

————— EDITORIAL —————

Finding new ways to lift spirits

Here are brief thoughts on recent happenings in Franklin County and the North Quabbin region.

Getting egg-cited

Easter weekend has now come and gone, without the usual fanfare. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the WHAI and Bear County radio stations didn't host their usual Easter egg hunt, nor did the Montague Parks & Recreation Department host its EGGstravaganza.

But that didn't stop local organizers from brainstorming ways for children to have fun, while still practicing safe social distancing. While the radio stations offered a virtual Easter egg hunt, the Greenfield Recreation Department encouraged residents to display colored paper eggs in their windows for passersby to spot, and the Montague Parks & Recreation Department arranged for Peter Cottontail to travel through town, waving to residents from his "special Cottontail-mobile."

"People are looking for creative and fun things to do while maintaining social distancing," Greenfield Recreation Director Christy Moore commented. "Life is still happening, just in a different way right now."

"We can't let this weekend and the spirit of the season, so to speak, come and go without doing anything," agreed Montague Parks & Recreation Director Jon Dobosz.

We thank these organizers for coming up with new, safe ways to celebrate as we navigate these unprecedented times, and hope everyone who participated felt the spirit of the season. And, if you're still itching to hunt for eggs, stay tuned, as Dobosz said his department still plans to hold the EGGstravaganza at some point in the summer.

Recognizing dogs' potential

Speaking of having fun while practicing social distancing, there's a group of dogs that are doing just that while putting smiles on the faces of residents at Charlene Manor Extended Care in Greenfield.

When Shelburne resident Jackie Walsh, whose mother-in-law used to live in Charlene Manor, heard that the residents are being instructed to stay inside as a COVID-19 precaution, she wanted to do something to brighten the mood there. So Walsh and some of her friends have taken to walking their dogs outside the facility on Sundays, also interacting with residents to whatever extent possible through their windows.

"I know people really miss their families but also their pets," she said. "It's not ideal. It would be great if we could bring them in. But it's a little bit of a diversion."

As a newsroom that is quite accustomed to having canine visitors — including photographer Paul Franz's dog, our official newshound, Dixie — we are very familiar with the power that dogs have to brighten a tough day. Kudos to Walsh and her friends for recognizing dogs' positive influence on our moods, and for tapping into that power during these trying times. While the circumstances that surround us tend to incite fear and frustration, everyone could use a reason to smile.