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News January 2010

BMR to Establish Alumni Wall of Fame

Kimberly B. Shaver-Hood, Superintendent of the Blackstone-Millville Regional School District, and Principal Richard A. Porter are proud to announce that an Alumni Wall of Fame and Distinguished Faculty Service Award have been established at Blackstone-Millville Regional High School. The purpose of the Alumni Wall of Fame is to recognize BMR graduates who have distinguished themselves in society. The Distinguished Service Award will honor those outstanding faculty members who dedicated their careers to the communities of Blackstone and Millville and had significant positive impact on the students of BMR. A selection committee has been established consisting of Kendra C. Baldini, BMR Guidance, Class of 2001, Keith A. Ducharme, BMR Assistant Principal, Class of 1987, Bradford Monroe, District Technology Director, Millville resident, and Blackstone Fire Chief Michael Sweeney, BMR Class of 1972. The induction dinner and ceremony will be held on Friday, May 14, 2010. Nominations must be received by March 1, 2010. Nomination forms can be found at www.bmrtd.net under the community tab, high school page, or in the Blackstone-Millville Regional High School main office, located at 175 Lincoln St., Blackstone, MA. 01504. For additional information, you may contact the selection committee at 508-876-0117.

Attorney Swain Opens Law Practice in Blackstone

Michael Edward Swain, son of Craig and Debra Swain of Blackstone, recently earned his Juris Doctor Degree from Syracuse University College of Law. Attorney Swain graduated from Blackstone Millville Regional High School in 2000. He received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Hotel Administration from Cornell University in 2004. Before attending law school, Swain was the manager of a fine dining establishment in Ithaca, New York

While attending Syracuse University College of Law, Attorney Swain received numerous accolades including the Chancellor's Award for Public Engagement and Scholarship in Action as well as the CALI Award for Agency & Partnership. During law school he volunteered for the Cold Case Justice Initiative and served as a CLE coordinator for the New York State Bar Association. Attorney Swain's prior legal experience includes externing with a New York Supreme Court Justice, serving as a Rule Nine Attorney with the Rhode Island Attorney General's Office, serving as an intern with the Massachusetts Department of Mental Retardation, and working as a student attorney at Syracuse University's Securities Arbitration Clinic. Attorney Swain is licensed to practice law in both Massachusetts and Rhode Island and has recently opened an office at 181 Main Street in Blackstone. He can be reached at 508-507-9246 or Michael@attorneyswain.com.

2010 Annual Town Election Nomination Papers Available

Blackstone Town Clerk, Marianne Staples has announced that nomination papers for the April 6TH Annual Town Election will become available from the Town Clerk's office on Thursday, January 14th. Candidates for town offices must obtain signatures from at least 30 registered Blackstone voters and candidates for the Blackstone-Millville Regional District School Committee must obtain at least 35 signatures from either town or a combination of both. In addition, Regional School District candidates must file a notarized statement of candidacy with the Town Clerk's office from the town in which they reside. Signed and completed nomination papers must be returned to the Town Clerk's Office no later than 5PM on Tuesday, February 16th. Questions may be directed to Marianne Staples at mstaples@townofblackstone.org or by calling 508-883-1500 X116

List of Expiring Terms

- One member Board of Assessors for a 3 Year Term
- One member BMR District School Committee for a 4 Year Term (Blackstone Representative)
- One member BMR District School Committee for a 4 Year Term (Millville Representative)
- One member Blackstone Housing Authority for a 5 Year Term
- Collector/Treasurer for a 3 Year Term Five Constables
- One member Board of Health for a 3 Year Term
- Two members Parks & Recreation Commission for 3 Year Terms
- One member Planning Board for a 5 Year Term
- Two members of Board of Selectmen for 3 Year Terms
- One Town Clerk for a 3 Year Term

Special State Election January 19, 2010

There will be a Special State Election to fill the seat vacated by the late Ted Kennedy. Candidates are: Scott P. Brown (R) Martha Coakley (D) Joseph L. Kennedy (I) Polling hours will be from 7:00 AM to 8:00 PM. Polling locations are: Pct. 1- Municipal Center (Lower Level) Pct. 2.-St. Theresa Parish Hall Pct. 3-Municipal Center (Upper Level) Voters who don't know which precinct they vote in may go to www.townofblackstone.org, then click on town departments, then click on Town Clerk, then "Where Do I Vote" or call 508-883-1500 X146 or 116.

Blackstone Business Owners

By Dave Monson

There will be a meeting for any/all Blackstone business owners on Monday, January 25th, 2010, beginning at 6:00 p.m. in the North Meeting Room of the Blackstone Public Library. Local area businesses will network to discuss unique and creative ways to increase patronage through awareness and co-promotion. In the time ahead of January 25th, please use your creativity to develop two novel ideas for business growth..."nothing happens until you take action". Please join us, we look forward to a productive gathering.

I would like to start by thanking all the people that have called with donations. Thanks to the generosity of your Blackstone Neighbors we have lots of warm clothing to share. A large variety of coats, ski pants and hats and mittens are just a phone call away. If you or someone you know needs a coat, blanket/comforter, ski pants or hats and gloves please call Jackie at 883-9476. We make deliveries as well as pick-ups. It's disheartening to think of people in such need in this day and age. But it is rewarding to be one to lend a helping hand. Everyone needs help at one time or another; Neighbors Helping Neighbors is just a phone call away.

OBITUARIES

James Michael Murray

James M. Murray died at home on December 6, 2009, after a long illness. A resident of Blackstone for 40 years, he was the husband of Helen (Houle) Murray for 43 years. Jim was born on October 25, 1946 in Milford, MA. He was the son of the late William F. and Christine F. (McKee) Murray. He is survived by his children; daughter, Amy Beth Deane, of Blackstone; sons Michael of Naragansett, R.I. and Patrick Murray and his wife, Michelle of North Smithfield. Another son, David died in infancy. He leaves four precious grand children: Hannah and Liam Deane and Alyssa and Evan Murray. He is survived by his sister, Mrs. Anne McLaughlin of Uxbridge. He was the brother of the late William Murray and the late Catherine Murray. He is also survived by 6 nieces and 1 nephew. Jim graduated from Milford High School class of 1965. He is a Vietnam era Air Force veteran, serving from 1966 until 1969, including a 13 month tour of duty in Taiwan. He was a communicant of St. Paul's Church for 40 years. Jim began his law enforcement career as an Inspector with the Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles. He attained the rank of sergeant and when his agency merged with the State Police, he served as a sergeant in that agency until his retirement in 1998. Jim was a former member of the Massachusetts Motor Vehicle Inspectors Association, Artist Blacksmiths Association (ABANA) and the New England Blacksmiths Association (NEBA). Jim enjoyed restoring antique cars and participating in antique car shows. He was an accomplished welder who was pleased with his part in designing and fabricating the metal structure for the massive granite alter at St. Paul's Church. Through welding, he rediscovered the ancient art of blacksmithing. He built his own forge where he restored antique pieces and created new pieces by hand. Jim's optimistic nature and generous spirit will be missed by all who knew him. He was first and foremost a family man- a caring husband, father and grandfather. He lived courageously with the effects of a severely disabling stroke for 7 years with his usual patience and good humor. His funeral was held on December 10, from Lauzon Funeral Home in Woonsocket, with a funeral Mass at St Paul's Church, he was buried at St. Paul's Cemetery.

Alice M. Trottier

NORTH SMITHFIELD- Alice M. (Roberge) Trottier, 92, of North Smithfield, RI, passed away Monday, Dec. 21, 2009 at St. Antoine Residence, with her family by her side. She was the beloved wife of the late Raymond E. Trottier. Born in Woonsocket, RI, on July 20, 1917, she was the daughter to the late Benoni and Marcelline (Mainville) Roberge. She was the loving mother of Robert R. Trottier and his wife, Ann Marie, of Andover, MA, Richard J. Trottier and his wife, Monice, of Bellingham, MA, Leo A. Trottier and his wife, Lois, of Millville, MA, Jacqueline Clore and her husband, Tom, of St. Marks, FL, Muriel M. Holfelder and her husband, Bob, of Cumberland, RI, Theresa Bowers and her husband, Tim, of Burke, VA; 13 grandchildren; and 8 great-grandchildren. She was the sister of Gloria Coderre of Norwood, MA and the late Rudolphe and Joseph Roberge. A resident of St. Antoine Residence since 1996, formerly of Blackstone for over 40 years and previously Woonsocket, Mrs. Trottier was a secretary at Catholic Charities in Uxbridge, MA for over 20 years until retiring. After her retirement, she was a volunteer at St. Antoine Residence for several years. A communicant of St. Theresa Church where she was very active and taught CCD for many years, she was active in the Rhode Island Chapter of MADD and volunteered in the Rhode Island Literacy Program. Devoted to her family, she will be greatly missed. Funeral was from Cartier's Funeral Home Bellingham, MA with a Mass of Christian Burial at St. Theresa Church, 630 Rathbun St., Blackstone, MA. Interment was at St. Charles Cemetery, Blackstone. Relatives and friends are invited to sign guest book by visiting www.cartiersfuneralhome.com

Mary C. Devlin

BLACKSTONE- Mary C. (Guilbeault) Devlin, 85, of Blackstone, MA died Tuesday evening December 22, 2009 after an illness. She was the wife of the late Francis J. Devlin who died in 2004. She was born in Blackstone, MA daughter of the late Elias and Mary C. (Duggan) Guilbeault. Mrs. Devlin was employed for many years at the former Uniroyal in Woonsocket, RI, then later for C.D. Burns and Company in North Smithfield, RI. She is survived by one son: Thomas Devlin and his wife Paula of Blackstone, MA; two sisters: Rita Maloney of Blackstone, MA and Patricia Murphy of California; three grandsons: Patrick, Bryan, and Timothy Devlin; and five great grandchildren. She was predeceased by one son Timothy Devlin and one brother Richard Guilbeault. Mrs. Devlin's funeral was held from the James E. Kellett and Son Funeral Home, Blackstone, MA followed by a mass at St. Paul's Church, St. Paul's St., Blackstone, MA. Burial will be in St. Paul's Cemetery, Gaskill St., Blackstone, MA

In the Know with Callie O.

By Callie Ostrowski

Being a member of the NJHS at the Middle School, I thought the community might like to know about the service and membership of the organization. The participants are an active group. We try to maintain honor roll, cooperate as an effective team, and participate in service projects within the community. We are proud to be students of the Middle School and residents of Blackstone. NJHS stands for National Junior Honor Society. Members are chosen by a faculty council. Membership is based on outstanding scholarship, character, leadership, service, and citizenship. Members must independently provide 16 hours of community service. After school tutoring and in school service projects are required of each participating student and do not count as service hours. The NJHS students choose projects that will benefit the needs of the school and town communities. One project the NJHS officers have discussed participating in this year is the Soup- A- Bowl Friday, prior to the Super Bowl Sunday. The NJHS will collect one dollar and a can of soup from the whole student body, grades 6 through 8, to be donated to the local food pantry. Under consideration are also a family fun night and the Memorial Day ceremony.

There are two staff consultants. Mrs. Ferrara, the 8A English teacher, and Mrs. Mclean, the 8B Science teacher, oversee and advise at the National Junior Honor Society meetings. The meetings are run by five officers: President- Daniel Manning, Vice President- Mark Volpe, Secretary- Mary Volpe, Service Coordinator- Jonathan Budnick, and Tutor Coordinator- Aaron Staples. The five officers were elected by the students who make up the NJHS. Being in NJHS does not guarantee a position in National Honor Society at the High School. You have to qualify

and apply to be chosen as part of the National Honor Society. Seventh graders will be elected in the spring of 2010 to take the place of the eight graders moving up to the high school. National Junior Honor Society students access needs within the community and find ways to contribute. We recently had a coat drive and we were able to donate both to Saint Theresa's clothes closet and Jackie Miner's project which provides coats to Blackstone residents who need them. Both of these places give the coats free to those in need. They also participated on the Haunt for Hunger and Cookies with Santa at the J.F.K. school. Mrs. Ferrara and Mrs. Mclean would like to encourage organizations within the community to contact them at the Middle School, 508- 876-0190, if there are projects in which they can utilize the time and talent of the students of the National Junior Honor Society.

"Welcoming in 2010"

A new decade has officially begun... 2010! I would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a Happy New Year. Christmas break is over, and now is where time begins to fly, especially for the seniors. I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday season. With all the festivities that went on at BMR, I can assure you the student body did! One organization that truly got into the spirit this season was the National Honor Society. The fun started with elementary children writing letters to Santa. Members of the NHS then took on the role of portraying Santa's elves. Each member wrote letters back to the children and personally hand delivered the responses, along with delivering candy canes. Besides playing the role as elves, NHS members also took part in being a Secret Santa with the faculty at BMR. Each member drew a faculty name from a raffle, and then bought a gift for that teacher. The event was thoroughly enjoyed by both staff and students. Additionally, on Thursday December 17th, the thirty six members of the society took a field trip to the IMAX theater at Providence Place mall to view "A Christmas Carol 3D" featuring Jim Carey. This enchanting story allowed members to get into the true holiday spirit. As for collections going on, NHS sponsored a "Hats and Mittens" drive during the month of December. Three large boxes of winter wear were donated to the Blackstone Food Pantry. Throughout the month of January, the National Honor Society will be collecting new or lightly used jeans for the "Just Jeans January" drive. Back by popular demand, SADD sponsored the annual holiday Penny War. This ritual took place from December 3rd through the 11th. Five jars were placed in the cafeteria at all lunches; one for each grade and one for the faculty. Pennies positively increased amounts in jars, and all silver change and dollar bills decreased amounts. A battle went down between the classes and the winner was announced at the Winter Pep Rally. As a result, \$1,130 was collected in order to help buy presents for less fortunate families. A special thanks to all who donated and Congratulations to Ms. Stefanie Anderson and SADD for helping families in need this holiday season! This year, the senior class worked very hard to bring back the Winter Ball, a BMR dance that has not taken place in several years. This event is open to all juniors and seniors, and will take place on Friday January 14th from 6:30 to 10:30 in the cafeteria. The theme is Masquerade, so get those masks out! Come enjoy a cold sit down buffet, dancing, and a night of fun that you will never forget. Winter sports are off to a great start so far this season. The Varsity and JV Boys and Girls Basketball teams look great! Be sure to come to a game and show your support. Twenty two cheerleaders sit in rows at each home game helping to cheer on our teams. The new coach for the cheerleaders this year is guidance counselor Mrs. Charron. She is thrilled to be working with the girls, and feels that they have great potential this season. Indoor track is also busy preparing for upcoming meets as well. Good luck to all winter sports! As January is beginning, it is safe to say that students are already doing their snow dances praying for snow days. Although cancellations are not always guaranteed, dates to mark off that we are guaranteed not to have school are Friday January 15th, which is a professional development day, and Monday January 18th, which is Martin Luther King Jr. Day. Also, students should start preparing for midterms, since they are fast approaching at the end of this month. I hope you all have a wonderful start to the new year, and I will have more to update you on next month!

Blackstone Millville Regional's Sophomore Job Shadow Day a Success

The 12th annual Job Shadow Day was held on November 13, 2009 for all members of the sophomore class at the Blackstone-Millville Regional High School. According to Mark Campopiano, English Dept. Chair and Job Shadow Coordinator, the purpose of this event is to encourage all tenth grade students to explore careers through "shadowing," a period of observation by a student at a place of employment of their choice. By doing so, a student can learn the various aspects of a job first hand - the skills required, the responsibilities involved, and future job prospects. Although many students are not sure of career choices so early on in their high school education, they are exposed to the "real world" of work. Campopiano said, "The program is an excellent way for students to test their career interests, goals, and communication skills, and to see how academics are applied in the working world". Making education relevant to students and linking it to prospective career choices is a basic premise of the program's mission. Information packets describing student, parent, and employer responsibilities are distributed through the English classes. The activity has become a part of the English curriculum with students completing a reflective essay on their Job Shadow experience or interview. In order for the day to be considered an excused absence, a student must complete all the project requirements described in the packet. Parental cooperation in helping students identify potential work sites, make initial contacts, and provide transportation is vital to the success of this event. Students have found the experience to be exciting and rewarding, as well as educational. Students have shadowed in law offices, schools, police departments, computer companies, hospitals, construction sites, barber shops, and in a host of other businesses. Additionally, the sophomore class is invited to a career fair each spring hosted by Northbridge High School. This year's fair will be held on April 1st.

Rep. Dr. Jennifer Callahan Seeks Transparency with AG Vote Replacement Vote Should be Public

(BOSTON)- State Representative Jennifer M. Callahan (D-Sutton) is asking Speaker DeLeo to fill the position of Attorney General by roll call rather than secret ballot should such a vacancy arise. Callahan issued a request to House Colleagues Monday asking them to cosign a letter she will be sending to the Speaker this Thursday, "filling of the position of Attorney General will be an incredibly important decision we make on behalf of constituents across Commonwealth. Like all other votes we cast, we should go on record and be accountable to the public," she stated in her email to House Members. "As elected officials, I believe we should be able to stand behind our appointment and not be able to hide behind a decision made in secret." The Constitution calls for

constitutional vacancies, including Attorney General, to be filled by the Legislature through a "joint ballot of the senators and representatives in one room". However, the Constitution does not specify how such a joint ballot is taken. Callahan is calling on the Speaker to work with his Leadership team to put forth changes that will allow the Legislature to conduct this process via a roll call rather than a secret ballot. "Potential appointees who are nominated could be placed on an official ballot, but each legislator's vote could be recorded for an individual on the ballot considered in a manner not dissimilar to the process used for electing the House Speaker," she said. Several rulings pertaining to this procedure were made in 1928, however Callahan argues, "the political climate has changed significantly since that time, I do not believe our forefathers intended this process to be conducted out of the public's view." Callahan has been a leader on government transparency and ethics reform, filing a multitude a bills to change the manner in which business is conducted on Beacon Hill.

Blackstone & Millville to Receive Public Safety Funding

(BLACKSTONE/MILLVILLE)- Sen. Richard Moore and Rep. Jennifer Callahan announce the Towns of Blackstone and Millville have been awarded two public safety grants. Blackstone will receive \$21.3K in stimulus funds to help the fire department address staffing reductions caused by the current recession with Millville receiving \$55.7K to hire one full time police officer and one part time officer. Governor Patrick released the funding at the end of November. "Public safety needs to remain one of our top priorities despite a challenging recession," said Rep. Callahan. "These stimulus funds are absolutely critical to Blackstone and Millville being able to serve and protect the public whether it is a call for help that comes to the police station or fire station." "The economic crisis has hit cities and towns hard and forced communities to lay off the men and women sworn to protect us," said Governor Patrick. "With these stimulus funds, we can eliminate dangerous understaffing, put people to work and give our police and fire departments the resources they need to keep our residents safe. I commend our partners in the Congressional Delegation for making this critical funding possible." In addition, the towns have each received a grant through the Student Awareness of Fire Education (S.A.F.E.) Program. This public safety initiative provides resources to local fire departments to conduct fire and life safety education programs to students in grades K-12.

"SAFE grants provide an exceptional education in safety, and help to build important relationships between students and their local firefighters," said Sen. Moore. "I am happy to see our local towns once again receiving the annual grants, which have certainly enriched the younger population." "Fire safety needs to be reinforced throughout all stages of childhood development. The fundamentals taught through the S.A.F.E. Program are essential in preventing injury and saving lives," said Callahan. "It is imperative the Legislature continues to fund these programs and I am thrilled Blackstone and Millville will benefit this year." Since its inception, the S.A.F.E. Program has resulted in a 66% decrease in the number of children who die in fires in the Commonwealth each year. S.A.F.E. teaches key fire safety behaviors including; stop, drop and roll, home escape plans, crawling low under smoke and kitchen and home safety as well. Through the S.A.F.E. program, Blackstone will receive \$1,912 and Millville will receive \$1,492 this grant cycle.

Sen. Moore fighting for hard working taxpayers

BOSTON - Working to restore credibility and promote efficiency in state government, a senior member of the Massachusetts Senate is advancing a four-part plan that could save millions of dollars for Massachusetts taxpayers. Sen. Richard T. Moore, D-Uxbridge, who is a member of the influential Senate Committee on Ways and Means, has drafted four proposals to make state government accountable to those it is designed to serve. Moore's ideas have garnered nearly 20 co-sponsors among his legislative colleagues. The proposals, which Sen. Moore said will be offered both as legislation and as budget provisions, seek to give the public opportunities to suggest reform or abolition of state agencies and programs. All are designed to force state bureaucrats to justify the work of their agencies or face abolition. Two of the ideas were gleaned from presentations Sen. Moore heard at leadership meetings sponsored by the National Conference of State Legislatures, and one resulted from a recent WBZ-TV I-Team report about unused leased parking spaces for state employees. "With the serious decline in state revenues, we need to ensure that state agencies function on a more cost-effective basis," Sen. Moore stated. "Scarce revenue dollars require new, innovative approaches to public program management. Furthermore, when the economy improves, there will be pressure to restore all of the cuts and personnel, but the state needs a plan to evaluate and prioritize state programs and services. We must not simply go back to 'doing business as usual,'" Moore continued, "when the revenue picture improves." He said that taxpayers deserve to know that every program that receives public funding is needed and that services are being delivered in the most efficient manner. The proposals being offered include: Sunset of State Agencies Texas, Florida and a several other states have laws that require all state agencies to terminate after a set amount of years, unless affirmatively re-authorized by the Legislature. Texas has saved nearly \$800 million in the past twenty-seven years, consolidated 12 agencies and abolished 58 agencies. The proposal in Massachusetts would assign mandatory sunset dates for each agency, provide an opportunity for stakeholders and the public to comment on how well the agency performs its duties, and give the Legislature the opportunity to decide if the agency should be abolished, reformed, or consolidated. Sunshine on State Agency Reports Over the years, as state agencies and departments have been established or re-organized, the Legislature has required these agencies to issue annual reports. The reports, often printed and distributed at considerable expense, rarely give legislators and the public an opportunity to evaluate the agency or provide a common sense report card on the need, success or failure of agency programs. Sen. Moore has proposed that agencies no longer print and distribute annual reports, but provide the reports electronically on the Internet with provisions for public feedback. "Reporting to the public in digital format will shine the public spotlight on agency activities and provide feedback on what's working and what isn't," the Senator explained. "It will also save millions of dollars in printing and distribution costs," he added. Improving State Program Performance Last year, during debate on the FY '10 state budget, Sen. Moore gained Senate approval for an amendment that would have created pilot projects for examining the efficiency and performance of selected state programs. Unfortunately, the proposal was dropped during negotiations with the House on the final budget package. The proposal has state programs evaluated by trained examiners from the private sector using performance quality standards developed by the Department of Commerce National Institute for Standards and Technology in the prestigious Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Program. The standards, often used to evaluate private and non-profit organizations, would have state agencies partner with senior leaders committed and focused on long-term sustainability and improving overall organizational performance. Preventing Waste in State Agency Leasing A recent WBZ-TV I-Team investigation revealed that millions of tax dollars are being wasted by state agencies for leasing parking spaces around the state, which are often unused or being misused. There is, at present, no provision in these leasing and rental agreements to provide for an evaluation and periodic review of the need for the leased or rented facilities or the termination of such agreements when they cannot be justified. The proposed legislation would require the director of the agencies to exercise more common sense in the procurement of parking spaces

and facilities rental. Value and Efficiency in Delivery of State Services This legislation creates a board within the Executive Office for Administration and Finance that administers a process for receiving suggestions from state employees and retirees for improving state programs and services. The Board shall receive, solicit and review suggestions made by officers and employees of the Commonwealth regarding the improvement and efficiency of state services or programs, and the Board shall select the proposals that they deem as having the greatest impact on improving government efficiency. This idea is modeled on the successful federal Securing Americans Value and Efficiency (SAVE) program, which resulted in over 38,000 suggestions for improvement from federal employees and retirees. The co-sponsors for Sen. Moore's bills are: Sen. Steven A. Baddour, D-Methuen; Sen. Harriette Chandler, D-Worcester; Sen. Michael O. Moore, D-Millbury; Sen. Brian A. Joyce, D-Milton; Sen. Thomas P. Kennedy, D-Brockton; Sen. Marc R. Pacheco, D-Taunton; Sen. Susan C. Tucker, D-Andover; Rep. Cory Atkins, D-Chelmsford; Rep. Jennifer Benson, D-Lunenburg; Rep. Jennifer Callahan, D-Sutton; Rep. Katherine Clark, D-Wakefield; Rep. Thomas Calter, D-Kingston; Rep. John V. Fernandes, D-Milford; Rep. Anne Gobi, D-Ware; Rep. Lida Harkins, D-Needham; Rep. Kate Hogan, D-Stow; Rep. Paul McMurdy, D-Dedham; Rep. James R. Miceli, D-Wilmington; and Rep. Michael F. Rush, D-Boston. For more information on Sen. Moore's work in the Legislature, please visit www.senatormoore.com.

Small Businesses

By Hùng Q. Pham

Happy New Year! I hope that you all had wonderful holidays and ended the year well. For many of you, I suspect that January begins a month long (or a couple months long, as the case may be) of still writing 2009 on everything, even though it is 2010. Just a couple weeks ago, I attended a commencement ceremony, and I thought, "How fitting." Although it marked the end of something - in this case, years of academics - by its very name, commencement is the beginning. So it also goes with our yearly transition from December into January. We reflect on the past year, think about the future, make our resolutions, and let the new year commence! As I reflect on the past year, I think about the many success and failures I encountered, and the biggest life changing moment of all - the passing of my father, just days before Father's Day. There were accomplishments he'll never see, and moments with him I'll forever keep in my heart. I think about how he stood and watched me work on my motorcycle and never said a word - but he didn't need to. I think about how many gigs I played after he passed, in one of my busiest summers yet, and how happy he'd be to know that I could do what I love and be paid for it. I think about how the year was before his passing, and how it was very different after his passing. In ways, we can draw a corollary with life in the current financial situation. We think about how we lived before the recession, and how it is now (since I can't say "How we live after the recession" just yet). According to a poll by USA TODAY during the holidays, 59% of shoppers planned on spending the same, while only 30% planned on spending less. The remaining 11% planned on spending more. Come to think of it, I'd love to be part of the 11% that actually felt like they could afford more. As of this writing, holiday sales were lagging, and the winter storm that dumped record snowfall on the East coast affected sales on "Super Saturday" - the last Saturday before Christmas. Some retailers, hoping to capitalize on last minute shoppers, extended their hours. By the time you read this article, we'll know how businesses fared. On wondering how businesses fared, I recently asked of one of the last business I interviewed, Wojcik's Farm, how they did, ending out the year, as they were implementing a new bakery section to their farm. I was told that many customers enjoyed the pies and other baked goods available and they plan on opening the bakery earlier in the season next year. They were thankful for all the compliments and support they received. It's great to hear of local success stories. I'm hoping that for you who have had hours cut back, or worse, lost jobs that you find something in the new year. For our local businesses, I hope for them many successes in the new year - please feel free to give them a little business! Valentine's day is just around the corner! Finally, for those of you who haven't donated to a charity or cause of your choice yet, I hope that now, after the holidays have settled down, you can and will consider making a contribution to an organization that means something to you. As an employee of a non-profit human services agency, I feel obligated to mention something about it! Again, happy new year to all, and may the new year bring new hope and many successes in all your endeavors. I look forward to informing, entertaining, and connecting you with the many businesses and business owners in Blackstone. Please feel free to contact me directly at hqp921@gmail.com with questions, comments, or suggestions.

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