

OTIS OBSERVER

Your Town, Your Neighborhood and You

June 2023 Vol IX Issue 2

Otis' Own Troubadour

By Sandy Balayan

A familiar name on the local music scene belongs to one Otis resident whom we all know, Bruce Mandel. He and his wife Patty Strauch have been members of our community since 2003. After both growing up in New Jersey, Bruce found himself ready for a slower paced rural environment and moved out to Colorado for ten years. Inspired by the landscape and peace, he would write music and play wherever he could.

He loved the years there but after "re-meeting" Patty (they went to the same high school) on a trip back to New Jersey, he knew that his heart was with her and they decided to look for a compromise between his life in Colorado and her's in Jersey. This involved finding a place they could both feel comfortable in within a few hours' drive to see family. They started looking with the criteria of privacy, woods, some water, not a lot of noise and no visible neighbors. Some land they saw in a realty magazine they picked up spoke to them and they bought and built their little slice of heaven in Otis.

Music was always in Bruce's heart and soul. As early as seven, with the advent of the Beatles and other groups, he was hooked and knew what he wanted to do. His parents were supportive and although he did get a college degree, he knew, while stuck in traffic in the Lincoln Tunnel going to his first job interview, that he was not suited for corporate work. His mother said to set some goals, give yourself a reasonable amount of time and go for it. Of course, there were setbacks, but the music industry called and Bruce followed his dreams with his parents' support.

Continued on Page 4

The Lake Is Full



Otis Reservoir, Tolland, Massachusetts, May 2, 2023

Each fall the water in the reservoir is "drawn down," protecting permanent structures and at the same time killing off invasive vegetation that establishes itself in the shallows.

Though there was little runoff from snow this year, the spring rains did their job. The flood gates that hold in the waters were closed at the end of March on this second largest body of water in Massachusetts and we crossed our fingers. In all our 60+ years on the lake only once did the lake not fill. We are ready for a new season.

Photo: David Modzelewski



For Your Information

By Sandy Balayan

As a staff writer for the Otis Observer, my emphasis is on highlighting Otis residents, past and present. I love a good story and would love your ideas. Please contact me at otismemories@gmail.com with any ideas.



This month, I'd like to share with you that my husband John will be at the Sandisfield Arts Center, 5 Hammertown Road, on Saturday June 24th at 10 a.m. to share his knowledge of handmade rugs from around the world. He will bring many rugs of all types with him that you can see and touch and learn about. If you have a small rug you'd like him to look at, or even a picture of a large one (front and back), he'd be happy to give you info about it. It will be a fascinating look at this ancient art by someone who has been around rugs all of his life. Please come join him and be sure to say "hi" to me! ☺



OTIS FOOD PANTRY UPDATE

By Terry Gould

Summer is trying very hard to sneak into the Berkshires. As I write this there are still a few freeze warnings in the weather predictions, but the black flies seem to be waning and the sun feels warmer every day.

The pantry has benefitted from the longer days as our fine feathered ladies in town have begun laying extra eggs. We thank the local chicken parents for sharing the bounty with your neighbors at the food pantry.



School vacation will start soon so we hope you will think of summertime meals and snack foods when you shop. The pantry receives more fresh produce during the summer growing

season as well, which is very helpful in supplementing our Berkshire Bounty donations. Juice drinks and healthy summer snacks are always welcome.

The Otis Food Pantry is open every Wednesday from 9 to 11 a.m. Donations of non-perishable food items may be left in the safe box at the back door of the Otis Town Hall. A volunteer checks the box regularly and donations are brought into the pantry every day. Monetary donations may be sent to the Otis Council on Aging with checks made out to "Otis COA" and "food pantry" written on the memo line. You may also message us on the Facebook page or via email at otisfoodpantry@gmail.com.

Thank you to everyone who monitors the Facebook page and fills the safe box with items from our list. And thank you to our email elf and her army of shoppers who make sure that the shelves remain stocked. The term, "it takes a village" seems overused unless you realize that without each and every one of you who remember us, the pantry could not exist. We live in the most amazing community, and we are grateful every day to be a small part of this wonderful town. Happy summer everyone.

Otis Council on Aging

By Eila Bell

Happenings at the Otis Council on Aging June 2023

June 1 - Out to Lunch, Tavern Restaurant in Westfield, MA, 12 noon.

June 5 - CHP Wellness Van, Otis Town Hall, 9 a.m. - 12 noon.

June 7 - The foot nurse will be at the center, 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.

June 14 - Flag Day, Pot Luck Lunch at the town hall, 12 noon.

June 19 - The Center is closed to celebrate Juneteenth.



June 26 - Linda Lewis, the hairdresser, will be at the center. Please call for an appointment at (413) 269-0100, ext.5.

The Otis Senior Center is open Mondays, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. and Wednesdays, 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.

All are welcome to join us. We look forward to seeing you soon.

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



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The Erbe Family Remembers

Dear Editor:

I am Carolyn Erbe Gangloff, daughter of the late Doctor and Mrs. Henry Erbe.



school, a senior center, a library, or even a museum. It certainly was not her intent that it be unceremoniously razed to the ground. We only hope that the Town of Otis will build a community structure on top of the Erbe hill. Maybe it will have our dad's name on it.

Sincerely,
Carolyn Erbe Gangloff

Photos left and right: Family home of the late Doctor and Mrs. Henry Erbe.

Photo: Lavry Lhaubouet



I am writing this letter on behalf of our entire family concerning the demolition of our beloved home and historic landmark on top of the hill in the center of Otis. Not only have we lost our home but we have lost our dad's office, where he served as Otis Town Physician for 65 years.

We are certain that many of you reading this letter had the unpleasant experience being probed with his notorious swab of mercurochrome! It may have hurt but you were never infected!

One of my earliest childhood memories is that of being awakened in the middle of the night by the sound of a siren and flashing blue lights as the ambulance would come racing up our hill. As I looked out the upstairs window, I would see dad dressed in his pajamas and bathrobe, stethoscope around his neck rushing to the aid of whoever was in the ambulance. Many nights he would travel to Fairview Hospital with his patient and stay there until he knew they were stabilized. We would pick up dad the next day and he was still in his pajamas. His life was devoted to taking care of patients in Otis and the surrounding towns in the white house on the hill.

When our mom sold her property to the Town of Otis it was her intent that it be used as an addition to the elementary

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Otis' Own Troubador
Continued from page 1

A prolific song writer, Bruce finds inspiration in almost everything, especially walking through nature. Scribbling snippets of lyrics or notes, or using his phone to record his ideas, he is constantly thinking about his music. "I feel my music is lyrically driven. My music has to say something and the song dictates where to go. The natural surroundings of our home in Otis, with a beaver pond and nesting great blue herons, fill me with inspiration," shared Bruce. He's written hundreds of songs and there is no end in sight. "I can't imagine ever stopping. I truly love what I do."

Although COVID put a major damper on touring and playing gigs, things are picking up again. Bruce plays at many clubs and restaurants in the Berkshires and will often tour different areas nationally for up to eight weeks at a time. He loves to perform in homes or small venues where he can mix his songs with storytelling up close and personal. He also does weddings and other parties and especially loves to go into memory care facilities and nursing homes. He finds the audience is often sleeping when he arrives but the music reaches them and he watches them tap along, sing and smile. "One of my absolute favorite times is when they participate and even ask for songs. If I don't know them I learn them. I get so much more than I give at these venues." Bruce also will do an afterschool songwriting workshop at Farmington River Regional School this fall.

Bruce says he does not fit into a particular genre as a musician, but he'd call himself a contemporary folk singer of Americana music. Some of the singers he enjoys listening to that have influenced his growth are John Prine, Jackson Browne, Willie Nelson, James Taylor and Lyle Lovett to name a few. At his gigs he mostly sings his own songs, but he also enjoys doing covers and encourages requests from his audience. He reconnected with the very first friend from New Jersey he



Bruce Mandel

Photo: Jim Franzinelli

ever played music with and now the friend, a drummer, frequently fills in when Bruce needs a drummer and is on several of Bruce's albums. Music has brought a lot of friendships into Bruce's life. The Berkshire music community is very welcoming and they often jam together and fill in at gigs for each other if needed. It is something Bruce enjoys and never says no to. "Music feeds my soul. Being on stage for the pure pleasure of bringing something I enjoy so much to an audience is very special. I feel incredibly lucky to be doing what I am doing."

Bruce can be reached at www.brucemandel.com for his upcoming schedule and for CDs, digital download cards and thumb drives. Sign up for his monthly newsletter there also.

See memories column on page 5. ☺



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Our Memories column this month takes us back to 2010 when Bruce Mandel composed a song for the Otis Bicentennial. While speaking with Hank Wingate, Bruce was able to access a lot of Hank's knowledge and peruse the materials Hank had gathered in the Otis Library and Museum. Using both written documents and historical photos, Bruce wrote and then performed this song at the Otis Bicentennial celebration along with the Otis Red Hats singing the chorus. Copies of this CD are still available on Bruce's website (brucemandel.com) and include an 1874 map, some photos and articles. Hank was a wealth of information and a true Otis historian. Enjoy these song lyrics. 🎵

See Bruce Mandel article on page 4.

HERE'S TO OTIS (1810-2010)

©2010 Bruce E. Mandel

I climbed on up to the Pinnacle overlooking this old town.

And I got to thinking about the spirit of place.

History books are good, but they only go so far.

I think it's us town folk who make us what we are.

(chorus)

Here's to Otis and two hundred years.
Berkshire Hilltown, give it three cheers.
(hey, hey, hey)

Tip a hat to our history and colorful lore.

Here's to Otis, and two hundred years more.

Have you ever heard of the fiddler by the name of Sammy Spring?

He'd call 'em all night long, from Otis to Washington, D.C.

And some say Tarzan, filmed at the falls to the east.

Talk about two swingers of the first degree.

(repeat chorus)

Did you know Otis had a secret, a secret hand shake club?

Morning meetings at Hall's for coffee, gossip and government.

And we had Clifford Clark and his integrity,

For 56 years of service to our community.

(repeat chorus)

(spoken)

Through the years Otis has seen many kinds of business and industry as we have navigated the challenges of changing economic climates. Some have survived, while others remain only in our history books and in our memories. Here are a few of the many:

(bridge)

Charcoal and chickens, saw, dish and grist mills,

Cranberries, blueberries and apple orchards in these hills.

Inns and Taverns, maple syrup and cheese,

Pulp for making paper, iron forges and tanneries ...

So you see the heart of Otis is we the people of this town.

That's the spirit, the spirit of this place. So join me now in song and celebration.

Raise up your voices and sing along.

(repeat chorus)



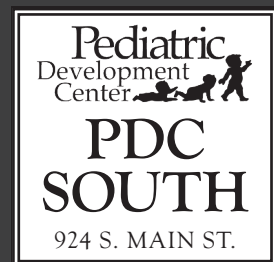
"Otis Memories" is an ongoing way to share your Otis memories with the community. If you have an idea for an article or think one of these memories would be a good feature, let us know. We also welcome old photographs. Send memories and ideas to otismemories@gmail.com. Looking forward to hearing from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

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Butterflies Enhance Gardens

By Cecilia Ackley

As April showers turn to summer sunshine, fluttering black wings strike a sharp contrast against blue skies. It's the first flight of a black swallowtail, she has emerged from her chrysalis, after many months waiting dormant for the snow to finally melt. She takes to the air, and despite her meandering path she has quite an important mission; to mate and lay eggs. She may live just a week, but with her limited time she will lay 200-430 eggs.



Spinus Nature Photography (Spinusnet) Black swallowtail, CC BY-SA 3.0

The black swallowtail is one of the most familiar butterflies of the northeast. Bejeweled with blue and orange markings, the black swallowtail is graceful and regal. While the black swallowtail takes a more generalist approach when looking for a nursery, some swallowtails are pickier. The pipevine swallowtail or the spicebush swallowtail are each named after their plants of choice. Eastern tiger swallowtails stick to woody shrubs and trees like the wild black cherry or cottonwoods.

The black swallowtail caterpillars have an appetite similar to ours. You'll find their tiny, pale yellow eggs camouflaged on the back of leaves or stems of many plants commonly grown in vegetable and herb gardens. As a child I learned to carefully search the dill, parsley and fennel we grew, but black swallowtail eggs and caterpillars can be found on carrot greens, celery and Queen Anne's lace too.

Summer is short so these caterpillars must grow up quickly with no time

to hide from birds and carnivorous insects. Within their three- to four-week life, they grow to be marked with black stripes and yellow dots across their green bodies. They've picked up a few tricks too. These caterpillars have evolved an organ called an osmeterium that extends out from behind their heads, mimicking a bright yellow forked tongue, and releasing an odor that repels predators.

The easy-to-spot and abundant nature of black swallowtails make them a fascinating species to raise and observe. All you need is a terrarium with small air holes and a lid you can remove. Once you see the first adult butterflies you can go into your garden and gently look for eggs and larvae. Take a pair of scissors and snip off the leaves where they reside, avoiding handling them directly which can stress and injure the delicate caterpillars. Placing the stems into a small glass, filled with marbles and water, helps the cuttings last as long as possible while minimizing the risk to the caterpillars. Place this glass and the leaves into your terrarium.

As the caterpillars grow, you will need to add more foliage or flat/curly parsley. Make sure to rinse off bought parsley to get rid of any pesticide residue that could harm the caterpillars. You should also provide them with a few sticks.



After three to four weeks of getting plump and producing an astonishing amount of poop pellets, your caterpillars will begin to climb and adhere themselves either to the sticks, or the top of their terrarium, by a pad of silk on their rump. They then let go, hanging stiffly by this silk pad. Their green body will harden up into a brown chrysalis as they shed their skin. The



*Cecilia Ackley
Photo: Val McQuillan*

process is rather grotesque, but nature isn't always pretty at first. You will wait 10-20 days but, with patience, you will then see something spectacular.

The butterflies come out small, wrinkly and damp, much like we all do. Also like a newborn, they are vulnerable at this stage, unable to fly until their wings dry and fully unfurl. Carefully, you can lift the lid off the terrarium, mindful not to disturb the new butterfly siblings that are still transforming. Let the butterfly crawl onto your finger, and gently raise her out and sit somewhere sunny letting the butterfly dry and stretch her wings right on your hand, or you can offer her a safe place like a twig or a flower. After a little while though, she will take her first tentative flaps and embark on the same journey her mother did, stopping for nectar from flowers, and painting a stunning display of color across the sky.

This cycle will repeat two or three times a season, with the last crop of caterpillars going into hibernation and lying dormant in their chrysalises through the winter. Whether you raise swallowtails yourself, grow extra host plants for them, or simply just admire their beauty in the wild, take note to appreciate these fascinating and mesmerizing creatures.

(See next page: *Beautifying Gardens* article) ☺

Beautifying Gardens

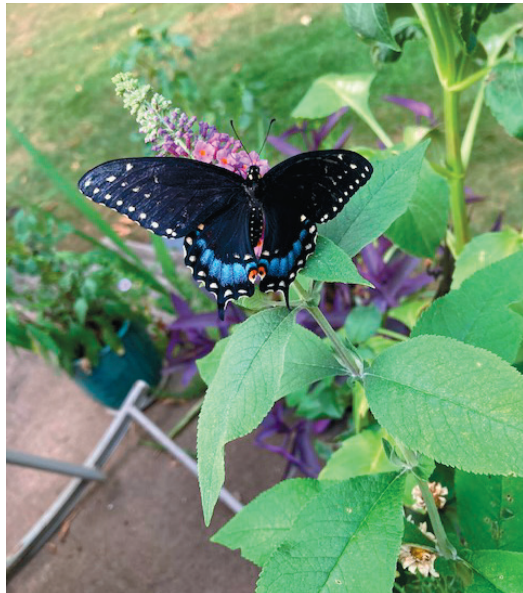
By Sandy Balayan

In talking with my neighbor and fellow Otis Observer volunteer, Ellen Dilts, I learned about her keen interest in attracting butterflies to her own garden and to the Otis Community Garden (she also is a longtime volunteer there). We planted flowers around our home to specifically attract butterflies and the enjoyment we get from the many species we see is both entertaining and mesmerizing.

“I want to plant various plants to create habitats for butterflies to not only enjoy but also so I can help the species to propagate and prosper,” said Ellen. Ellen also had a keen interest in gardening and using plants to attract birds and butterflies. The discovery of a caterpillar on a parsley plant in her garden peeked her curiosity. After talking to her hiking buddy, Val McQuillan, she learned that Val’s

granddaughter is very knowledgeable about butterflies as well as a terrific writer. At 18, Cecilia Ackley’s interests include mushrooms, plants, general horticulture and in providing and locating safe habitats for many other garden creatures. The article about Swallowtail butterflies, *Butterflies Enhance Gardens*, is the answer to a simple question Ellen had for Cecilia, “How can I learn more about these beautiful creatures and use this knowledge in my gardening?”

Knowing that butterflies are more than just a beautiful presence, Ellen saw them as a great addition to any garden and will be planting a variety of plants in her home garden, as well as at the Otis Community Garden, to attract them. Dill, curly and flat



Swallowtail butterfly
Photo: Ellen Dilts

parsley, fennel and Queen Anne’s Lace will be some of the plants she will use. For now, as June 1st dawns and we start the beautiful Otis summer, enjoy your garden and enjoy the beautiful words of 18-year-old Cecilia.

(See *Butterflies Enhance Gardens* previous page) ☉



OTIS COMMUNITY GARDEN

By Margie Klein

The hummingbirds are back! The feeder is filled. The yellow daffodils have burst open and they are showing their splendid beauty. The sun is dancing around my yard. Colors and lovely signs of spring abound.

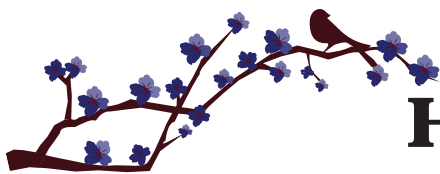
As I enter the garden I see mounds of dirt in neat rows. Each straight line is labeled with the vegetables or herb that has been planted. The garden looks very tidy and organized. This is the quality of the Otis Community Garden. My thoughts go elsewhere trying to envision the seeds popping underground, sending shoots up, thirstily making their way to the surface to explode with food for us all to enjoy. They are reaching for the sunlight. It sounds like me after the long winter in Otis. I also want to grasp the sun and spread my glory.

There are buckets of herbs around the garden. They will add to our culinary delights. I see some scallions ready for picking.

The days are getting longer. Temperatures overnight are becoming warmer. Soon we can put our summer flowers out. The bees are buzzing, the dandelions are growing, the ticks are sticking to my clothes and the May flies are swarming.

Each and every one of us is rejoicing in the new season, and is thankful for life. ☉

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The Rural ETHICIST

Honing the Kitchen

By Katharine Adams

I've become a sharpening maniac. And now I am honing everything I can get my hands on, with a renewed zest for all that life has to offer.

The old honing steel, suspended from a rooster-stamped, cast iron hook, attached to my kitchen bookshelf (a swashbuckling and spear like object, once eyed with slight contempt), has lately become the darling of my eyes.

Over the years, my spouse has demonstrated (more than once) how to hone a blade. I would watch him get my kitchen knives reasonably sharp, with seeming effortless movement. "It's important to hold the blade at the right angle," he would say.

But I wasn't buying it. I could not fathom how sliding one piece of smooth metal over another could possibly produce a sharp edge? It seemed a sham, like some practical joke. The old, trim-sanding housepainter in me balked. Doesn't crisping the edge of something require a gritty agent, like sandpaper? Wasn't my father's motor-driven grinding wheel, attached to his tool bench, the only honest way to go?

But today, my chagrin has changed. In a flash, I've become a metal alchemy true believer.

It all began when I picked up a pair of cheap, cute, serviceable crafting scissors we've had since my son's elementary school days. I cache them in a small vase, among pens and pencils, worn nail files and a bent old straw, on our kitchen counter beside the junk bowl. They may have cost \$2.79 at the time, and feature striped, orange-and-black, tiger-style handles. (The spotted, cheetah-style scissors are my true favorite, as well as my son's—since they still live in his room. And that pair is next up in my sharpening frenzy.)



Scissors honing.
Photo: Katharine Adams

I picked up a packaged product and tried to snip off its ubiquitous plastic housing. But the tiger scissors failed their duty. Chagrined, the old me proceeded to attack the package from different angles, snipping in four or five different directions. Still, no go. The tiger scissors had devolved into a cute crimping tool.

Abruptly, I recognized the folly of my ways. *Wait a minute*, I muttered aloud to the cobwebs, *why not just try sharpening them?*

Steeling myself to go to battle, I seized the honing spear from off its hook. Peering at the angle of one blade's edge, I tried to align with it, adjusting my handhold. It's a bit awkward with the scissors opened, forming an "x." Placing one blade on the rod, confident I had mimicked the correct angle; I whisked the scissors across multiple times until I felt satisfied.

The next step is flashing-light cautious. Very gently and lightly, barely touching, I brushed my fingers *perpendicular* across the blade's edge, to gauge its crispness. Pleasantly surprised, I found that indeed, it felt pretty dang sharp!

Note: *one must never feel along parallel with the blade*, in the same direction—else you will slice your skin! When in doubt, take heed. Test for sharpness on paper or a tomato, and forego brushing your fingerprint.

I followed suit with the other blade. Now the scissors have that newish, satisfying, slightly gritty resistance to operate. They also have regained that delicious, swishing sound. Inventive recording artist Tom Waits might consider incorporating such a sound into his material, the way he has with squeaking hinges, creaking rocking chairs and crowing roosters.

Finally, the true test: I returned to the piece of plastic and took a snip. I was even able to hold the scissors still and slice clean down the length of plastic, like dipping a blunt spreader through room temperature butter. *Voilà!* Success! Flood of endorphins!

There is much advice for getting the angle right: ideally, 15 degrees for a Japanese knife, or a tad steeper on French or German blades.

Information on knife care is beyond what can be listed here, but Daniel Gritzer in *Serious Eats* explains, "Ridged, rod-like honing steels, or 'stropping irons,' as they're sometimes called, do not sharpen blades—they realign them." He describes the way honing helps to correct a blade whose edge becomes imperceptibly bent over time. "This is why you have to swipe the blade on each side, to ensure proper alignment."

Next step? Tackling the delicacies of honing a serrated bread knife. ☺

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Can you solve this month's contest mystery? If you are the first to identify the family name of the woman 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.

If you have a picture you'd like featured in a future contest, please email the above address.

There was no winner in last month's contest. ☹



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The Reel World of Films

By Eileen W. Cohen

When the film industry showcases animals in their movies, it draws awareness to animal cruelty and makes audiences think twice about how they treat their pets. The movie, *Strays*, an R-rated (crude and offensive language and drug use) live-action animated comedy, featuring the vocal talents of Hollywood royalty (Jamie Foxx, Will Farrell and Will Forte), portrays lovable dogs who don't always get the best treatment and attention they deserve. The storyline for this talking animal movie follows Reggie, a cheerful border terrier, who loves his beer guzzling, "abusive and heartless" lowlife owner who abandons him. But revenge is on the way when Reggie teams up with a pack of stray dogs (a.k.a. "a pooch crew") to find his way home and hatch a plan seeking revenge on his former owner. This dark comedy, opening on June 9th, will definitely "shock audiences for its raunchy humor."

Get ready for another Marvel Comics superhero film featuring Miles Morales as Spider-Man in the upcoming computer-animated, *Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse*. This film is a sequel to the 2018 Oscar winning *Spider-Man: Into*

the Spider-Verse and is set in a multiverse of alternate universes known as the "Spider-Verse." Miles embarks on an epic adventure with love-interest, Spider-Woman, traveling across the multiverse where they meet a new team of Spider-People known as the Spider-Society. The film also introduces new characters—Spider-Punk and Spider-Byte. Conflict ensues when Miles finds himself at odds with the Spider-Society and gets caught in a web of intrigue.

Children's author, Crockett Johnson, wrote a timeless classic, imagination-sparking picture book in 1955 that is now being adapted for the big screen. This computer animated live-action movie, *Harold and the Purple Crayon*, is expected to follow the misadventures of Harold, a curious and imaginative four-year-old that creates his own world, his own reality, using a giant purple crayon. When trouble comes along, like a dragon, Harold draws his way out of the situation and ends up safe in bed. Crockett Johnson was the pen name of the American cartoonist and children's book illustrator, David Johnson Leisk, who is also best known for the comic strip, *Barnaby*. The film is directed by Carlos Saldanha whose previous works included family favorites, *Ferdinand*, *Rio* and *Ice-Age*.

The fifth installment of the *Indiana Jones* saga has an opening scene set in 1944 showing a young Indiana Jones using de-aging technology. It's called VFX software that combed through archived material of a younger Ford and then matched it up with the new footage. What did Ford say when he saw the results? "It's a little spooky, believable but eerie."

The main story unfolds in 1969 during the space race and the time of the moon landing. The fedora wearing/bullwhip slinging Harrison Ford stars in the action adventure, *Indiana Jones and The Dial of Destiny*, part of a franchise that started in 1981 with *Raiders of The Lost Ark*. Portraying a globetrotting archeologist always seeking some prized artifact, in this film Ford is searching for the mysterious Dial of Destiny,

thought to change the course of history. The franchise's newcomer is Phoebe Waller-Bridge (*Fleabag*) who plays Indy's goddaughter, Helena Shaw. The director's chair that originally was held by Steven Spielberg will now be filled by James Mangold (*Ford vs Ferrari*). But Spielberg still remains an executive producer. Actually, it was through the visions of filmmakers, Steven Spielberg and George Lucas, that the iconic character of India Jones was created. It's not often that audiences will see an octogenarian star in an action-packed adventure doing high-flying stunts like jumping out of planes or surviving death-defying car, truck and boat chases. So for Ford, this will be his last *Indiana Jones* movie. Now what's an Indiana movie without a great soundtrack. Once again the credit goes to world-renowned nonagenarian, composer/conductor, John Williams, (*Jaws*, *ET*, *Jurassic Park* and *Star Wars*) who has composed music for more than 75 films. For this film, Williams unveiled a new piece, *Helena's Theme*. This score will be Williams' last, marking his official retirement from the industry.

Fresh off his appearance as Phil Knight, Nike founder in the film *Air*, Ben Affleck will appear on the silver screen again as he reprises his role as Bruce Wayne/Batman, a.k.a. the caped crusader, Leader of the Justice League. This highly anticipated film is *The Flash*. If you're a fan of the DCEU (DC Extended Universe) and you like action, adventure, drama and sci-fi entertainment, then head over to your neighborhood theater on June 16th and watch as worlds collide.

Stay safe, enjoy summer 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.

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Our Otis Graduates



Makenzie Marie Chaffee
Photo: Suzy Avery

Makenzie Marie Chaffee

Graduating from: Lee High School

Daughter of: Chris and Candy Chaffee, East Otis Rd.

Granddaughter of: Jennie Scapin of Lee and June Axt of Pittsfield

Heading to: Western Governors University (WGU) online and working in the early childhood field.

Major: Educational Studies, Special and Elementary Education

Extracurricular: While at Lee, Makenzie played soccer, lacrosse, did skiing and also volunteered for the Special Olympics.



Ava Consolati
Photo: Tara Consolati

Ava Young Consolati

Graduating from: Monument Mountain High School

Daughter of: Brian & Tara Consolati, West Center Rd., Otis

Headed to: University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY

Major: Undecided

Extracurricular: Ava was on the varsity soccer team and was co-captain of the Monument Spartans ski team



Alana Guidette-Bocchino
Photo: Alana Guidette

Alana Guidette-Bocchino

Graduating from: Monument Mountain High School

Granddaughter of: Christopher and Mary Jean Guidette, Dimmock Rd., Otis

Daughter of: Mark Bocchino and Gina Guidette

Headed to: University of Rhode Island, Kingston, RI

Major: Undecided

Extracurricular: Alana was on the Monument varsity volleyball team and received an award for volleyball athlete of the year.



Haley Couch

Graduating from: SUNY Polytech, Utica, NY

Daughter of: Mark and Kathy Couch, Algeria Road

Granddaughter of: Jim Fink, Reservoir Rd. and Vickie Jorczak of Tyringham

Degree: Bachelor's of Science, Mechanical Engineering

Headed to: General Dynamics Electric Boat, working on electric and hybrid propulsion systems for the newly commissioned Columbia class submarines

Haley received honors from the student government and SAE Baja teams

Haley Couch
Photo: Megan Hawkins

Sylvia Franz

(no photo provided)

Graduating from: Hopkins Grammar School, New Haven, CT

Daughter of: Burvee Franz III and Candance Franz, Milford, CT

Granddaughter of: Burvee Franz, Jr. and Judy Franz, Kibbe Point Rd.

Headed to: Marist College, Poughkeepsie, NY

Major: Education and Psychology

College Graduate



Jay Howard

Photo: Suzy Avery

Jay Howard

Graduating from: Monument Mountain High School

Son of: Mike and Hillary Howard of Otis

Grandson of: Diane Dyer of Otis

Headed into the workforce with the possibility of furthering his education

Extracurricular: Jay was captain of the varsity football team and is an avid fisherman.



Matthew O'Brien

Photo: Cooper Maloney

Matthew O'Brien

Graduating from: Lee High School

Son of: Richard and Tanya O'Brien, Reservoir Rd.

Grandson of: Richard and Deborah Hawley of East Otis and Richard and Gloria O'Brien of Palmetto, FL

Headed to: Southern Maine Community College, Portland ME

Major: Architectural Engineering and Design

Extracurricular: Matt played basketball at Lee and also raced go karts at Lebanon Valley. He volunteered for the Special Olympics.



Paige Schultze

Photo: Stacey Schultze

Paige Schultze

Graduating from: Monument Mountain High School, with high honors and Berkshire Community College, AS in Psychology

Daughter of: Steven and Stacey Schultze, Loudon-Bethlehem Rd.

Headed to: Suffolk University, Boston

Major: Psychology

June, 2023



Margaret Glory Sarnacki

Photo: Suzy Avery

Margaret Glory Sarnacki (Maggy)

Graduating from: Mount Everett High School, with honors

Daughter of: David and Roberta Sarnacki, Kibbe Rd.

Granddaughter of: Robert Peterson, Reservoir Rd.

Headed to: Salem State University, Salem MA

Major: Sports and Movement Science

Maggy will play soccer and basketball for the Salem State Lady Vikings.

Extracurricular: Maggy played varsity soccer and basketball all four years. She was captain of the soccer and basketball teams this year. She also plays varsity lacrosse for the Lee High Lady Wildcats. She is a member of the National Honor Society and the Model United Nations club.

*Congratulations to all of our graduates
and we wish them good luck in all of
their future endeavors!*

ASTROLOGY

Put Your Party Shoes On

By Hilary Harley

The heavy lift of April and May has passed. Take a breather and savor the fruits of your labor. Your feet are firmly planted on the ground with three planets in earthy Taurus. *This is rock solid energy* to reap a terrific return on wherever you invest your time, energy and resources.

You may think twice about exactly how to spend the currency of your life as the Gemini Sun challenges Taskmaster Saturn in Pisces the first week of June. We feel the push and pull of life's obligations versus our desires. The struggle is real; but any road blocks in your progress will not last as we head into a Full Moon in Sagittarius on Saturday, June 3rd, calling for raw honesty. Say YES to what IS working in your life rather than banging on closed doors. Lean into the flow offered by Neptune and Venus in Pisces-Cancer in early June to accept opportunities right under your nose.

The Sagittarius Full Moon offers pure truth pouring forth from its bright spotlight, liberating everyone. Like a gigantic AH-HAH, any confusion is cleared up by this wise Full Moon. Aligning to Mars in Leo, this moon says: *Let's get this party started!* Celebrations over the first weekend in June will be a blast!

Put your party shoes on as Valuable Venus joins Mars on Monday, June 5th. Joy is on the agenda for the next month as both planets revel in Leo, the sign of romance and creativity, until July 10th. TAKE ADVANTAGE of their playful energy. Venus rules love and money, while Mars drives our energy. Leo rules risk taking; remember: no risk, no reward. So throw your hat in the ring because luck is on your side. With warmer weather, take time to explore and enjoy. Allow for surprise and wonder.



Messenger Mercury shifts into Gemini on Sunday, June 11th aligning to Powerful Pluto. Our observations are super sharp now for

gathering information. Knowledge is power. Equally, our words are *on point*. Speak your truth but be mindful of gossip and hearsay.

Choose your words and thoughts wisely especially the week leading into the New Moon on June 17th when trickster energy is afoot. Mercury challenges Saturn in Pisces as it turns retrograde. Watch for con artists and spin doctors. Focus your attention intently from June 13th-18th. Smoke and mirrors permeate this stretch. Do not be shy about asking hard questions. Set your New Moon intentions carefully: *understand WHY*, the reason behind your goals. Think long-term, what will happen if you reach your goals. What happens then? ... so be careful what you wish for.

The alliance of two cosmic titans: Jupiter and Saturn underscores our power to manifest now. Saturn now cycles through spiritual Pisces, encouraging us to act on our beliefs, dreams and visions, as Jupiter in earthy Taurus offers plentiful resources to plant and develop our dreams. By the end of the week, the Sun enters Cancer the Crab, marking the summer solstice on Thursday, June 22nd. With the Moon in Leo tightly wedged between Venus and Mars, get out your festive attire.

Before long, Messenger Mercury joins the Sun in Cancer on Monday, June 26th. Four planets and the lunar south node now cycle through water signs, making sure your internal GPS is deeply accurate. Follow where it leads. Draw nearer to water and music, home and family. Dip your toe in the stream of life for it is the daydream you make of it. ☯



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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.



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OTIS LIBRARY NEWS

By Susan Ebitz

The library has exciting news. The Board of Trustees has hired a new director, Brad Havill, who assumed all the Director's responsibilities on May 15th. The Board of Trustees would like to acknowledge their gratitude to Interim Director, Lois Hall, for her selfless service to the community until Brad was hired. Lois is looking forward to returning to her position as Assistant Director and collaborating with Brad.



Lois Hall, Assistant Director, and Brad Havill, Director of the Otis Library, first day on the job.

Photo: Susan Ebitz

It is time to introduce Brad. He has many local connections. He was born and

grew up in Tyringham. He has family in Becket and currently resides in Richmond with his wife and daughter. Prior to joining us, Brad worked as an archivist or librarian at Williams College, the Stockbridge Library, Bard College at Simon's Rock and the West Stockbridge Library. He earned a master's degree in library and information sciences (MLIS) from Simmons University. We are thrilled that he plans to start on Kathy's path before finding his own. He was ready and willing to let me ask him a few questions on his first workday to make the deadline for the *Otis Observer*.

Who are your favorite authors?

Brad: Lee Child and the Jack Reacher Series are favorites because the books are fast paced and you know who the "bad guy" is before he/she gets what is coming to them. I enjoy Carl Hiaasen's adult and young adult fiction for the environmental themes and sense of humor.

Another mystery author I really like is Archer Mayer whose series features Joe Gunther. This author uses Burlington, Vermont as a setting with many references to local places such as Springfield and Holyoke. I am also a big fan of the late Robert Jordan's fantasy series *The Wheel of Time*.

Your education and experiences in libraries are quite different from your previous work and time in the service. What drew you to want to be a librarian?

Brad: I have always been a book lover and have always loved going to libraries.

When I started college, I was interested in archeology and anthropology. Then I went to Simmons and got interested in archives management. I was asked to help with the archives in Stockbridge and while there discovered that I enjoyed being with people, listening and talking to them as much, if not more than researching questions and finding information for people. In West Stockbridge I became the Assistant Director of the library. As library director, I am looking forward to interacting with patrons and the community in a variety of areas: research, book recommendations, tech support and using library resources.

In what capacity do you see the library functioning in our community?

Brad: The library is a center, a hub, not just books, but a gathering and meeting place for people to interact with each other. It is the center of the community. In addition to the physical space, it is full of resources for all ages and interests. When someone comes into the library no one is asking them to buy something or charge them for the use of the materials. This library has a designated "quiet area" in the back, but this is not a "shhhhhing" library. I look forward to meeting, listening and talking with patrons and members of the community to see how the Otis Library can best serve their needs. ☺

Thank you Brad, we look forward to continuing this conversation in person at the library.

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How did I end up here? I had spent a good portion of my adult career in finance and manufacturing in New York City and, in the aftermath of 9/11, my family and I realized it was time for a change and we moved here on a part time basis. The more time I spent here the more I felt the healing and cathartic powers the Berkshires is known for. I set a goal to pursue a more purposeful and balanced life here.

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Otis Cultural Council

By Jeanne Randorf

What's happened? Music and Drama!

- Music programs for seniors through the Council on Aging. Tim Van Egmond sang and played favorites for Valentine's Day and Davis Bates "Celebrated the Season" in May.
- As for the younger set, students at Farmington River Elementary School presented their original production *The It's Never Too Late Show*. To show what, you may ask? At the time of this writing it remains a mystery to be revealed next month.
- And a fabulous concert by Wanda Houston and her Band to raise money for preservation of our historically important buildings.

What's happening now? Planting!

Thanks to our enthusiastic team of gardeners, and the help of our town maintenance crew, the flower barrels of Otis are overflowing with beauty. We appreciate their dedication to beautifying our town.

What's going to happen? Summer fun!

- June 4th Line Dancing at the Knox Trail Inn from 2 – 4 p.m.
- Ed the Wizard will again present his mix of magic and learning at the Otis Library.

- Also contributing to the summer reading program will be a music and reading event by David Maloof, with his songs and ukuleles for all!
- Lara Tupper will host a writing workshop for adults called **Journaling for Wellness**. No prior experience required. It will include info about the health benefits of journaling; short and sweet "free writing" prompts and tips about how to sustain greater self-compassion and self-awareness through writing. All are welcome!

And many other programs happening in our neighboring towns, such as:

- Early American Re-enactment Weekend at the Bidwell House.
- Fiddle music at the White Church in Blandford.
- José Gonzalez and Criollo Clasico Trio also at the White Church.
- Summer concerts in Becket and Washington.
- Festival Latino of the Berkshires in Great Barrington.
- SculptureNow exhibition at The Mount.

For a complete listing of programs we are sponsoring see our page at townofotisma.com. ☺



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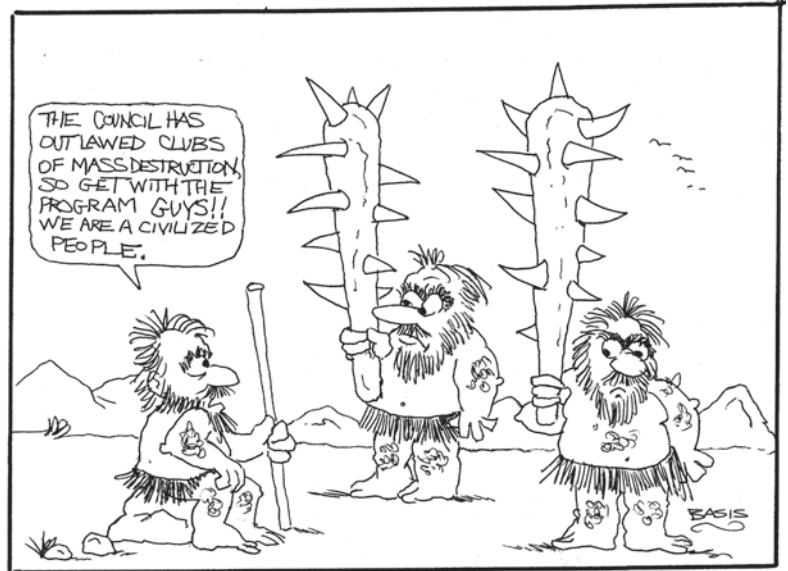
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Laugh with Carolyn

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.

A couple was going out for the evening to celebrate the wife's birthday. They'd gotten all dressed, put the cat out and were ready for the taxi to arrive. As the couple walked out of the front door, the cat ran back into the house. Not wanting this often rowdy cat having free run of the house while they were gone, the husband went back upstairs to chase the cat back outside. The wife, not wanting it known that the house would be empty, explained to the taxi driver, "He's just going upstairs to say goodbye to my mother."

A few minutes later the husband got into the car, and said, "Sorry it took so long. Stupid old thing was hiding under the bed and I had to poke her with a coat hanger to get her to come out." ☹



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OTIS HISTORY

Historical Potpourri for the Month of June

By Peter Cameron

Before I start this column, I want to share some exciting news. On Saturday, July 22nd, author John Hanson and myself will host an Otis Preservation Trust event at Norton Cemetery in Otis. It is an awesome chance to see the cemetery and gain an understanding of its connection to history. Please save the date. More information to follow.

June is:

- African American Music Appreciation Month
- Caribbean American Heritage Month
- LGBT Pride Month
- National Safety Month

History of Junes past:

June 2, 1692, Salem Witchcraft trials begin.

June 4, 780 BC, China records a solar eclipse for the 1st time.

June 4, 1942, Pivotal WWII Battle of Midway begins. It is the turning point of the war in the Pacific.

June 4, 1989, Chinese troops fire on protesters in Tiananmen Square killing 300, arresting 1600 and eventually executing 27 more.

June 5, 1968, Robert F. Kennedy is assassinated in Los Angeles after a presidential campaign event.

June 6, 1872, Susan B. Anthony arrested after voting, a violation of male only voting laws.

June 6, 1944, Allies storm French beaches in D-Day invasion of Hitler's Fortress Europe. 15,000 are killed or wounded. It signals the beginning of the end of WWII in Europe.

June 10, 1652, In Massachusetts Bay Colony, John Hull mints first silver coin, the Pine Tree Schilling, in violation of English colonial Law.

June 10, 1692, Bridget Bishop becomes the first person convicted of witchcraft in Salem and is hung.

June 11, 1994, Last former Soviet troop leaves East Germany opening the possibility of German reunification.

June 12, 1924, George Bush, Sr. was born in Milton, Massachusetts.

June 12, 1954, My wife Catherine's birthday.

June 12, 1987, President Reagan challenges Gorbachev to tear down the Berlin Wall as the Soviet Union begins to crumble.

June 13, 1966, U.S. Supreme Court Decision *Miranda vs. Arizona*, mandating advisement of rights upon questioning after arrest, is decided.

June 14, 1775, Continental Congress creates the United States Army.

June 14, 1777, John Adams introduces resolution to Continental Congress setting the stars and stripes design for our American flag.

June 15, 1218, King John of England, signs the Magna Carta. It is the 1st

charter recognizing the inalienable rights of man.

June 17, 1775, Battle of Bunker Hill in Boston begins prompting the saying, "Don't fire until you see the whites of their eyes."

June 18, 1812, War of 1812 is declared.

June 18, 1815, Battle of Waterloo, Belgium occurs where a coalition of nations crush Napoleon's army.

June 19, 1865, Union General Granger issues General Order #3 in Texas releasing all slaves in accordance with Emancipation Proclamation. Date now celebrated as Juneteenth.

June 21, 1788, U.S. Constitution goes into effect after New Hampshire, the 9th state to do so, ratifies it.

June 22, 1847, First doughnut is made. Police around the world rejoice.

June 23, 1967, 1st female contraceptive pill is sold.

June 25, 1630, Governor John Winthrop of Plymouth Plantation introduces a fork as an eating utensil. Initially its use is thought to be blasphemous.

June 25, 1876, Battle of Little Bighorn in Montana takes place with a Native American coalition wiping out U.S. Army Gen. George Custer's force.

June 28, 1914, Archduke Ferdinand and wife Sophia are assassinated in Austria leading to WWI.

June 28, 1919: Exactly five years after it started WWI ends with signing of Treaty of Versailles. Ironically it sets the table for WWII twenty years later.

June 29, 1964, Civil Rights bill passed after 83-day filibuster is broken.

June 30, 1971, 19th Amendment to Constitution is passed allowing 18-year-olds to vote. ☉

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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.

FARMINGTON RIVER SCHOOL'S END OF YEAR MUSICAL PRODUCTION, THE IT'S NEVER TOO LATE SHOW.



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Photo: Frank Tolopko



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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.**

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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.

JUNE

NOTE:

- Otis Town Hall is open from 8 am – 3 pm, Monday - Thursday.**
- Otis Library Summer Hours**
 - Monday - 10 am - 4 pm
 - Tuesday - 12 noon - 6 pm
 - Wednesday - 10 am - 5 pm
 - Thursday - 1 pm - 7 pm
 - Friday - 10 am - 5 pm
 - Saturday - 9 am - 1 pm
 - Closed Sunday
- Rec Center - Temporarily Closed**
- Farmington River School - Last Day of School is June 16**
- StoryWalk, children and adults will enjoy a reading of "Mama, Do You Love Me?" by Barbara M. Joose while taking a walk along the Farmington River Trail, the StoryWalk will remain up through June 4.**

Thurs., June 1, 8, 15, 22 and 29, 8:30 am, **Inspirations ONLINE at <https://www.facebook.com/noticeotis>, Viktoria Seavey**, jumpstart your day with clear intention, centered inspiration and positive imagination, call or email Otis Rec Center for more information **(413) 269-4541.**

Thurs., June 1, 8, 15 (canceled), 22 and 29, 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**

Thurs., June 1, 12 noon, **Council on Aging Out to Lunch** at the Tavern in Westfield, for information call Eila at **(413) 269-0103** or email Eila at **eilabell2@aol.com**

Sat., June 3, 10, 17, and 24, 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., June 5, 12, 19 and 26, 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., June 5, 10 am - 2 pm, **Council on Aging Haircuts**, call for an appointment, Eila at **(413) 269-0103** or email Eila at **eilabell2@aol.com**

Mon., June 5, 7 - 8 pm, **School Committee Meeting**, Farmington River Regional Elementary School

Tues., June 6, 13, 20 and 27, 8:30 am, **Inspirations at <https://www.facebook.com/noticeotis>, Viktoria Seavey**, jumpstart your day with clear intention, centered inspiration and positive imagination, call or email Otis Rec Center for more information **(413) 269-4541, otisrec@verizon.net**

Tues., June 6, 13, 20 and 27, 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., June 6, 11 am - 12 noon, **Historical Commission Meeting**, Otis Town Hall

Wed., June 7, 14, 21 and 28, 9 am - 2 pm, **Council on Aging Open**, Otis Town Hall, for information call Eila at **(413) 269-0103** or email at **eilabell2@aol.com**

Thurs., June 8, 4 pm, **PTA Meeting (Zoom)**, Farmington River Regional Elementary School

Thurs., June 8, 6 pm, **Otis Library Meeting (In person and Zoom)**, inquire at info@otislibraryma.org for more information

Mon., June 12, 4 -5 pm, **Board of Assessors Meeting**, Otis Town Hall

Mon., June 12, 7 - 9 pm, **Planning Board Meeting**, Otis Town Hall

Tues., June 13, 6:30 – 8 pm, Town of Otis **Select Board Meeting**, Otis Town Hall

Fri., June 16, 11 am – 12 noon, **Council on Aging Brown Bag Program**, for information call Eila at **(413) 269-0103** or email Eila at eilabell2@aol.com

Tues., June 20, 6 - 9 pm, **Conservation Commission Meeting**, Otis Town Hall

Wed., June 21, 12 noon – 2 pm, **Council on Aging Potluck Lunch** – Bingo in the Gym, for information call Eila at **(413) 269-0103** or email Eila at eilabell2@aol.com

Wed., June 21, 6 – 7:30 pm, **Cultural Council Meeting**, Otis Town Hall

Wed., June 21, 5 – 6:30 pm, **Journaling For Wellness with Lara Tupper**, this workshop includes a brief discussion about the health benefits of journaling, short and sweet “freewriting” exercises and tips about how to sustain greater self-compassion and self-awareness through writing. No prior experience necessary. All adults are welcome. Otis Library, to register go to: <https://www.laratupper.com/contact>

Tues., June 27, 6:30 – 8 pm, Town of Otis **Select Board Meeting**, Otis Town Hall

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Sat., July 8, 9 am, **Smile Like Jack 5K/10K Road Race/Walk**, a fundraiser for the Smile Like Jack Memorial Fund. Race Start: 9 am at the Knox Trail Inn, 1898 East Otis Road, East Otis, MA 01029.

Sat., July 8, 10:00 – 3:00 pm, **Otis Library Country Fair**, vendors featuring a wide variety of crafts and products, Authentic Italian food, bake

table, raffle baskets and raffle items, Children’s entertainment including performers and artists from BTC Entertainment, the Pittsfield Police Copsicle truck will be on hand to pass out free popsicles to the kids. Otis Town Hall green.

Fri., July 14, 5:00 pm, **“Ed the Wizard”** a fun-filled workshop where Harry Potter meets real science. Using common household items, learn and perform magical feats such as transfiguration, vanishes, levitation and other magic! Free, registration required. Register at www.otislibraryma.org. Otis Library

Wed., July 26, 5:00 – 6:30 pm, **Laugh & Learn: Healing through Comedy & Laughter with David Maloof**, learn how (and why) jokes and comedic songs are written and discover the physical and psychological benefits of comedy and laughter. All ages welcome. Free, registration required. Register at www.otislibraryma.org. Otis Library



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