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Senator Sal DiDomenico speaking during the MASSCAP event

DiDomenico champions Community Action Agencies at State House Event

Special to the Patriot-Bridge

Last week, Senator Sal DiDomenico spoke at the Massachusetts Association for Community Action (MASSCAP)'s public policy briefing about the essential role Community Action Agencies play in our community. He was joined by the Community Action Agency leaders in his district, Cambridge Economic Opportunity Committee (CEOC), Community Action Programs Inter-City, Inc. (CAPIC), and Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD). During the event, MASSCAP informed legislators and staff about their policy priorities and what kind of assistance they need from the state in order to successfully serve constituents across the Commonwealth.

(ACTION Pg. 7)



Shown (left to right) are Richelle Cromwell (CAPIC Executive Director), Tina Alu (CEOC Executive Director), Senator Sal DiDomenico, Sharon Scott-Chandler (ABCD President and CEO), Joe Diamond (Executive Director of MASSCAP)

The fight against the Constitution Inn Project continues with a lawsuit

By Michael Coughlin Jr.

Last week, 11 Charlestown residents filed a lawsuit against the Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA), its director, its board, Mayor Michelle Wu, and the proponents of a permanent supportive and affordable housing project at the site of the old Constitution Inn which was approved by the agency's board in December.

The lawsuit comes off the heels of a letter sent to the BPDA's Director James Arthur Jemison by the law firm Mirrione, Shaughnessy & Uitti, LLC, on behalf of the Neighborhood Voice Alliance back in December in an attempt to put a halt to the project which has seen a significant amount of opposition since it was first proposed in 2022.

The abovementioned letter was a formal complaint against the agency for "continued violations of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §§ 18-25, at the BPDA's public meetings held via Zoom on October 19, 2023, and December 14, 2023."

Fast forward to now, Mirrione, Shaughnessy & Uitti, LLC has now submitted the newly filed lawsuit to stop the project dubbed

The Independence at Charlestown Navy Yard in its tracks.

The Independence, previously known as the Helm on Third, is a project put forth by the Planning Office for Urban Affairs (POUA) and St. Francis House, which would bring 100 affordable rental units to the site at 150 Third Avenue — 48 of which are permanent supportive housing (PSH) units — 32 for women and 16 for veterans.

The PSH model, as described by a BPDA news update on the project's approval, "combines providing deeply affordable, permanent, leased housing for individuals experiencing homelessness with tailored individualized services to assist people with disabilities to live successfully in the community long term."

The project contains features such as 24/7 private concierge-style security, staffing that "exceed best practice standards," per POUA's President Bill Grogan, and background checks for those who would live in the PSH units, among other items.

Even with all this said, as mentioned, many residents have had grave concerns about the proposal

(CONSTITUTION INN Pg. 3)

The Independent Newspaper Group Office will be Closed on Monday, Feb. 19th in observance of President's Day. We will reopen on Tuesday at 9:30 am.

Deadlines are Friday, Feb. 16 at 12 p.m.



EDITORIAL

OL' MAN WINTER IS NO MATCH FOR CLIMATE CHANGE

The record-high temperatures and beautiful weather this past weekend and Monday may have lulled us into thinking that the worst of winter was behind us. But Ol' Man Winter gave us a head-fake worthy of Patrick Mahomes by bringing our region the threat of a major nor'easter with high winds, significant snow, and coastal flooding on Tuesday, although the Greater Boston area escaped the worst of it.

But try as he might, Ol' Man Winter just ain't what he used to be thanks to the effects of climate change.

Eight of the 24 warmest winter days on record in Boston over the past 110 years have occurred since 2016. But it isn't just our corner of the globe that is feeling the effects of a warming planet. World-wide, December 2023 was the warmest December ever, completing a year in which the seven months from June to December all broke temperature records, making 2023 the warmest year since record-keeping began.

With ocean water temperatures now following the same trend, it is expected that a warming planet and a warming ocean will create a positive feedback loop that will accelerate both trends at a far more rapid rate than even the most-pessimistic climate change scientists had predicted.

For those among us who think that the worst effects of climate change will have to be addressed by future generations, the rapidity of the onset of climate change effectively means that there is no place on Earth that is safe for any of us.

In other words, the future is now.

PATS FANS, ON THE OUTSIDE LOOKING IN

The Super Bowl has become our biggest national holiday. There is no other event that even comes close to grabbing the attention of just about every American, even more so this year with the addition of Taylor Swift into the mix.

For the 19 years from 2001 to 2019, the Patriots made it to the big game nine times, an amazing run, especially when you consider that they made the playoffs in 17 of those years and therefore their success rate -- measured by how many times they made it to the Super Bowl -- was better than 50 percent.

We often wrote during those years that we shouldn't take the Pats' success for granted because even the greatest of dynasties eventually comes to an end. We were around when the Celtics' dynasty ended with the retirement of Bill Russell in 1969 after winning 11 championships in 13 seasons and the next season and the Celts went from top dog to a near doormat (although they soon rebounded when they drafted Dave Cowens.)

So as we were watching the Chiefs and the 49ers, and all of the hoopla surrounding the Super Bowl (which somehow gets even bigger and bigger every year), we were reminded of the Pats' glory years, when our entire region was united in the common cause of rooting on Tom Brady and the team. Our kids wore their Patriot gear to school and businesses of all kinds exhibited support for the Pats.

But those days seem like a lifetime ago. With the Pats now having been out of the Super Bowl picture for five years (and with no hope of getting there anytime soon), watching Sunday's game made us feel that we were on the outside looking in at a party to which we had not been invited.

The Independent Newspaper Group reserves the right to edit letters for space and clarity. We regret that we cannot publish unsigned letters. Please include your street and telephone number with your submission. The Independent Newspaper Group publishes columns, viewpoints and letters to the editor as a forum for readers to express their opinions and to encourage debate. Please note that the opinions expressed are not necessarily those of The Independent Newspaper Group. Text or attachments emailed to editor@reverejournal.com are preferred.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

THE SHORT-CHANGING of CHARLESTOWN

To the Editor,

As Mayor Wu delivered her State of the City address recently, my hope was that the City of Boston is in a good place. Mayor Wu spoke of many new initiatives, programs, and positive happenings in our city.

Further into the address, the Mayor added, "The Boston Planning and Development Agency will transition to the city in July, "restoring planning as a core function of the agency."

Charlestown has lost out on the "new planning." Our one square mile is in the middle of a major building boom, with more than 46 multi storied buildings ranging in height from 4 to 20 stories, with a goal of 20,000 more residents in our one square mile. Of note, 14,000 residents on average reside in one square mile in Boston according to the latest census.

The back story: As a City Councilor, Mayor Wu wrote a major policy paper calling to "Abolish the BPDA" citing the failures of this agency. This was a compelling document and prompted many of us to join her campaign as we in Charlestown needed and advocated for planning.

After Mayor Wu was sworn in January 2022, we presented over 4,000 petition signatures that requested a Master Plan going forward. We were ignored by Mayor Wu, and ignored by newly appointed first Chief of Planning, James Arthur Jemison.

Here it is 2024 and we are still without planning but every available acre in our one square mile is slated for development. One proposal after another is approved, ignoring resident comments and concerns. We asked for in-person or hybrid meetings by the BPDA, we were rejected. We asked the BPDA for a map to show the residents in a simple format the future building proposals that would take place, "a picture is worth a thousand words". That was not done. It seems the modus operandi of the BPDA "is the less they know the more we sow."

The latest project to be approved is a travesty for our community: The Austin Street parking lots, awarded to a developer touting affordable housing as the main selling point. Due to the BPDA's lack of due diligence and

no planning, Charlestown seems to be the place for more affordable housing. In this toxic location, the environmental and social injustice -- proposal: to build 700 units for 1750 Charlestown residents is the travesty. Charlestown currently is home to the highest number of affordable units / per capita in greater Boston, Seaport has zero.

Why are the Austin Street parking lots proposal the latest Charlestown travesty? The parcel is located on the Mill Creek which connects to Miller's Pond [Sullivan Square], built on filled wetlands, in a severe FEMA flood zone, and surrounded by 6 major roadways, adjacent to the Boston Sand and Gravel.

The creation of another massive heat island with little green or open space is NOT okay for the residents who will be living there 24 / 7 with idling, noisy traffic just outside their windows. Where is the critical and forward thinking, where is the due diligence to even allow this ill- conceived development?

As a nurse, I have been following the research regarding physical and mental health and the impacts of living in this "toxic environment." Just living next to traffic, research is astonishing that shows increased asthma and cancer rates, increased dementia, as well as multiple morbid illnesses.

What worries me is the latest statistics regarding the future of the health care systems, hospital staff burnouts, decreased workers in hospitals, and many forgoing a career in health care leading to limited access to health care in a timely fashion. We all have heard stories and experienced the delay in seeing a doctor due to the physi-

cian shortage. It's not easy to hear "the doctor will see you in a few months," which is the norm these days. Charlestown medical facilities are at capacity, with no room for new patients.

The health care landscape is floundering as hospitals, health care systems, rehab facilities are closing.

Placing people in an unhealthy environment is a life of poor health, with a compromised health care system. This is frightening and unnecessary. Does any public agency consider the impact on our lives? Do they connect the dots of toxic living to longevity, our quality of life, the cost of public health?

It is the height of egregiousness to consider The Austin Street parking lot proposal, it should be shelved. Green, open space, an urban wild, playgrounds, tennis/pickle courts, picnic tables, performance stage, dog park and trees / benches to just sit and read or chat with a friend is needed for the residents in one square mile. Charlestown has the third lowest tree canopy of the 23 neighborhoods.


Charlestown residents deserve a healthy environment with the need and a place to recharge, relax, and restore our physical and mental health.

As Governor Healy stated in her State of the Commonwealth address, "Every voice is heard. Every community is listened to".

Please Mayor Wu, dig into your toolbox and find the important tool of hearing and listening to us in Charlestown. Our health, quality of life and future depend on doing the right thing NOW.

Thank you,

Ann Kelleher MS, RN



CHARLESTOWN

PATRIOT-BRIDGE

THE CHARLESTOWN PATRIOT-BRIDGE,

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CITY CELEBRATES START OF BLACK HISTORY MONTH WITH CEREMONY

Photos by Derek Kouyoumjian

The City Of Boston officially inaugurated Black History Month for 2024 with a flag raising ceremony at City Hall Plaza. The tri-color Pan-African flag was raised in the place of the City of Boston flag. Afterwards the event moved inside City Hall where Boston Mayor Michelle Wu awarded two Black artists for their work in expressing their community. The event reflected on the history and celebrated the contributions of the Black community in Boston.



Aziza Goodnight accepted an award given by Mayor Wu on behalf of her father, Boston artist Paul Goodnight.



Massachusetts State Rep Chris Worrell quoted James Brown: "Say it loud, I'm Black..."



Boston City Councilor Tania Fernandes Anderson.



Keith Williams, Deputy Chief of Operations for City Services reads the Proclamation from Mayor Michelle Wu for the start of Black History Month.



Boston Mayor Michelle Wu (center) with City employee Boni Palmer-Penn and keynote speaker Taneshia Laird, President and CEO of the Greater Roxbury Arts & Cultural Center. Taneshia Laird had just returned from the Grammys Ceremony where she was a nominee for the Best Music Film category.



The Black National Anthem, Lift Every Voice And Sing, was performed by Boston vocal artist Danny Rivera.



Boston City Council President Ruthzee Louijeune, Award recipients Shaumba-Yandje Dibinga and Aziza Goodnight (on behalf of her father Paul Goodnight), Suffolk County District Attorney Kevin Hayden, poet Amanda Shea, and keynote speaker Taneshia Laird.

CONSTITUTION INN (from pg. 1)

and the BPDA's process of approving the project, which led to the lawsuit filed last week.

The lawsuit alleges that the BPDA's decision to approve the project "is based on errors of law, is unsupported by substantial evidence, and is arbitrary and capricious."

It claims, "The conclusions and determinations expressed in the BPDA Decision are unsupported by facts."

Specifically, the lawsuit asserts that the BPDA "refused to take into account" more than 100 emails and letters sent to the BPDA in opposition to the project, along with opposing testimony from a public meeting on Zoom in October.

Moreover, the suit asserts that the BPDA did not follow the city's Article 80 Review requirements, pointed to the agency waiving the creation of an impact advisory group (IAG), and claimed the BPDA "waived the public review requirement."

"Most egregiously, the BPDA's conduct in precluding the public to participate in the review process amounts to a violation of the Plaintiffs' right to assemble, right to free speech, and right to engage in petitioning activity, as guaranteed under the First Amendment

to the U.S. Constitution," reads the suit.

While Brittany Comak, the BPDA's Assistant Director of Communications, told the Patriot-Bridge the agency would not be commenting on the lawsuit, she did pass along a statement regarding why an IAG was waived, which was similar to a statement shared with the Patriot-Bridge back in December.

"There is no legal requirement to convene an Impact Advisory Group. The BPDA and the Mayor's office waived an IAG to align with the Mayor's Executive Order related to Speeding the Production of Affordable Housing. IAGs are now waived for affordable housing projects with 60 percent or more of units at or below 100 percent AMI," reads the statement.

It continues, "We also waived the IAG because IAGs are responsible for determining necessary mitigation and community benefits, which are not relevant in this project. Constitution Inn is an interior retrofit to accommodate a change of use from hotel to housing units, so the project would not generate significant impacts to the built environment, wind, shadow or traffic, and therefore would not require mitigation, and the community benefit from the project is

predetermined as affordable housing."

The lawsuit also alleges that the BPDA's decision that allowed Jemison to assign the lease for the building to the proponents and to enter into an amendment, which happened during the same Board meeting in December where the project was approved, was unlawful.

"The Plaintiffs contend that the BPDA failed to comply with the Uniform Procurement Act, G.L. c. 30B, which requires governmental bodies to solicit all contracts for real property, including leases, prior to entering into such contracts," reads the suit.

"Further, not only did the BPDA hand-select the Applicant to lease the Building without soliciting the lease beforehand, but the BPDA Board took less than three (3) minutes to

Approve — without any discussion — authorization for Defendant BPDA Director James Arthur Jemison to take such action during the BPDA Board meeting on December 14, 2023."

Additionally, the lawsuit says the BPDA's decision was "rubber-stamped" and outlines the concerns of the plaintiffs, who live near the development, regarding the impacts of the project.

The plaintiffs' concerns surround safety, lack of parking, lack of services in terms of health needs and general amenities, overburdening of the local medical system, and more.

The abovementioned concerns were described in the lawsuit as "significant adverse harms that will impact Charlestown residents."

Ultimately, the plaintiffs are demanding a jury trial on "all counts so triable." Specifically, the suit lays out several counts of "claims for relief" for alleged violations of the development review procedures, the public procurement statute, and the state's Civil Rights Act, alleged breach of fiduciary duty, alleged failure to comply with open meeting law, and alleged civil conspiracy.

The suit also identifies that the plaintiffs are requesting that the court either annul the project approval or reopen the public process in "conformance with the Open Meeting Law."

The plaintiffs are also requesting that the BPDA decision concerning the lease be voided and that the agency "be required, pursuant to G.L. c 30B, to publicly solicit any lease related to the Building prior to entering into any such lease agreement," among other requests, per the suit.

As previously noted, the BPDA did not comment on the lawsuit, and an attempt to get comments from POUA and St. Francis House was unsuccessful.

To view the lawsuit, visit <https://www.change.org/p/helmino/u/32322979>.

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ABCD offers free tax preparation for Boston residents who earned up to \$64,000

ABCD urges all residents of Boston who earned \$64,000 or less in 2023 to schedule a FREE in-person tax prep appointment right away at one of our neighborhood sites by calling 617-348-6329 or visiting bostonabcd.org/tax.

ABCD is a co-founder of the Boston Tax Help Coalition, a public-private collaboration with the City of Boston and a number of other non-profit organizations, which seeks to ensure the full participation of all Boston residents in the City's economic vitality and future. Additionally, as a member of the Massachusetts Association for Community Action (MASSCAP) Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) network, ABCD offers free tax preparation services in the Mystic Valley. Both the Boston and Mystic Valley coalitions fall under the federal VITA program.

ABCD's IRS-certified tax preparers will be at our 11 neighborhood sites and two satellite locations to prepare and electronically submit returns through in-person appointments and document drop off. In addition, we are offering evening tax prep services at Brookside Community Health Center in Jamaica Plain. VITA volunteers provide credit advising and financial education to clients in the form of the Financial Check-Up (FCU) – a light-touch credit advising session in which a trained Financial Guide assists taxpayers in understanding their current financial situation, including a review of an individual's credit report and FICO score, a personalized one-year plan to help improve their credit, and relevant service referrals. Our tax volunteers are multilingual – fluent in eight languages including English, Spanish, French, Mandarin, Cantonese, Vietnamese, Cape Verdean Creole and Haitian Creole. ABCD meets people where they are.

"ABCD is proud to be a long-standing partner of the MASSCAP VITA network and the Boston Tax Help Coalition," said ABCD President and CEO Sharon Scott-Chandler. "Free tax preparation services bring millions of dollars back into our communities and help empower underserved residents in Boston and the Mystic Valley by providing IRS certified tax preparers at easy to access sites in the neighborhoods ensuring that clients receive every tax credit for which they are eligible. The Massachusetts Child and Family Tax Credit, Rental Deduction and Senior Circuit Breaker increases in 2023 are good news for residents burdened by the high cost of living. In Massachusetts, according to Prosperity Now, an estimated 24.3% of eligible households do not claim EITC. This credit can be claimed retroactively for the past three years. Eligible taxpayers, including some seniors, can qualify for a sizable sum."

Last year, ABCD helped 3,103 residents complete their state and federal tax returns, generating \$5,395,219 in federal and state refunds combined. A total of 488 clients filed for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) which generated over \$1M in refunds. We filed 384 Child Tax Credits on behalf of our clients, generating \$498,691 in refunds. For over 30 years, ABCD has provided more than 150,000 people across the city with free tax preparation services. A list of required documents to complete tax returns can be found [here](#).

Those who may qualify for free tax preparation services include:

- People who earned \$64,000 or less in 2023
- People with disabilities
- Limited English-speaking taxpayers

ABCD's IRS-certified tax preparers will make sure that residents receive every tax relief measure to which they are entitled and that help reduce poverty rates among underserved households including:

- EITC – Earned Income Tax Credit – one of America's most effective anti-poverty initiatives – EITC is a tax deduction that rewards work. This year, a Married Filing Jointly family with three or more children earning up to \$63, 398 and filing jointly will receive total federal and state EITC deductions of \$10,402 off their 2023 income tax. The IRS estimates that one out of five eligible taxpayers will not claim EITC and will lose out on this important credit.
- CTC – CHILD TAX CREDIT – has increased to \$310 per qualifying child in 2023.
- SENIOR CIRCUIT BREAKER – a state tax deduction providing seniors age 65 and older who pay unsubsidized rent or property taxes. The maximum credit amount for tax year 2023 has increased from \$1,200 to \$2590. If the credit owed exceeds the amount of the total tax payable for the year, the additional amount of the credit will be refunded without interest.
- RENTAL DEDUCTION – which has increased from \$3,000 to \$4,000

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NEWS IN BRIEF

55TH MICHAEL P. QUINN DINNER DANCE SET FOR APRIL 6

As we mourned the death of Michael P. Quinn, who was killed in action in 8/29/1969, 28 miles south of De Nang RVN, serving with the 2nd battalion, 7th Marines, 1st Marine Division. How would we perpetuate this 23-year-old valiant? A graduate of St. Francis De Sales 1960, with his friend Ed Doherty. On to Boston Latin School, class of 1964, and receiving his bachelor's degree and Marine Commission, from the College of the Holy Cross 1968. Our mission was to establish a college scholarship in his name on 9/8/1969. He will celebrate our 55th annual scholarship dinner

dance on 4/6/2024, at the Bunker Hill Knights of Columbus Hall, 545 Medford St., Charlestown, MA commencing at 6:15 p.m. We will be saluting the 2023 Quinn Scholar, Colleen Buckley, matriculating at the University of New Hampshire, with the class of 2027. Our featured speaker is Brigadier General Farrell J. Sullivan, Training Command, U.S.M.C. This year's program book will be dedicated to the first Quinn Scholar, Robert Irgens, Boston College graduate, 1974.

QUINN SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS DUE APRIL 15

The 2024 Michael P Quinn Scholarship applications are due

April 15.

The following requirements must be met to apply for the scholarship: must be a resident of Charlestown for the past four years; and the applicant must be a graduate with the Class of 2024

Please be advised this scholarship award is for \$16,000 for the recipients first year of college only. Applications can be picked up at Guidance Department at Charlestown High, Boston Latin, Boston Latin Academy, and the Boys & Girls Club, the Charlestown Branch Library, and Malden Catholic High School.

If you have any questions regarding the scholarship, call Ronan J FitzPatrick at 617-242-5493 or email maryfitzpatrick10@comcast.net.

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Bunker Hill Community College opens Student Success Center

Special to the Patriot-Bridge

Bunker Hill Community College (BHCC) held a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the College's Student Success Center on Monday, officially opening the first new building in more than a decade at the state's largest community college.

The 56,000-square-foot Student Success Center is home to the College Library & Learning Commons, academic advising and coaching, and wrap-around student services that help support BHCC's students, many of whom are students of color and first-generation college students. The State's Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM) and BOND Building and Construction led the building's planning, engineering, and construction. NBBJ is the project architect.

"Today is the culmination of the work of so many and of 50 years of the Community College movement right here on this campus," said BHCC President Pam Eddinger. "In these hallways, we can see the ambitions and potential of our students."

President Eddinger, Secretary of Education Patrick Tutwiler, Commissioner of Higher Education Noe Ortega, Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM) Commissioner Adam Baacke, State Senator Sal DiDomenico, and State Representative Dan Ryan spoke to College community members at the ceremony.

"Today, we are celebrating a new space that will benefit BHCC's student community now and for years to come, improving their experience and maximizing the resources available to them," Secretary Tutwiler told an audience of more than 100 BHCC faculty, students, and guests. I want



BHCC President Pam Eddinger.

to share a strong congratulations to the BHCC leadership team and the entire student community for nurturing this project forward."

"It is our genuine pleasure to deliver the space that your students deserve," said DCAMM Commissioner Baacke. "Your students, faculty, and staff have been creating transformative experiences for 50 years, and they've been doing that despite the facilities. Now, they'll be doing it with the facilities that help make their jobs easier and not harder."

State Senator Sal DiDomenico reflected on the new building coming online in the middle of the College's 50th Anniversary, saying, "50 years in the making is a special thing for any institution. But the mission of this school is to give people a second chance, it is turning their lives around, it is the first step in the next step of their lives... This is the mosaic of the Commonwealth coming together at this school, and now we have a facility that matches the dedication, excellence, and prestige of being a graduate of this institution."

State Representative Dan Ryan spoke both as a legislator and a graduate of BHCC: "I think of where we are now as a community, as a nation, as a commonwealth and I think of the impact that this



Secretary of Education Patrick Tutwiler, BHCC President Pam Eddinger, Commissioner of DCAMM Adam Baacke, Commissioner of Higher Education Noe Ortega, State Representative Dan Ryan, and State Senator Sal DiDomenico cut the ribbon to officially open the new Student Success Center.



State Representative Dan Ryan.



State Senator Sal DiDomenico



Secretary of Education Patrick Tutwiler.

building, the students, the teachers, the faculty, President Eddinger and all the presidents before her have had... People didn't envision it then, but the Commonwealth did... and that's why businesses are coming from around the world to headquarter themselves within walking distance from here."

All but one of the College's current buildings were constructed almost 50 years ago and designed to accommodate around 5000 students. However, the campus has housed more than three times that number in recent years, and the aging buildings have accumulated a backlog of deferred maintenance.

The Student Success Center also represents the Commonwealth's commitment to climate-resilient infrastructure. Based on Passive House principles, the building's exterior enhances the college's visual engagement with the community. The building is designed to be Net Zero Energy-ready, integrating a geothermal well field on

campus. It is engineered in anticipation of a future photovoltaic array. Additionally, the building uses a highly insulated, high-performing envelope. It anticipates projected sea-level change and the rise in base flood elevation by shifting all critical building systems, including the emergency generator, to the roof level.

Bunker Hill Community College is the largest community college in Massachusetts, enrolling approximately 16,000 students annually. BHCC has campuses in Charlestown and Chelsea, and a number of other locations throughout the Greater Boston area. BHCC is one of the most diverse institutions of higher education in Massachusetts. Sixty-five percent of the students are people of color and more than half of BHCC's students are women. The College also enrolls nearly 600 international students who come from 94 countries and speak more than 75 languages.



Commissioner of Higher Education Noe Ortega



Commissioner of DCAMM Adam Baacke



The new Student Success Center building.

Residents learn about Mystic River Watershed study of air quality in region

Charlestown is part of air quality project

Special to the Patriot-Bridge

Residents met with air quality and climate health professionals Feb. 8 in Charlestown to learn about the Mystic River Watershed Association's three-year study (CLEANAIR) of air quality that will focus on the communities of East Boston, Everett, Malden, and Charlestown.

The meeting coincided with MRWA and its partner Tufts University's installation of air quality monitoring equipment on the roof of the Bunker Hill Museum last Friday, Feb. 9. The monitor will measure the pollution in Charlestown and MWRA team members will record weekly results that will be part of the three-year study (CLEANAIR).

"We're grateful to the National Park Service for their willingness to host us at the Bunker Hill Museum," said MWRA Executive Director Patrick Herron. "We should be able to begin sharing data from the air quality monitoring in a few months."

Laura McNulty, epidemiologist at Cambridge Health Alliance, spoke about air quality in the area, noting in a power-point presentation about transportation-related air pollution that "fossil-fuel combustion by various modes creates a complex mixture of combustion by-products that pollute urban air."

McNulty, a graduate of Tufts University, said she was pleased to meet with Charlestown residents and hear their concerns about air quality in the neighborhood.



CHA Epidemiologist Lauren McNulty speaks at the MRWA Air Quality Listening Session in Charlestown.



Nicole Fina (right) of Everett Community Growers is pictured at the MRWA Air Quality Listening Session in Charlestown.

"With the CLEANAIR project, we're just so appreciative of the chance to hear residents' experiences," said McNulty. "It will really help our team of researchers to identify where to monitor the air for pollution and hopefully lead to action to improve air quality and health in the community."

Sen. Lydia Edwards is pleased that an in-depth study is being done to assess the air quality in Charlestown and other communities.

"I'm excited to see a comprehensive environmental justice conversation," said Edwards. "It is vital that we build healthy clean, and green communities, guided by community and grassroots participation."

Herron explained the goal of the meeting in Charlestown, stat-

ing, "We're holding learning sessions to meet with residents to learn about the concerns they have and have them share their knowledge with us so we can understand the hot spots and where air quality might be poor in the communities. "The end result is if we can learn where the problems are and better understand them with some really sophisticated monitoring – that gives us a chance to talk with municipal planners and businesses, and try to find solutions."

Previous meetings have been held in Everett.

Everett Councilor-at-Large Katy Rogers, who attended a Jan. 17 informational workshop in Everett about the MRWA air quality study, said, "The meeting was well attended and informative. I learned there is a device on top of

Everett City Hall measuring the pollution in our community. This is an issue we should be concerned about, and I appreciate there are tangible measures being taken to address it."

Nicole Fina, who is the civic engagement and advisory manager for Everett Community Growers (ECG), attended meetings in Everett and Charlestown. ECG is a part of the CLEANAIR project team.

Fina said that 36 residents attended the Feb. 6 meeting in Everett. She added that two physicians from CHA participated in the meeting.

"We talked about the monitor located on top of City Hall, and we had residents pick out an area in Everett where air quality monitoring could be done and where

there are concerns," said Fina.

Fina said the long-term monitoring of air quality in Everett "will take two to three years for the results to come in."

Much of the air quality study is focusing on transport-related air pollution, according to Fina.

"I found the meeting in Everett to be very productive," said Fina. "We had a very good turnout and a wide demographic. People gave their feedback about how different causes of air pollution could affect them in their daily lives, like walking to school or work or taking the bus. I think people were really able to contextualize everything and put the pieces together why we're doing air quality monitoring in Everett."



Kevin Vurreff, Rayven Willis, Maddy Santos, and her mother, Maria Santos, are pictured at the MRWA meeting in Charlestown.



Nicole Fina, civic engagement and advocacy manager at Everett Community Growers, joined Mystic River Watershed Association and CHA representatives at the Air Quality meeting Feb. 8 in Charlestown. Front row, from left, are Nicole Fina, MRWA Project Manager Karina Ramos, Community and Engagement Consultant Dr. Greer Hamilton. Back row, from left, are Community Engagement Consultant Adrianna Spindle-Jackson, Wig Zamore, Tufts Air Quality Scientist Neelakshi Hudda, Tufts student Kyrielle Lord, CHA Epidemiologist Laura McNulty, and AmeriCorps member Shannon Collins.

DiDomenico advocates for bill providing IDs to returning citizens

Senator Sal DiDomenico recently spoke before the Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security to advocate for his bill, S.1506, An Act relative to successful transition and re-entry to tomorrow for incarcerated persons. This legislation will provide identification cards to people who are incarcerated and will soon be re-entering our communities. Many people who are released from incarceration do not have IDs, so they are immediately barred from accessing public and private services.

Senator Sal DiDomenico spoke about the importance of passing his proposal, "The unfortunate truth is that we do not prepare people leaving prison for re-entry into society and one simple and effective way to change that, is by giving them an ID. This bill will provide people leaving incar-

ceration with the ability to prove their identity in our society, which is key to accessing housing, food, employment, and basic needs that allow a person to survive, and then to thrive."

Without an ID card, some people can't even enter rehabilitation homes or halfway houses, which poses a very clear and harmful challenge to someone who is re-entering society. This problem is likely to increase recidivism because we make life so difficult at the very first step of the re-entry process for these individuals, which is the opposite of how we should be treating our residents.

Senator DiDomenico sponsored this bill alongside State Representative Brandy Fluker Oakley, and he will continue to work with her and the countless advocates to get this important bill over the finish line.



Senator Sal DiDomenico testifying before the Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security.

USS Constitution open for Presidents' Day

USS Constitution is scheduled to be open for public visitation from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Monday, February 19, for Presidents' Day.

The public will be able to view a 21-gun salute, commemorating the holiday, aboard USS Constitution at approximately 12 p.m.

President George Washington, whose birthday the holiday celebrates, named the ship after the document that defines our nation.

Tours will be available every half hour with the final tour of the day beginning at 3:30 p.m.

Guests will be guided across the ship's deck by an active-duty Sailor knowledgeable on the ship's 226 years of history.

USS Constitution is normally open to free public visitation Wednesday through Sunday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

USS Constitution is the world's oldest commissioned warship afloat, and played a crucial role in the Barbary Wars and the War of 1812, actively defending sea lanes from 1797 to 1855.

The active-duty Sailors sta-

tioned aboard USS Constitution provide free tours and offer public visitation as they support the ship's mission of promoting the Navy's history and maritime heritage and raising awareness of the importance of a sustained naval presence.

USS Constitution was undefeated in battle and destroyed or captured 33 opponents.

The ship earned the nickname of Old Ironsides during the War of 1812 when British cannonballs were seen bouncing off the ship's wooden hull.

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Volunteer to help at the Food Pantry

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A SHORT STORY ABOUT A MOTORCYCLE AND A SUDDEN TURN.

When she was a young college student, Elisabeth Marra had a serious motorcycle accident that ultimately changed her life. Two years after the crash, her painful open fractures had failed to heal. Then she heard about a new and complex surgery pioneered by a surgeon who used a patient's own stem cells to concentrate the healing process. This time, her surgery and subsequent therapy were successful.

Elisabeth's experience caused her to redirect her own career aspirations. Inspired by the medical professionals who helped her reclaim her active lifestyle, she changed her major to study physical therapy—a profession where her own experience could help other patients prevail through difficult recoveries.

We tell Elisabeth Marra's story here to illustrate two of the most profound messages we know. Don't give up, and remember to give back. If reading it inspires just one more person to achieve something special, then its telling here has been well worth while.



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REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Proposals are invited to operate the BOOKSTORE at Bunker Hill Community College's campuses. The Request for Proposal BHCSTR24 will be available to download from the College's website on and after February 23, 2024. Please visit <https://www.bhcc.edu/news/>. The deadline for proposal submission is March 22, 2024.

THE CHARLESTOWN HIGH SCHOOL TRACK TEAM



Members of the Charlestown High School track team get together for a team photo on Tuesday, February 6 at the annual BPS track championship. The event was held at the Reggie Lewis Track Center in Roxbury. Overall, the girls came in ninth place and the boys in sixth place.

Coalition builds momentum for Ranked Choice voting in Boston

The coalition group Ranked Choice Boston (RCB) announced the addition of a new partner to its campaign, as it continues to build momentum to promote ranked choice voting in the City of Boston. RCB, along with the voting rights group MassVOTE, last night held a gathering with its new group partner Neighbors United for a Better East Boston (NUBE), a Latinx-led organization that advocates for inclusive democratic processes and just public policies to create a vibrant economy and environment for all of East Boston.

RCB has witnessed an increase of support from allied groups around the City with currently over thirty coalition members since its launching on August 2023, marking a significant step toward its collective mission to create a more just and inclusive democracy.

“Our most active members and volunteers have expressed that with the implementation of Ranked Choice Voting, we strongly feel we have the opportunity to have authentic representation in Boston” said Enilda Lovo, Lead Coordinator of NUBE. “We are extremely excited at the possibility

of enacting in the near future this fairer system of voting in Boston”

Among those who participated at the event include Boston At-Large City Councilors Julia Mejia and Henry Santana, City Councilor Enrique Pepén, and RCB Co-Chair Rahsaan Hall, who is President and CEO, Urban League of Eastern Massachusetts, as well as Latinx leaders from the East Boston community.

“We are proud to join fellow democracy advocates and justice seekers in this growing coalition to advance ranked choice voting. Our collective efforts will seek to mobilize Bostonians of every neighborhood to have a strong presence in their communities and at the ballot box,” said RCB Co-Chair Rahsaan Hall.

RCB’s mission is to empower individuals and foster civic participation, ensuring that every voice is not only heard but also honored. To that end, RCB has called on the support of key voices in the voting rights and community empowerment space to help lead this effort with campaign Coalition Co-Chairs Cheryl Clyburn Crawford, Executive Director of Mass-

VOTE; Tanisha Sullivan, Voting Rights advocate and President of the Boston NAACP; and Rahsaan Hall, President, CEO of Urban League of Eastern MA.

“Boston is excited for ranked choice voting. 62% of Boston voters supported Ranked Choice in 2020, and our coalition of supporters keeps growing. RCV is easy, equitable, and will give voice to all voters,” said RCB Director Ed Shoemaker.

In addition to NUBE and MassVOTE, the coalition includes the New England United 4 Justice; Urban League of Eastern Massachusetts; Union Capital Boston; Right to the City Boston; Represent Women; Represent Us; Dunk the Vote; NAACP Boston; Boston Teachers Union; MPDC (Madison Park Development Corporation); Fairvote Action; South End-Roxbury community partnership; The RoxVote Coalition; Progressive WRox/Roz; JP Progressives; Veterans for All Voters; Brazilian Worker Center Inc.; Ward 15 Democratic Committee; Boston Ward 4 Democratic Committee; BLOC (Black Local Organizing Committee); Mass Dems Ward 11 Boston;

Common Cause Massachusetts; MAHA (Massachusetts Affordable Housing Alliance); Our Revolution Massachusetts; ML (MassLandlords, Inc.); Not On My Watch Mentoring Inc.; Marcus Anthony Hall Educational Institute; Boston Ward 19; IRIE Jamaican Style Restaurant; YDMA (Young Democrats of Massachusetts).

RCB’s goal is to enact a Home Rule Petition for Ranked Choice Voting in Boston’s Municipal Elections, and will seek the backing of the Boston City Councilors to vote to submit the petition to the state legislature. This will need to pass the City Council with a minimum of 7 votes and have the support of the Mayor. Once that passes, it needs to be approved by the state legislature and then will likely require a referendum vote by Boston voters. This system of voting upgrades both preliminary and general elections to use ranked choice voting, for council district seats, council at large seats, and mayor, and will affect Boston’s elections for Mayor and City Council, both the preliminary and the general election.

What’s more, instead of being

restricted to picking just one candidate, Ranked Choice Voting gives you the power to rank candidates in the order that you like them. With Ranked Choice Voting, your top choice is never harmed by ranking additional “backup” choices. And if your favorite candidate lacks the support to win, your ballot automatically counts for your next choice.

Boston has made incredible progress over this decade with diverse candidates competing for and winning office. In the 2021 mayoral preliminary election, an astounding 95% of Boston voters cast their vote for a woman of color. Ranked Choice Voting will protect and extend these gains. By allowing voters to express their wishes more fully with ranked ballots, Ranked Choice Voting is able to ensure that candidates with the greatest overall support of the broadest majority of voters win each election. In US cities in the past two decades, studies have shown that Ranked Choice Voting breaks down barriers to people of color and women, allowing them to run for office and win like never before.

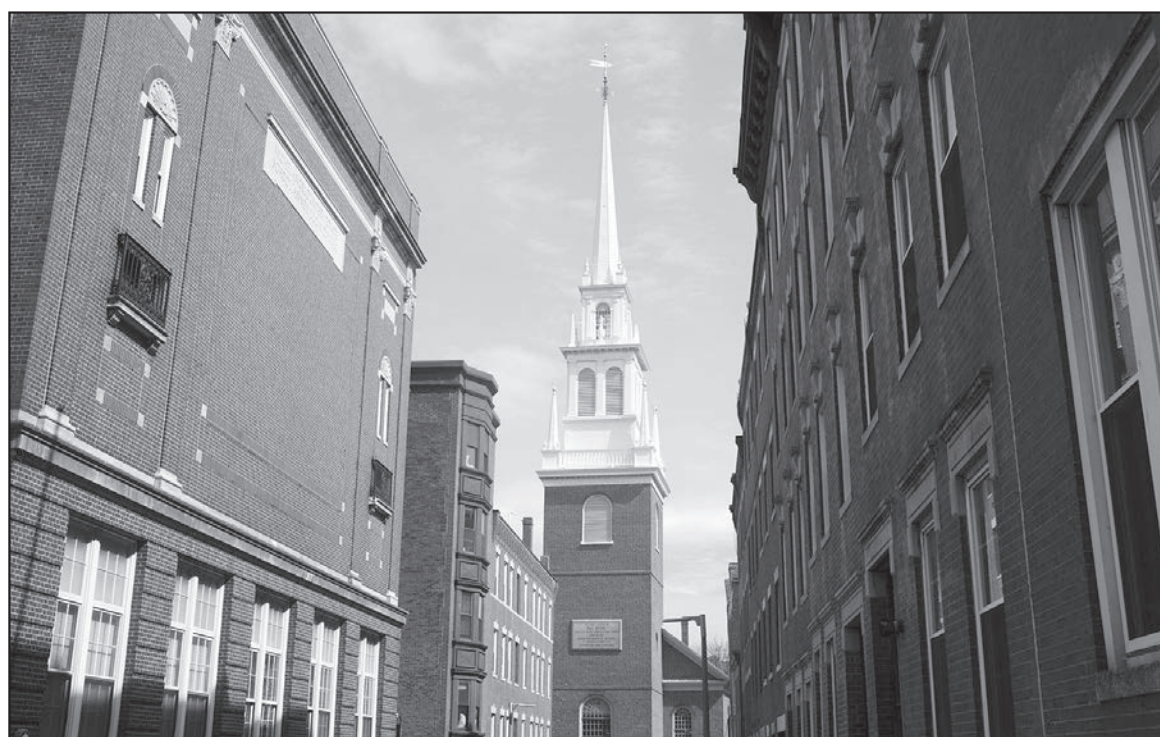
Old North Church & Historic Site opens its doors during February School vacation

Known for “one if by land, and two if by sea,” and the midnight ride of Paul Revere, the legacy of Boston’s oldest surviving church as a symbol of American independence and active citizenship is discussed in history and civics classrooms nationwide. During February School Vacation, Old North Church & Historic Site will open its doors to visitors who will get an in-depth look into our nation’s founding while also discovering the origins of Old North Church and its role in shaping America’s past and present.

Located in the heart of Boston’s North End neighborhood, visitors can follow the famous Freedom Trail to the national landmark, which was designated a Site of Conscience by the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience in 2023. With a new exhibit, group and self-guided tours, and

retail experience featuring American-made products from BIPOC- and women-owned businesses, the Old North campus offers something for everyone.

The historic site, which is typically closed to the public during the winter season, will be open Feb. 17 through Feb. 24 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. (12:30 to 5 p.m. on Sunday). General admission tickets, which are offered at \$5 per person, include a self-guided tour of the church’s sanctuary, a new exhibit, and the chance to ask questions to knowledgeable Educators. A special \$10 bundle includes general admission, a self-guided tour of the historic crypt where 1,100 bodies are buried, and an immersive audio guide. For more information or to purchase tickets in advance, visit: www.oldnorth.com.



The Old North Church.

Healey-Driscoll administration announces \$5M in grants to local Fire Departments

The Healey-Driscoll Administration announced \$5 million in awards to 321 Massachusetts fire departments through the state’s Firefighter Safety Equipment Grant program. The City of Boston received \$37,293.99.

“Every single day, firefighters across Massachusetts put themselves in harm’s way to protect their communities,” said Governor Maura Healey. “They deserve our thanks and our support. The Firefighter Safety Equipment Grant program is just one way we can express our appreciation for that selfless dedication.”

“From structure fires and water rescues to hazardous materials and building collapses, firefighters never know what life-threatening risks the next call will bring,” said Lt. Governor Kim Driscoll. “These grants will support the purchase of fundamental tools and specialty equipment to help them do a dangerous job more safely.”

Fire departments across Massachusetts were invited to apply to the Firefighter Safety Equipment Grant program, which provides

reimbursement on purchases of 135 different types of eligible equipment. Eligible items include hoses and nozzles, turnout gear, ballistic protective equipment, gear washers and dryers, thermal imaging cameras, hand tools and extrication equipment, communications resources, hazardous gas meters, and more. In many cases, the purchase of this equipment will help departments attain compliance with Occupational Safety & Health Administration or National Fire Protection Association safety standards. This is the fourth year that funding has been awarded through the program.

“For the second year in a row, many fire departments are using this program to provide their personnel with ballistic vests and helmets so they can make life-saving rescues in active shooter situations,” said Secretary of Public Safety and Security Terrence Reidy. “As we confront this growing threat and other emerging hazards, we are proud of the way Massachusetts fire departments have risen to every challenge.”

“While smoke and flames are the most obvious threats to firefighters’ safety, occupational cancer is the leading cause of death in the fire service,” said Deputy Secretary Susan Terrey. “We now know that wearing the right type of protective gear and cleaning it properly can reduce that risk. This program will give many firefighters access to tools that will help protect them from the number one threat to their health and well-being.”

“The Firefighter Safety Equipment Grants are an investment in the health and safety of Massachusetts firefighters,” said State Fire Marshal Jon Davine. “The flexibility of the program is especially valuable because it allows each department to make purchases based on their specific needs and resources. It has become a vital part of the way the Massachusetts fire service prepares for the

constantly evolving threats in the world around us.”

“Firefighters who have the proper protective gear and contemporary rescue tools are much better able to protect themselves and the residents they serve,” said Hyannis Fire Chief Peter Burke, President of the Fire Chiefs’ Association of Massachusetts. “These grant awards will have immeasurable impacts on public safety in Massachusetts for years to come.”

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Author Peter H. Reynolds joins World Read Aloud Day at Shubert Theatre

Story & Photos by Marianne Salza

The Boch Center partnered with New York Times best-selling children’s book author and illustrator, Peter H. Reynolds, presented World Read Aloud Day at the Shubert Theatre on February 7. Read Aloud Day is a global literary movement that promotes the joy and imaginativeness of a joint reading experience.

“What I love most about being an author is sharing,” explained Reynolds, who enjoys reading with his daughter, son, and grandchildren. “You can read a book quietly, or share it with others. That’s why Read Aloud Day is important to me.”

Over 1,000 students from Boston Public Schools and Chelsea Public Schools participated in person. Two thousand classrooms registered for the virtual live stream, reaching an audience of some 50,000 students nationally, and throughout 16 countries, such as Australia, India, and Japan.

“World Read Aloud Day amazes me because of the response we’ve gotten to the event,” expressed Corey Evans, Vice President and Senior Director of Education, Boch Center. “It’s an opportunity for us to serve not just Boston, but a worldwide audience and celebrate art, creativity, and literacy. We have a firm belief that everyone should have the right to a creative life and education, regardless of socio-economic status or any other boundaries.”

Read Aloud Day featured an interactive workshop, and a reading of Reynolds’s book, “The Word Collector,” which was chosen by former president, Barak Obama, and First Lady Michelle Obama, as part of Chicago Public Library’s Live from the Library series during the pandemic.

“As an author and storyteller, I love words. I wrote a story to model that joy,” declared Reynolds.

Reynolds’s goal when writing “The Word Collector” was to make learning words more fun for readers than simply “vocabulary acquisition.”

“When I started learning my ABC’s, I realized I could put them together and make words, and connect those words to make sentences. I love the library and got inspired reading books,” remembered Reynolds, whose favorite word is “effervescent.”

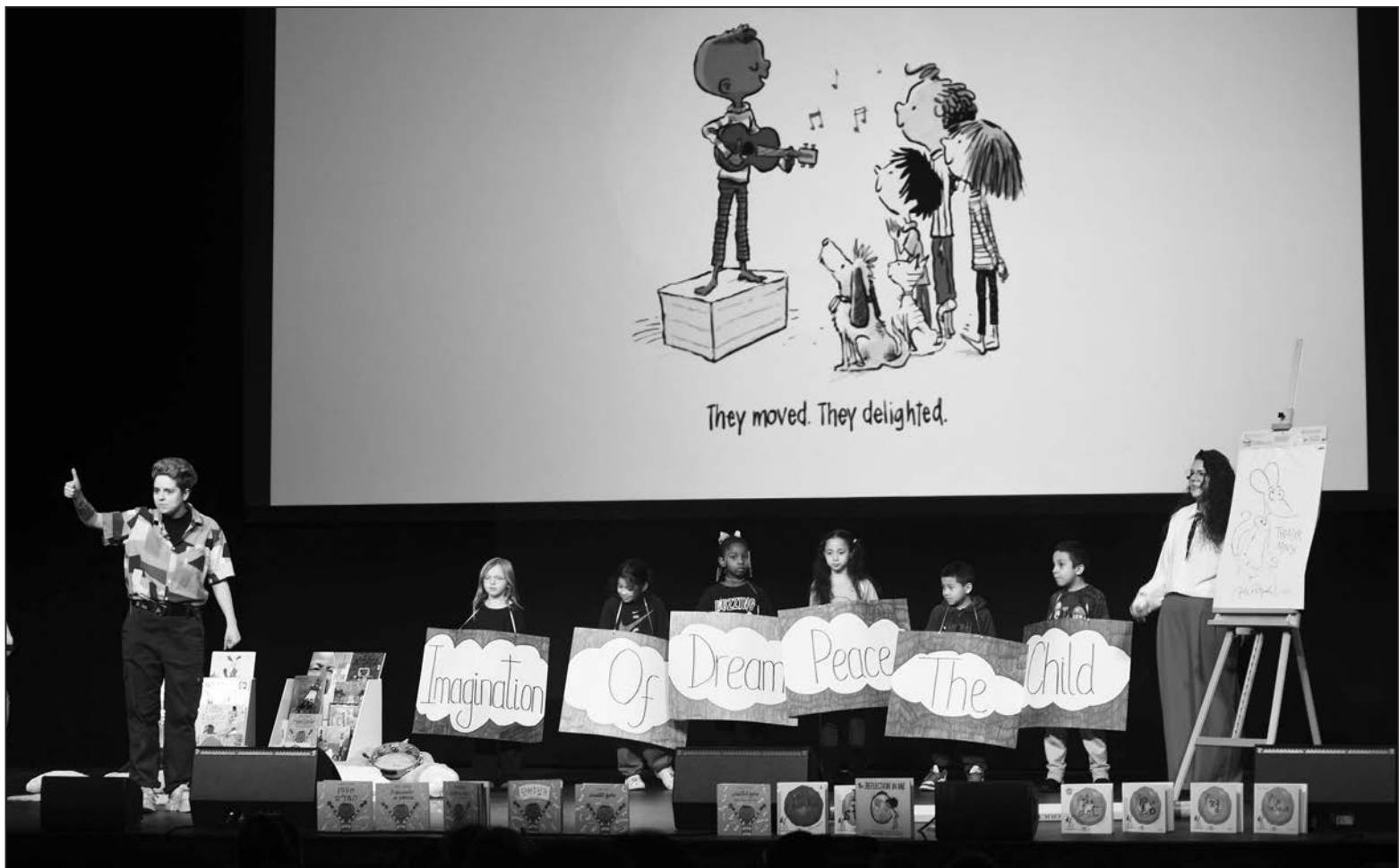
Reynolds stressed the importance of reading aloud with loved ones. When he was a little boy, Reynolds was captivated by the Shakespeare and Charles Dickens books that his elder sister, Jane, would read to him.



Peter H. Reynolds offering advice to young writers.



Children enjoying a literacy workshop at the Boch Center Shubert Theatre for Read Aloud Day on February.



Boch Center teaching artists, Han and Jasmine, engaging students in a poetry activity.

“It takes a while to learn how to read by yourself; but until then, you can have a book read aloud to you,” acknowledged Reynolds. “Eventually it clicks hearing and seeing the words. That’s magical.”

Reynolds discussed his process of writing, illustrating, and proof-reading a book. He hopes Read Aloud Day inspires the next generation of story tellers. His advice to young writers is to keep a journal and write their ideas during quiet moments when there are few distractions.

“It usually takes a second for me to come up with an idea. It’s

like a lighting strike. Then I write it down quickly on a piece of paper so I don’t forget,” revealed Reynolds.

Reynolds explained his love of creating artwork through mediums such as watercolor, pencil, and digital sketching. During the workshop, he drew a mouse that likes to attend the theatre.

“I’m a big advocate for the arts. It’s something that schools need more of,” asserted Reynolds. “The Boch Center has been a champion of that.”

Boch Center teaching artists, Jasmine and Han, empowered stu-

dents to sing and move their bodies with the goal of helping little ones understand that the performing arts are about sharing stories.

“Reading aloud is a way to bring a book to life. What’s wonderful about teachers is they know how to dive deeply into the book,” said Reynolds, owner of Blue Bunny Books, Dedham.

Reynolds and the Boch Center – which offers free programming and community outreach opportunities to explore and participate in the arts – provided a copy of one of Reynolds’s books to every student in the audience.

Reynolds hopes “The Word Collector” inspired children to use their words to shape stories. He emphasized that their voices matter, and that the world needs to hear them.

“Hate is louder than kindness. We have to amplify the kindness and encourage people to use their words,” said Reynolds. “If they’re too shy to use words, use music or sculpture.”

Read Aloud Day is part of a collaboration with Reynolds’s educational, multimedia development company, FableVision Studios,

READ ALOUD *(from pg. 0)*

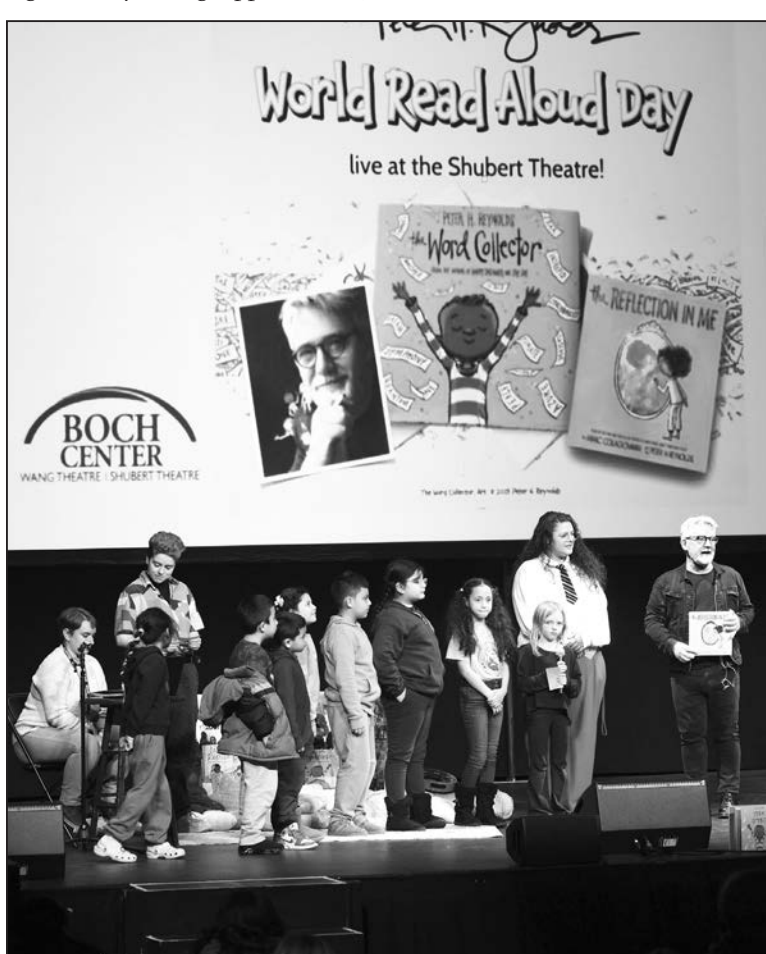
in Boston's Back Bay, and The Reynolds Center for Teaching, Learning, and Creativity (TLC), opening this spring at 390 Washington Street, Downtown Boston. Reynolds TLC is an interactive studio that Reynolds and his twin brother, Paul, founded to support hands-on technology skills.

"It's designed to inspire teachers to recharge their creativity batteries. Kids are welcome, too. It'll be 6,000-square-feet of creative tools," beamed Reynolds.

The non-profit organization will offer professional development programs, student-driven digital story-telling opportunities,

video, audio, and animation production resources, and story-powered social and emotional courses. Reynolds TLC will feature video and podcasting studios, green screens, and event space.

"I wanted to open up that cool experience to teachers and say, 'you guys are story tellers. You're inspiring the next generation of storytellers. You should tell your own stories – record them, act them, and share them,'" exclaimed Reynolds. "We think the world needs more creativity if we're going to take care of everybody on the planet."



Children's book author and illustrator Peter H. Reynolds answer student questions from around the world.



Over 1,000 students participating in Read Aloud Day at the Boch Center Shubert Theatre on February 7.

Healey-Driscoll administration awards nearly \$6.5 M in grants to reduce recidivism among young adults

The Healey-Driscoll Administration announced that nearly \$6.5 million in grants has been awarded to support nonprofits, working in partnership with the Massachusetts Department of Correction and Sheriffs' Offices, to provide reentry services for 18- to 25-year-olds returning from incarceration. Roca and Suffolk County Sheriff's Department received \$1,141,666.66.

The state grant funding is the latest investment by the Healey-Driscoll Administration to reduce recidivism rates and improve outcomes for justice-involved individuals and public safety for Massachusetts communities.

The funding is made available through the FY24 Emerging Adult Reentry Initiative, a state-funded grant program administered by the Office of Grants and Research (OGR), an agency under the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS). The program invests in nonprofit service providers who have partnered with correctional facilities to provide pre-and post-release services to emerging adults returning to the community after incarceration.

The grant recipients deliver promising and evidence-based programming to help young adults avoid future contact with the criminal justice system. The program also funds a technical assistance provider that will assist the program sites with training and evaluation tools, including support for data entry, collection, and analysis.

"Successful, evidence-based reentry programs are essential to preventing recidivism and improving outcomes for young adults who are involved in the criminal justice system. These programs help ensure they have the tools and resources needed to make sustainable, positive life changes," said Governor Maura Healey. "This funding is an investment in meaningful, second-chance opportunities. I'm grateful to the grant recipients for their dedication to this vital work."

"Our administration is committed to reducing barriers to successful reentry and providing opportunities that help pave the way to a healthy and stable adulthood for many who need guidance and support. This essential grant funding helps to ensure emerging adults have access to resources that offer a pathway to a positive and sustainable way forward," said Lt. Governor Kim Driscoll.

"Effective reentry initiatives significantly reduce the potential for re-offending while promoting public safety," said Secretary of Public Safety and Security Terrence Reidy. "The programs supported by this grant provide life-changing services and guide our justice-involved youth on a path to successful adulthood."

"This program aims to provide emerging adults with the services necessary to ensure successful reentry, resulting in reduced recidivism and improved community safety. The programs funded

through these grants are proven effective, and program partners will have additional support from a technical assistance provider to ensure the best possible outcomes for program participants and communities," said OGR Executive Director Kevin Stanton.

Additional Reentry Initiatives

As part of the Healey-Driscoll Administration's commitment to strengthening public safety and reducing recidivism for formerly incarcerated community members, here are several additional programs focused on supporting emerging adults and improving outcomes.

Stable Start Housing Initiative: EOPSS has partnered with the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities to develop a program that provides emerging adults with long-term, sustainable housing, and related services to support successful community reintegration.

The Credible Messengers Program: This transformative mentoring initiative supports justice-involved individuals and their families in navigating the transition back into the community. The program connects returning individuals with mentors, known as "credible messengers." The messengers, who are EOPSS employees, have similar backgrounds and shared lived experiences to those exiting the criminal justice system and, as such are uniquely positioned to serve as credible sources of advice and support.

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FRESH AND LOCAL

Food as a love language

By Penny & Ed Cherubino

Food is a love language for an Italian Nonna who repeats “Mangia! Mangia!” as she serves her family a multi-course meal she spent hours preparing. However, you don’t have to cook to express your love through food. The person who slips out to buy a coffee and croissant and serves it to you in bed also uses food as a love language.

Think of all the ways we connect food with love. If you read the Boston Globe feature “Getting Salty,” you notice how many people in the hospitality industry talk about their initial connections to food through someone they love. Many will also say that they enjoy making people happy through the food they offer.

Food as an expression of love is behind the tradition of serving breakfast in bed on Mother's or

Father's Day. Inviting friends to join your holiday meal is loving. Dropping off a dish to someone going through a difficult time shows that you care about them. Adapting a menu for someone with allergies or dietary restrictions shows you want what is best for them. Even sneaking a delicious tidbit to a pet is done out of love.

Speaking of delicious tidbits, in some cultures, it's a sign of respect and love to offer the best of what is on the table to the family's elders or special guests. There was a time in this country when the family would have hamburgers while the breadwinner ate a steak.

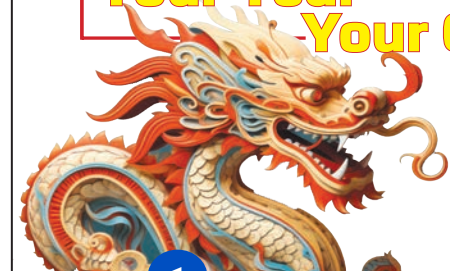
Simply eating together can be an act of love. Waiting for someone to arrive home to eat or planning family meals enhances relationships. In the hospitality industry, a “family meal” allows everyone on staff to enjoy food together. Dif-



A person who slips out to buy a coffee and croissant and serves it to you in bed uses food as a love language.
(Photo by Stephan Mahlke)

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ferent staff members often prepare this meal, which can be a way of sharing the food each cook loves.

Food and Romance

Think of all the ways we connect food with romance. Brides and grooms feed one another wedding cake. We give chocolate for Valentine's Day, plan a romantic dinner for two, or tuck love notes into the lunches we prepare for family. Lady and the Tramp sharing a strand of spaghetti became a cultural image of romance for Disney fans.

Finally, think of the foods considered aphrodisiacs by various cultures. The very word comes

from Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love. These range from the horny goat weed used in Chinese folk medicine to oysters, figs, and chocolate in Western culture.

Cooks Share Love in Many Ways

Sharing recipes is another way of showing love. However, a good cook may tell you the ingredients and instructions when you ask for a recipe. If your version doesn't measure up, it might be because they add a dash of love in the small steps they take from shopping to serving that make a difference.

Despite being urged by her family, many an Italian Nonna never actually sits down to eat herself.

After all, she had spent hours shopping, cooking, tasting, and refining the food you are eating before her family sat at the table.

As a recipient, how can you return the love the cook put into a meal? It can be by helping with the cleanup if your chef is comfortable with this. You can buy a favorite treat for the cook and serve it with a beverage after the meal. Or, give the cook a day off from cooking by taking a turn to provide a meal, whether homemade or takeout.

Do you have a question or topic for Fresh & Local? Send an email to Penny@BostonZest.com with your suggestion.

ACTION *(from pg. 1)*

Senator Sal DiDomenico spoke about the essential need for Community Action Agencies, “These organizations provide critical services and benefits to residents throughout my district, and I will always fight for them and the work of all Community Action Agencies by advocating for funding and support in the Legislature.”

DiDomenico also highlighted the Commission on Poverty which he is now leading with Rep. Marjorie Decker, "I look forward to working with my friend and co-chair, as well as the Commission members to address the poverty crisis that exists throughout the Commonwealth and work towards solutions that benefit our most vulnerable residents."



Senator DiDomenico with Representative Marjorie Decker.