
1737 New Boston Inn
Restaurant, Tavern and B&B
Six Guest Rooms, All Private Baths
(Breakfast for Guests Only)
Check website for list of events.
Restaurant open THURS 12-8, FRI & SAT 12-9, SUN 12-7

Pets Welcome!

101 North Main St., Sandisfield, MA (Corner of Routes 8 & 57)
413-258-4477 • List of events at www.NewBostonInn.com

Friendly
Spirits
(as seen on
syfy
Channel)



P. O. Box 533
Otis, MA 01253

STAFF:

Arlene Tolopko, Publisher
Linda Rocke, Editor
Tina Sotis, Graphic Designer
Sue Brofman, Calendar and eSubscriptions
Leslie Morris, Proofreader, Circulation
Frank Tolopko, Treasurer and Proofreader
Ellen Dilts, Circulation, Subscriptions
Deb Fogel, Circulation
Katharine Adams, Contributing Writer
Sandy Balayan, Contributing Writer
Peter Cameron, Contributing Writer
Eileen Cohen, Contributing Writer
Lynne Geane, Contributing Writer
Jackie Gentile, Contributing Writer, Donations
Hilary Harley, Contributing Writer
Diane Provenz, Contributing Writer
Stephanie Skinner, Contributing Writer
Celeste Watman, Contributing Writer
Carol Lombardo, Recording Secretary
Howard Basis, Cartoonist
Karen Amanti, Masthead Artist
Sam Maher, Website Consultant
Peter Sohn, Webmaster Emeritus

LOCAL OTIS
EXPERT

THOM
GARVEY

Service that's as elevated as
YOUR STANDARDS.

tgarvey@williampitt.com
508.371.8219

williampitt.com



William
Pitt

Sotheby's
INTERNATIONAL REALTY

Great Barrington Brokerage | 306 & 308 Main Street | 413.528.4192
Lenox Brokerage | 34 Church Street | 413.637.4402

© MMXIX WPS Holdings, LLC and Sotheby's International Realty Affiliates LLC. All Rights Reserved. Sotheby's International Realty® is a registered trademark licensed to Sotheby's International Realty Affiliates LLC. An Equal Opportunity Company. Equal Housing Opportunity. Each office is independently owned and operated. Statistics Source Berkshire MLS 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 Berkshire County in all price ranges YTD.