Calendar of Events

Neighbors Supporting Neighbors
A group of Town residents is providing support to Royalston people who may be quarantined or self-quarantined in the next few months. If you want to be part of this effort or you would like assistance, call Carla Rabinowitz at 978-249-4422, or email at Royalstonladiesb@outlook.com.

Wildlife Sightings
What’s in your backyard? Let us know at the Royalston Community Newsletter.

May 1 Friday May Day
South Village Community Garden is growing. If you would like a 10 ft. by 10 ft. plot, sign up at the Country Store.

Digital Census Weekend
It only takes about 10 minutes to complete the census. As of April 20th, the national self-response rate is 51%, the Massachusetts self-response rate is at 52.4%, the Worcester County self-response rate is 53.9%, and Royalston is 42.4%. Now more than ever, we should all respond to the Census online, by phone (844-330-2020), or by mail. Responses are kept confidential. It’s easy, safe and important. Census data is used to extend billions of dollars in funding for hospitals, school lunch programs, Medicaid, libraries, roads, and resources that are needed every year, especially in uncertain times like now. It also makes sure we receive equal representation in Congress and fair representation at the local and state levels. Make sure everyone in your home is counted. Visit 2020Census.gov.

May 4 Monday
Eta Aquarid Meteor Shower – Before daylight, take a few minutes to face southeast and watch for some of the remnants of Halley’s Comet shooting through the sky. Expect a shooting star every five or six minutes.

May 7 Thursday
6:45 a.m. Full Flower Moon

May 10 Sunday
Mother’s Day

May 22 Friday
1:39 p.m. New Strawberry Moon

Support the Country Store
The Royalston Country Store, while closed for dining in, is still serving delicious, bargain-priced breakfast, lunch, and dinner specials from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Check their Facebook page for specials. Orders should be called in at 978-249-9798, and it will be ready for pick up when you arrive. Please observe social distancing when picking up your meals. Our continuing support is necessary for this new owner to make it in Royalston!

Wildlife Sightings
The second week of April, Wade and Sharon Harmon had a cool bird under their euonymus bush. It was an American Woodcock, also known as a timberdoodle, Labrador twister, and bog sucker. It was using its long beak to shake insects from the earth. Woodcocks have eyes nearly in the backs of their heads, which means they can watch for predators in the sky while searching for food on the ground. Because of expert camouflage, woodcocks are hard to spot most of the year, but right now at dusk, males are showing off to find a mate making a buzzy call while on the ground, and then flying upward in a wide spiral. Getting higher, the wings start to twitter. At a height of 200–350 feet, the bird starts a zigzag descent until landing silently (ideally, near an impressed female). Once on the ground, he buzzes again and the display starts once more.

John McClure has an albino porcupine that visits as well as a bear that is trying to train him about the best time of day to bring in the bird feeders.

Amy Newland had a pair of young moose, startled by ATV noise in the distance, run through her yard.

May 25 Monday
Memorial Day Observed
Select Board Notes
Christine Long, clerk, Royalston Select Board

Covid-19: Spring is bursting forth and beckoning us outdoors. Royalston is blessed with splendid conservation lands, waterways and forests, and numerous trails tempt us to explore. Covid-19, however, affects even the simple enjoyments of walking, running, biking and canoeing – most stark are the closings, all until further notice: Doane’s Falls (both the falls themselves and the fishing area), the disc golf course at Tully Dam, and the lower parking lot at the Tully Lake Recreation Area.

Other areas and trails remain open, but please observe these guidelines:
• Enjoy the areas alone or in very small groups; leave if large gatherings begin to build.
• Maintain social distance; step off the trail if necessary to remain at least six feet away from others.
• Participate in only non-contact recreational activities.

If you encounter strangers or out-of-staters at a conservation area or elsewhere, DO NOT shout at them or confront them. Speak to them as politely as you would in other circumstances.

Public safety: The Royalston police department, fire department and emergency medical service have acquired an adequate supply of personal protective equipment and hand and surface sanitizers. All three departments routinely review the procedures to use in dealing with situations. Employees of all three will have access to Covid-19 testing; the procedures for how to do so are under development.

Mitigation and recovery: Emergency management is working on plans, but the duration of the emergency and the extent of the psychological and financial impact cannot yet be identified.

Internet access: The town has arranged to have free wi-fi available outside the Royalston General Store and will be setting up wi-fi at the Whitney and Town Hall parking lots; the password for each will be posted on the building. The library also offers wi-fi, with no password necessary.

Board and committee meetings and hearings: All will be held remotely. Residents can check the meeting agenda for details on how to attend.

FY21 Budget and Financial Outlook: The picture remains grim. The town will be able to meet our contractual obligations (for police, fire and DPW vehicles), but the Select Board has tentatively level-funded most departments and ruled out any new capital projects altogether. The Select Board, however, has also reduced the projected local tax revenues and state aid and is asking departments to begin considering how they might reduce their FY21 budget requests by ten percent if necessary. Obviously, we hope some of these unknowns turn out rosier than we can now count on. By town bylaw, this year’s annual town meeting was supposed to convene on May 8, but the board voted last month to delay that meeting to a date to be determined by decisions on the state level.

Check the town website or Facebook page frequently for important announcements.

Ending on Two Positive Notes –

Solar Lease Signed: On April 21 the Select Board voted to approve the lease of 30 acres at the transfer station to Verogy, of Hartford, CT, to build a solar array. Depending on which state incentive program the company falls into, this lease could bring in $250,000 to $300,000 in the first year it is operational, increasing two percent per year thereafter. Especially because of emergency constraints, however, the permitting and construction phases may be drawn out. In short, while this income will be welcome indeed when it does materialize, we can’t count on its doing so in FY21.

And Great People in Royalston: The Select Board wishes to thank Emergency Management Director Jim Barclay for strong leadership and communication during the Covid-19 emergency and Finance Director Rebecca Krause-Hardie for the many hours working with a consultant and town counsel on the landfill lease.

Town Clerk Notes, Barbara Richardson
There will be early/absentee voting for the annual election that was to be held April 6 but has been postponed to a date yet to be announced. Applications are available on the Town’s website or by emailing, townclerk@royalston-ma.gov, or calling, 978-249-0493.

Fire Department Remembrance
Keith R. Newton, Royalston Fire Chief
Royalston lost a lifetime resident with the passing of Wayne R. Newton, who served as Fire Chief for the Town of Royalston from 1973 to 2008. The long career that the Chief served was in a time that proved to be busy with many large fires that were in our mutual aid communities and Royalston was able to provide assistance to all Towns that requested help. The equipment when the Chief took command in 1973 was old and in need of upgrades. The training of members was also an important part of his program and he brought state of the art levels of this training to our fire service here in Royalston.

I served as an officer under Chief Newton and learned many of his observation skills that come only from years of experience and tested ability when the incident continues to ramp up against you. I also enjoyed his colorful way of expressing himself when the situation called for it.

I want to thank all Royalston Fire Department staff along with the neighboring mutual aid Towns of Richmond, and Troy, NH and the Royalston Police Dept. for honoring the Chief with a procession of Police cruisers and Fire and EMS vehicles assembled at my home and stopped and paid tribute with the ringing of our department bell. The ringing of that bell signifies the “last alarm” to those that served in the Fire Service and who have passed. The musical anthem that was played by Fire Fighter Rebecca Hardie, Amazing Grace, happened to be the Chief’s favorite. The procession then made a stop at the Chief’s home on North Fitzwilliam Road and honored him by doing the same program for his family members. Quite a tribute!

Thank you Chief Newton for giving us so many years of your life to help protect and guide the citizens of the town you loved so much. I will miss your guidance brother, and the butt chewing that usually came with it!
A number of residents have been sewing homemade, washable face masks, which when worn properly (covering mouth and nose) reduce chances of transmission of viruses by limiting the spread of droplets from breathing, coughing, sneezing. Many of these masks, along with homemade surgical caps, have made their way to Athol Memorial and Heywood Hospitals, where CEO Win Brown asserts these donations make a tremendous difference with respect to the availability of face coverings for both medical and non-medical employees. Those of you with heavy-duty sewing machines who would like to help: CEO Brown has put out a call for volunteers to make barrier gowns out of Tyvek; the hospital will supply the Tyvek. Patterns for barrier gowns, standard surgical masks, N95 mask covers, mask headbands (to prevent irritation from elastics over ears); protective hoods, and face shields/proective visors are all available at www.heywood.org – click on the “COVID-19 Resources & Updates” banner, then click on “PPE Making.” Also at that site are suggestions for quick & easy face coverings when there isn’t access to a mask.

It cannot be said often enough. Please make sure you are obtaining FIRST-HAND FACTS! Social media postings may be well-intended but are quickly outdated when accurate, and often, flat wrong. For COVID-19 Pandemic medical information, please go directly to the Centers for Disease Control site www.cdc.gov. For information regarding Massachusetts-specific details including daily updates on statistics, directives and advisories, how the states of emergency have affected government services/hours, as well as details on unemployment and small business assistance, go to www.mass.gov. To self-screen (in non-emergency situations) for COVID-19, visit www.Buoy.com/ mass – a State-approved, free resource. To have an urgent question regarding COVID-19 answered, dial 2-1-1; it is a State-approved, confidential, free resource. For up-to-date alerts texted to your cell phone, text COVIDMA (Spanish-language text COVIDMAESP) to 888-777. Heywood Healthcare CEO Brown provides twice-daily YouTube updates on area statistics, COVID-19 patients in Athol and Gardner hospitals, as well as shout-outs to the sewing brigade, dinner donors, etc. His updates are also posted on the Heywood Hospital Facebook Page, and come out roughly at noon and 6 p.m.

Please continue to adhere to distancing and stay-at-home advisories, and when you go out for your essentials, consider ordering something to-go from the Royalston General Store, or one of the area’s eateries, and grab it on your way home. If you’re willing and able to help neighbors with groceries, pharmacy pick-ups, etc., let the Ladies’ Benevolent Society know – they’re pairing helpers with those who need help – e-mail RoyalstonLadiesB@outlook.com or by calling President Laurie at 978-249-5807.

Knock on wood, Royalston seems to be faring quite well through all of this so far, but we need to keep up the good work. Thank you for all you’re doing to make the best of this - this is definitely more of a marathon than a sprint. 
Preparedness beats panic every time. Be informed. Make a Plan.
News of the Library World
Kathy Morris

The distancing continues but in some ways I feel closer to many people. I have received phone calls from people I haven’t seen, or heard from in years and communicate almost daily with our four sons, often carrying on satirical dialogs on Messenger for what Larry seems to think is most of my waking hours. The virus has hit close to our family with son Benjamin’s house in Sheffield having one documented case and probably at least two, maybe three, maybe four, mild or asymptomatic cases, all resolved, and son Jacob’s partner, Heather’s dad and stepmom with severe cases of Covid-19. And we have sons, Joshua and his wife Kate, and Noah close by and doing the grocery and dump runs for their elderly parents. So it seems very real to me. I hear of others with affected family members and it makes me realize that it affects so many of us in so many ways- even if we don’t have the virus.

Focus... compartmentalize.. Focus

There is a lot going on in the library world, even with all libraries in the Commonwealth being closed. There are virtual meetings and ideas to pass along to the community to keep people involved and connected. On April 24, I will attend a virtual meeting on the effect on State Aid, our little pot of money from the State that we receive each year for meeting ‘minimum library standards.’ It isn’t only money, it’s our doorway into borrowing books and materials from other libraries in Massachusetts and throughout the United States, as well as allowing any resident of Royalston to go to other libraries in Massachusetts and borrow books and use their materials. It also allows us to apply for State and Federal grants. It is critical for functioning to full capacity.

I am going into the Library to do ‘maintenance’ chores, answer emails and phone calls; process the books, audiobooks, and movies that were ordered months ago and are still arriving; weeding the collection and shelf checking; consolidating twenty-five plus years of Library records (much to the delight of other staff members!). This has included fondly recalling working on the Heritage Grant with Polly Longsworth to document all the historical documents in town and her finding us an archivist, who was 7 months pregnant. With all the mold on the documents we had to buy her disposable gloves and a respirator. The State tried to hire after they saw her exceptional work, and issued a commendation, which Selectman (not yet a Board) Bill Reopell received at the State House. Further pursuing leads to documents for repairs I had forgotten about – like sistering the roof rafters – out-of-sight, out-of-mind; being amazed at how long ago we installed the exterior pole lamp; and replacing the fluorescent lights with schoolhouse lamps so that they would match the ones in the other rooms - (these vintage fixtures came from a town building that was torn down in Orange and Beth Gospodarek saw them in an antique store, the proprietor of which then sold us all eight complete fixtures and globes for $120 because they were for the Library). Furniture frugality revealed in the stacks: We received a grant to purchase short tables for the children’s room and contacted a furniture maker in North Carolina who made shorter legs for their small round dining room tables, which made them much less expensive than ordering from a library catalog, and in a similar vein, working with the furniture company in Winchendon to make us a tall stand up table, a gig that gave me a free lunch and a few dollars to cover driving to a meeting to talk about innovative ways for small libraries to make their limited funds go further. Of course, my frugality can cause consternation too: one patron (I hope you will smile) complained about my reuse of removable labels and commented that we could afford a few more labels. And in reality, they do curl and come off sometimes when they have been used more than once. We still sometimes use them for staff but not for others.

It is amazing how fast the time flies when I’m there working. When we are open, many of the chores are pushed to the back burner to be done in fits and starts during hours and now I have a concentrated block of time without patrons, reference questions, or check outs. But, I wish we were together. I miss everyone and hope all are holding up. This makes me think about early settlers with the nearest neighbor a few to many miles away making for a long walk to visit. In other sections, you’ll find a sample of online resources and activities that are posted on the library website and some unwired things to look for this spring. Remember, we are only a phone call or an email away from you if you have questions, need help, or just want to say hi.
You Know what Goes Well with Social Distancing? Gardening

Friends of the Library “On Demand” Plant Sale is Happening: Need plants? E-mail or leave a message on the library phone and we will dig you some. Lots of common and uncommon perennials and herbs, as well as some extra shrubs, berries, and veggies are available. Don’t know what you need? You can just say things like, “flowers in August” or “lots of shade” or “total black thumb”, and we will make recommendations. Plants will be left at the library labeled with your name. If able, please make a donation to the Friends (PO Box 133 or put in the drop box) in return. Plants respond better when they are dug early in the season, so early orders are best.

The Community Garden in South Royalston Village is Happening!
As of May 1st, the Community Garden located at One School Street in the South Royalston Village is up and running. The first tenants are breaking ground and getting those first plants and vegetables in.

The Town of Royalston has allowed the Village to use this site for a Community Garden from May 1 to Nov 1. There are some 10 X 10 plots left over and there is still plenty of time to get involved. It is a great family adventure and a wonderful way to currently physically distance. If you are interested, just stop in at the Country Store and leave your name and contact information and we can have you digging dirt ASAP. See you in the Garden!

Some of the new materials at your library

Adult Fiction
Alvarez, Julia  Afterlife
Fossey, Brooke  The Big Finish
Jiles, Paulette  Simon the Fiddler
Koontz, Dean  Devoted
McMillan, Terry  It’s Not All Downhill from Here
Roth, Veronica  Chosen Ones
Tyler, Anne  Redhead by the Side of the Road

Adult Non-Fiction
Fehrman, Craig  Author in Chief
Kondo, Marie  Joy at Work


Children’s Fiction
Barton, Chris  Fire Truck vs. Dragon
Cole, Henry  One Little Bag
Elliott, David  In the Woods
Lindstrom, Carole  We are Water Protectors
Lowry, Lois  On the Horizon
Pintadera, Fran  Why do we Cry?
Shannon, David  Roy Digs Dirt
Stead, Rebecca  The List of Things that Will Not Change

Children’s Nonfiction
Gianferrari, Maria  Play Like an Animal
Messner, Kate  The Next President
Yang, Gene  Dragon Hoops

Audiobooks
Box, C.J.  Long Range

You Know what does not Always Feel Good during Social Distancing? Being isolated.

Tools for Seniors: Combating Social Isolation Through Covid-19 and Beyond. The Concordium, a social impact start-up at the Harvard University Innovation Labs, matches a senior to a college student to chat once a week by video conference or phone call. The college students are trained before they have these conversations with a guide that has been approved by a neurologist and each volunteer has an up to date CORI. For more information visit theconcordium.org. If you are interested in taking part in the program but don’t have online access to sign up, call the Library and leave a message and we’ll get you connected.

If you would like to receive check-ins from people in town, please contact Carla Rabinowitz at 978-249-4422 or Laurie Deveneau at 978-349-5807 or email at Royalstonladiesb@outlook.com. Please leave your name, phone number, and email.

Luncheon Club News: Grab and Go Lunch Available
The Council on Aging, along with LifePath, is offering the nutritious meals as a “grab and go” (to be reheated later) to people who want to drive to the Town Hall, receive their meal, and drive away, keeping a safe distance. This service will be every Wednesday from 10:30 to 11:30 AM. On the third Wednesday of month is still pick-up for Brown Bag. For weekly meal or any questions, call Betty Woodbury by Monday 5 PM at 978-249-9656.

Free Audiobook Program for Teens
SYNC, the free summer audiobook program sponsored by AudioFile Magazine for teens 13+ starts up again on April 30. Interested teens should register for the program at: https://www.audiobooksync.com/ You can learn more about the SYNC program at https://www.audiobooksync.com/. For integration with the Sora app visit: https://resources.overdrive.com/audiofile-and-overdrive-present-sync-audiobooks-for-teens/ If you don’t have a library card, email or call the Library and we’ll set you up with one.
Wildflowers in Royalston

Now is the time to start looking for many of the spring wildflowers blooming around town. Most early wildflowers are white with a few notable exceptions. This is only a sampling of what you can find. See something you can’t identify? Take a photo and submit it to the library and we will try to identify it for you. Photos by Noah Siegel. (To see these photos in color, visit royalstonlibrary.org where you can find this and every other Royalston Community Newsletter archived.)

Mayflower – Trailing Arbutus (Epigaea repens) – A cluster of several fragrant, small pale pink, bell-shaped flowers that open into 5 petals occurring at the end of a trailing stem with leathery oval leaves. Early May. Our State flower.

Red Trillium (Trillium erectum) – Also called Wakerobin and Stinking Benjamin due to its aroma. Three petal, liver red flower on short stalk above three wide pointed leaves in a whorl around the stem. Early May.

Jack-in-the-pulpit (Arisaema atrorubens) – Distinctive green and purplish brown funnel with a flap folds over the spadix, a long club-like structure within the spathe. One or two three-part pointed leaf. Moist woods. Early May.

Painted Trillium (Trillium undulatum) – Three white petals with a crimson blaze at their base, the flower is on a short stalk above the three leaves around the stem. Smaller and a little later than the red trillium. Early to mid-May.

Dutchman’s Breeches (Dicentra cucullaria) – Dangling white flowers that look like a row of pantaloons hanging on a line. Leaves like delicate parsley, same genus as bleeding hearts. Early May, rich, often moist, shaded woods.

Fringed Polygala (Polygala paucifolia) Pink-purple flowers with two petals (sepals) that look like wings with tiny petals at the end of a tube. Evergreen leaves are broad. About 3-6” tall. Sandy pine woods. Mid-May.

Pink Lady’s Slipper – Moccassin Flower – (Cypripedium acaule) – Distinctive pink pouch with deep cleft above which are three narrow petals on a long stem with two basal leaves. Acid woods and bogs, late May.

Foamflower (Tiarella cordifolia) – Many tiny five-petal white flowers with long stamens arrayed singly down the stem, with heart shaped leaves with 5-7 lobes. Rich woods in early-mid-May.
Congratulations and Good News
ed note: Graduates and graduates’ families: You did it, but now graduation is postponed, and it feels a bit hollow. Make the RCN your place to strut. Send a photo and an accolade-laden write up, and as much as a little newsletter can, we will make it a big deal. Got other big news or milestones? Let us know. Send them to chasegos2@gmail.com or drop at the library.

Congratulations College Graduates
Paul Thibodeau is graduating with the class of 2020 from Fitchburg State University. His academic path began as a bit of a fluke when he turned 48 years old and feared that he would not be able to do carpentry work forever. He scoffed at the idea of going back to school but decided to give it a try and registered at Mount Wachusett Community College. Pursuing higher education became his calling. Paul has now completed studies to earn a Master’s Degree in Behavioral Health Sciences. Congratulations!

Tobey Chase is graduating from Clark University with a BA in a double major of Geography and Global Environmental Studies, with a specialty in satellite mapping. The exceptional quality of her academic work and her commitment to social justice has led to her being awarded a full scholarship for a 5th year at Clark to complete her Masters degree.

Songwriter of the Year Finalist
Melanie Mangum, diva of Open Mic’s Blue Shots and former Town Clerk, is one of eight finalists for the Memphis Songwriters Association’s “Songwriter of the Year Award”. Her song, “Million Dollar Day” was the final of eight announced via video link. Sadly, it was supposed to be performed at the MSA’s Songwriter Showdown, but live performances have been postponed due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Melanie left Royalston for Memphis a year ago to pursue her passion for music – and it is lovely to see her have success. To hear the song, look for Melanie Ann on Soundcloud. Congratulations and best wishes, Mel!

Recipe of the Month
This month’s recipe was a Facebook find, when Royalston resident Katie Shortis posted she was looking for someone willing to share a “classic whoopie pie recipe.” Megan Brockelbank stepped up and posted this picture of her Grandmother’s recipe, and reports it is, “...the best I’ve ever had.” It’s actually from her maternal great-grandmother’s side of the family, and the delicious little pies were made on special occasions as long as Megan can remember. Megan uses King Arthur’s Gluten-Free Flour Blend, making them compatible with a celiac disease diet.

Megan moved from Orange to her West Royalston home in 2011, and lives on a self-sufficient homestead with her fiancé Josh, five-year-old Mila (who will join RCS’s K class next year) and soon-to-be-three Conor. She is a graduate student working on a M.S. in Sustainability Science, with a focus on food systems and sustainable farming. She’s been on a hiatus from running a farm stand, but if she can find someone to help with the kids, she is considering starting up again.

Obituary
Wayne R. Newton, 74, of Royalston, died Tuesday, March 31st at Wachusett Manor, after an illness.

Wayne was born July 15, 1945, son of the late Willard and the late Dorothy (Winchester) Newton. Wayne served as the Royalston Fire Chief for 35 years until his retirement in 2008. He was the organist for the 1st & 2nd Congregational Churches of Royalston for over 40 years. Wayne was also a school bus driver and owned and operated Wayne R. Newton Building and Excavation.

As a lifelong Royalston resident, Wayne served on the town’s Cemetery Commission, the Conservation Commission, the Planning Board and as a member of the J.N. Bartlett Fund. Wayne also served on the Worcester West Forest Fire Warden Association and was proud to be a committee head for the Athol High School Lights Committee.

He leaves his son: Scott Newton and significant other, Mary Amero; his daughter: Jennifer Winters and husband, Michael; stepson: Joseph Spear and wife, Amanda; stepdaughters: McKenzie Spear and significant other, Nick Robbins and Colleen Spear; as well as eight grandchildren; three brothers: Willard Newton, Geoffrey Newton and wife, Diana and Keith Newton and wife, Deborah; two sisters: Anne Robertson and husband, Lyall and Deborah Bullock and husband, Fred; several nieces and nephews.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made in Wayne’s memory to the Royalston Fire and EMS Association, P.O. Box 53, Royalston, MA 01368. To send an online condolence, please visit www.mackfamilyfh.com.

(In case you can’t read it – “To sour milk – add 1 tbsp. vinegar” to ¾ cups of milk)
ARRSD Working to Support Families
Distance learning for the remainder of the school year

Brick and mortar school will not resume this school year as it is not yet possible to social distance to keep kids and staff safe in a school. During this closure, the Athol Royalston Regional School District is working to stay connected, to try to find internet connectivity, to lessen stress, and to provide structure and learning opportunities for students and families.

To make sure students stay well fed, over 1000 bag lunches and breakfasts are delivered via Merrifield bus to bus stops daily. The cafeteria staff is working so hard and some volunteers join them in the wee hours getting the meals ready. To provide access to fresh foods, each Thursday from 10 - 11 at Athol Community Elementary School parking lot, the outdoor produce market will continue, a second venue may open soon. Families can pay what they can, and Heywood Hospital will pick up the balance of the cost. SNAP benefits are accepted.

All teachers are posting assignments for their students on the district website (www.arrsd.org) on Monday and Weds. and regularly calling families to check in on these families’ needs and well-being. Virtual video classes through Google Meet are beginning in some subjects. There are differences in availability of internet service in our area, so paper packets of work can still be delivered to families by school bus or collected at the school. WiFi can be accessed outside all of the ARRSD schools in Athol as well. The district is trying to purchase some hotspots to lend, but it is in competition with everyone else buying hotspots right now, and there is a delay. Beginning in the last term, assignments are for course credit. Some students may have an opportunity to do some catch up learning during summer school.

Nonetheless, while academic progress is fostered, the priority is to meet students’ social and emotional needs during the closure. Realizing the cancelation of senior events is a huge let down for seniors, teachers recently purchased yearbooks and lawn signs for them. There will be a graduation as soon as it is safe to do so. RCS teachers recently held a parade to smile and wave and let students know they are in their thoughts. All of the ARRSD schools’ facebook pages and Google classrooms are full of teacher-made videos, read alouds, songs, art, jokes and other ways adults in the district are working to stay connected with students.

These are stressful times. Mental health and physical health supports for families are available. The situation is fluid and changing rapidly. Families who have questions about food, school work, and economic or emotional supports, please e-mail your teachers or principals. Stay safe and keep in touch.

Royalston Historical Society
Peter Krania, president

Because of what is happening in the world, country, state and area we will not be opening the museum for viewing. If you are looking for information you can call 978-249-7625 and we will try to assist. Thanks to all who have been supportive of our efforts. Be cautious and safe.

We are living though historic times. If you are keeping a journal or scrapbook during the pandemic, consider sharing with the historical society. Any historical artifacts telling the story of your family in Royalston can be left at the building with a description attached. Remember your history is important to us.

Monty Tech
Mary C. Barclay, Royalston Rep., m-barclay@montytech.net

The short version? Monty Tech’s 1,430 students are continuing meaningful education despite school buildings closing in mid-March. This is thanks in large part to MT’s five-year old “1:1 Chromebook Initiative,” where every student was provided with a ready-to-use, cloud-based device, and teachers trained to maximize using laptops as a teaching tool. At the virtual April School Committee Meeting, Superintendent-Director Dr. Sheila M. Harrity heaped praise on administrators, faculty, and staff for their extraordinary efforts to keep students engaged. Zoom meetings with more than 100 participating teachers, CVTE (career, vocational, and technical education) educators, administrators, and ancillary staff are a daily happening. Through MT Director of Vocational Programs Jim Hachey’s leadership, the MA Association of Vocational Administrators has been coordinating a state-wide effort to record and share shop/trade/profession components with the State’s nearly 40 public CVTE schools, so each student can continue at least some level of voc-tech training in their chosen discipline. In response to a question regarding areas without internet coverage, Dr. Harrity said her administrators, faculty, and staff are committed to providing whatever a student needs to continue learning, and in the very few instances where students cannot be on-line, accommodations are being made; remote learning does not necessarily mean on-line learning. She declined to offer any possible options for senior trips, prom, and graduation, until the “extremely fluid” situation with COVID-19 has stabilized. She also went over the new grading structure, which includes a “credit” or “no credit” system for the remainder of the year; a student’s GPA prior to this change will stand. The intake process for the 2020-2021 school year is continuing as planned, although the outreach to applicants has been a little delayed due to remote working.

Regarding finances, it was noted that in keeping with the Governor’s recommendation, bussing contracts will be re-negotiated to reduce costs to the schools, but with an eye towards keeping the companies afloat so they can immediately begin transporting students when school buildings are allowed to re-open. Local bus companies that did not furlough employees are eligible for any number of small business loans to bridge the gap. No guidance regarding percentages was issued by the State, but school business managers are working as a group to ensure re-negotiations result in reasonable and fair contracts.

This is not an easy situation, but this crisis has resulted in the discovery of many new resources, as well as a number of positive changes that could shape the future of education.

Does anyone have any records of Royalston during the “Spanish flu” pandemic 100 years ago that we could copy at the Historical Society? Then, like now, Massachusetts was very hard hit and social distancing made a huge difference in slowing the spread. Schools were closed. Everything but non-essential services were shut down. Eventually a third of the world’s population was infected. Now, we barely remember it. History gives perspective. This will eventually be the past as well.
Classifieds

free:  File Cabinets: 4, gently used, 4 drawer; 2, a bit more mileage, 5 drawer. Assorted office, desk top trays and dividers. 978-249-3531, please leave message.

Services Available

Piano and Guitar Lessons: Evan Foisy. $20 for a half hour session. Call Evan 978-249-4250, or email evan55@comcast.net

Photography Services: Events, portraits, weddings, horse and dog shows, and commercial photos. Visit www.snowheronstudios.com Call 978-249-8108 or 978-248-9454

What’s Happening at the Village School?
Rise Richardson

With the school building closed for the remainder of the school year, children are learning at home. For all students, the hardest part is the lack of social connection. Learning is a cooperative, social experience. Without fellow students, its dry and less interesting. It’s hard for preschoolers especially, because much of their learning takes place during play with others, and they miss their pals. Kindergarten students are receiving weekly packets, including books to read, and a Theme that they can explore at home and outside. They meet weekly on Zoom and share their work. 1st-2nd students receive a weekly packet and have individual meetings with teachers and whole class meetings too. All on Zoom of course. 3rd-4th students get daily work and have individual meetings with teachers too, and one weekly whole class meeting. 5th-6th have daily math classes. They are also writing the play (setting is the 19th century westward expansion) via Zoom, a difficult task, but do-able. Specialists are sending art projects, music, Spanish and science work that can be done at home. Children are asked to spend no more than a half-day on learning, and spend the rest of the day exploring and learning from nature. Otherwise parents will go nuts!

Music and video went home so families can have their own Teddy Bear Picnics, a Village School late April tradition. Music and video are going out to families to help them find ways to celebrate May Day, by making May Day baskets and singing May Day songs outside. The play and graduation may take place in August, depending on when everything gets back to “normal”.

It’s all new territory, and we are learning as we go.

Laurie Truehart: private wood carving lessons. 978-249-3291.

Graphic digital artist. Websites, print materials - posters, flyers, brochures, business cards, etc... Also photo and slide scanning offered. Barbara 508.364.3339 or brguiney@wildblue.net.

House cleaning. 4 hr - $60.00. Royalston resident. Call Fran: home 249-4596 or cell 978-895-0817.

DTM Landscaping. spring cleanup, snowplowing. Call Theresa Gates 413-336-1850 or David Plourde 413-336-1593

for sale:


Fitness Equipment - In good working shape. Lightly used - Bench with weights, $100. Cross-country ski machine, $35. Treadmill (Smooth 5.0P) $400. Call Polly 978-249-5901.

Putney’s Sugarhouse $6.50/half-pint; $10/pint; $18/quart. Jessica Putney Schanz at 978-939-3329 (cell); 978-249-7787; jessputney1989@gmail.com.

Maple Syrup from Divoll’s sugar house. Prices: pints $10, quarts $18, half gallons $30 and gallons $55. Call John 978-894-5109.

Sweetwater Sugar House at the LeRays has syrup available. Call 978-249-3464.


Pork Cut Packages available. Variety packs. 10 lbs- $55 20 lbs- $100 Sausage also available for $4/ lb- breakfast, hot, sweet, and cajun. Call Chet 978-895-6327.

Jarvenpaa Farm Eggs. $3.00/dozen. 17 River Rd, So. Royalston. Come by anytime. Cooler at the bottom of the driveway next to road.


Local, raw honey from Squier Davis Farm. One pound jars $8.00 Cash preferred. Call Deb/Joe Nunes at 978-249-4000.

Mulch by the load or by the bag from Black Horse Farm (978) 424-8580 or email suzannagaits@gmail.com

Birch Knoll Farm - Hay for sale, Contact Helen at 978-249-3163 or 774-239-5062

Comfort Food

Tom and I love to cook. Over the years we have developed a repertoire of mainstay recipes we return to often. In recent weeks, however, I have found myself longing for dishes I have not thought of in years. This is the food of my childhood. Most of these dishes have no written recipe, so my attempt to recreate each one becomes a journey.

One such journey involved my mother’s baked beans. On a recent weekend I decided to make a batch. I knew to pick over the dried beans as she taught us, removing the occasional stone before soaking the beans overnight. But there was no written recipe anywhere. The exact proportions of molasses, brown sugar and dried mustard were a mystery. And how much salt pork? How big an onion? At what oven temperature and for how long?

For the answers I turned to my oldest brother, Jerry, our family’s baked beans expert. Each summer when we all gather for a week in New Hampshire, Jerry brings out our mother’s bean pot and gets to work. He cooks the beans “by feel”, just as Mom had done. There are no proportions, just the texture and the taste as the beans bake. Like Mom, Jerry checks the beans every hour or so, monitoring the water level and tasting for the right balance of sweet and savory. He blows gently on a spoonful of beans, watching for the skins to break and curl. When he calls me over to the stove and holds out a spoonful saying, “what do they need?” I see my mother. This is exactly what she would do. It is a moment that connects us both to our past and holds a memory more precious than the pot of beans.

So, I called Jerry, now living in Arizona, and he was happy to advise. As he talked I scribbled hasty notes knowing that nothing was definitive. Mom’s recipes were always vague: “…cook it until you know it’s done…add water until the dough feels right…” My brother knew this, and so did I.

Once the baked bean recipe was sorted out we began to reminisce about other childhood delicacies. “Do you remember Tuna-Pea Wiggle?” he asked. And I did: a delicacy from our elementary school cafeteria. Served on Fridays in deference to the Catholics among us, it was listed on the menu as “served on crispy crackers” and we loved it. When our mother learned of our passion she recreated it: creamed tuna with peas served on saltines. Even with her addition of chopped hard-boiled eggs, the nutritional value was dubious. But the sentimental value has stood the test of time.

“I have Mom’s meatloaf recipe,” I offered. “Do you remember Tuna-Pea Wiggle?” He did, and we discussed the merits of soaking bread in milk and eggs before mixing in the ground beef and pork. We recalled her variation, “Meatloaf Surprise”, that involved peeled hard boiled eggs poked into the meatloaf before baking. To this day this is the only meatloaf I will eat.

Before hanging up we lingered a while longer, sharing our stories of childhood fare: the blood sausage that Mom prepared whenever Grandpére visited, and the “Refrigerator Cake” made from chocolate wafers stuck together, and smothered, with whipped cream. It was about food, of course. But it was also a chance to connect with a much-loved brother who lives too far away. In these strange times our stories, and the connections they create, are the “comfort food” we crave.

Larry Siegel

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Hotspots: Call or email the library to ask to be placed on the list to borrow a Coolpad Hotspot with unlimited data for two weeks. These have proven to be very popular and work far better than Mobile Beacon thought they would in our area. We will arrange pickup of the hotspot here at the library, and it can be returned to the dropbox.

Valuing Our Children continues to offer Family Support during this time of social distancing. For up-to-date information, check VOC’s Facebook page “Valuing Our Children” or the calendar on their website: valuingourchildren.org.

May is the month the Friends usually make their annual membership appeal. If you are able, please consider supporting this newsletter and all of the community connection and services our library provides.

Donations can be sent to:
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PO Box 133
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This frog rock off Rt 32 reminds:
*Go in the woods in a place you can stay away from others.
*hunker down
*wash hands
*wear a mask in public spaces