

Duxbury Clipper



Wednesday, November 30, 2022

"The only impossible journey is the one you never begin." – Tony Robbins

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Price hike

Estimate for new DPW facility increases by over \$4 million

By SUSANNA SHEEHAN
CLIPPER SENIOR REPORTER

With the costs of construction driven sky high by pandemic related-problems and inflation, the price of a new Department of Public Works building is now estimated to be \$4.4 million more than the amount voters approved in March.

This increase brings the cost of the new 38,189 square-foot facility to \$30.8 million instead of \$26.4 million.

On Nov. 21, the Select-board received an update on

the DPW headquarters project off Tremont Street from its engineering consultant Jeff Alberti, the chief operating officer at Weston and Sampson. Alberti has been working on this project for over three years, including on the first \$18 million DPW building project in 2019, a project approved at Town Meeting but ultimately shot down by voters on the ballot.

At Town Meeting in March, residents voted 194-

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SHE'S MAKING A LIST. Maya Keady pauses for a picture with Santa before telling him what she wants for Christmas. See more photos from this year's Holly Days on page 12.

Photo by Deni Johnson

Getting testy

MCAS scores raise concerns

By MATTHEW NADLER
CLIPPER EDITOR

Duxbury students haven't been faring well compared with their peers on the MCAS, according to school officials who presented their findings at last Wednesday's School Committee meeting.

Assistant Superintendent Elizabeth Wilcox showed how Duxbury stu-

dents scored compared to neighboring towns like Hingham, Marshfield and Scituate. This was the first year since 2019 that the MCAS was entirely administered in person, Wilcox said. The test wasn't given in 2020, it was offered first in a hybrid format, then in person in 2021.

Overall, English scores

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Crossing the generation gap

Sages and Seekers program helps seniors and students make connections

By MAUREEN HERRMANN
CLIPPER REPORTER

Belying the chill in the Aiden classroom last Tuesday, the atmosphere could not have been warmer or more convivial as the Sages and Seekers cohort of Duxbury seniors and DHS students met for the final gathering of the fall session. Founded in 2009 by Elly

Katz, a Bostonian and graphic designer, Sages and Seekers is an intergenerational program which, according to its website, "is designed to develop empathy and diminish social isolation and ageism." For the seniors, the Sages, the program seeks "to promote their sense of purpose and value as members of a community." For the

young adults, the Seekers, the program strives to "promote the development of empathy and social emotional skills while also enhancing their interviewing, listening, writing, conversation, and public-speaking competencies."

During a light-hearted hour of fellowship and tender

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Program brings seniors and students together

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exchanges of appreciation and affection, it is clear the first Duxbury iteration of this program achieved these goals and worked, in at least one sense, toward the promotion of an “Age-Friendly Duxbury.”

Hannah Boulton, chairwoman of the Senior Center’s Lifelong Learning Committee, brought the program to the Committee’s attention. As Chris Coakley, Manager of Volunteer Services for the Senior Center, and program co-facilitator, explained, “[Hannah] has long believed in the value of connecting the generations and discovering how much more alike we are than different, despite our ages.”

Earlier this year, Boulton was instrumental in convincing the Friends of the Council on Aging to acquire a license for the program. Work then began in earnest to build the cohort. The Senior Center was quick to find members eager to take part in this program, and to commit to meeting each Tuesday afternoon, typically at the Alden School.

Sages in the fall cohort were Hannah Boulton; Patsy Bruce, a retired Alden School teacher; Nancy McDermott, a recently retired finance and purchasing executive; Jeannie Mark, a retired educator; Lisa Wattine, a retired paralegal; Linda Sjoberg, retired after a career with NASA and as a middle school educator; and George Sjoberg, a retired computer and network indus-



The Sages and the Seekers.



George Sjoberg with Oli Thawley.

try professional who has since co-authored scientific papers on astronomy.

Meanwhile, the Senior Center reached out to their partners in the Duxbury Public Schools to secure an after-school location for the Sages and Seekers to meet, and to recruit Seekers. Coakley relied heavily on DHS junior Hannah Stout to find Seekers in the school community. She recounted, “One of our best young volunteers at the Senior Center, Hannah Stout, recruited the Seekers and we wound up with seven pairs of Sages and Seekers. The hardest part about the recruitment was making sure that everyone could block off eight Tuesdays after school. With sports, family obligations, and more, it was challenging.”

A true networker, Stout soon convened a group of enthusiastic Seekers who some-

how managed to include this weekly meeting in their already tight academic, club, and athletic schedules. This cohort included DHS students Hannah Stout, Ally Brooks, Gabriella Bruno, Lydia Kondry, Alana Koplovsky, Maya Daly and Oliver Thawley. The Seekers received neither academic nor community service credit for their participation.

From there, the magic, as Hannah Stout described it, began. On week two, the cohort engaged in a version of “speed dating.” Chatting briefly and individually with each Sage, the Seekers then listed the three individuals with whom they would like to be paired. The ultimate matches were then arranged by Coakley and her co-facilitator, Alex Newcomb, Community Services Manager of the Senior Center. On the final day of their session, the Seekers readily admitted they would have been content being paired with any one of the Sages.

“Conversation flowed easily when pairs were given the time just to talk,” cited Coakley. “Each week the whole group got closer, and everyone showed up earlier and stayed longer to visit with each other. It didn’t matter that decades separated the pair.”

As they went around the circle to debrief their experience, the words that kept being repeated were kindness, compassion, and respect. It was clear there developed a sincere appreciation for each person as a unique individual and for the group as a diverse whole.

Hannah Boulton confessed that the isolation of COVID made her feel she had lost of



Seeker Hannah Stout and Sage Lisa Wattine.

Photos courtesy Duxbury Senior Center



Patsy Bruce with Alana Koplovsky.

the art of conversation, but interacting with her Seeker, Ally, dispelled that notion. At each session, “I felt present. Sometimes I’m not. I’m always thinking about other things, the next thing, but here, I’m present.”

Jeannie Mark explained, “I think it was a great experience to meet everybody and I guess I was surprised at how open the teenagers were, and how willing they were to express themselves, and how genuinely interested they were in hearing from all of us, too. Sometimes, as you get older, you feel like you’re invisible and that certainly isn’t the case in here. I think that’s commendable of all of you – you’re very respectful.”

Seeker Gabriella Bruno shared, “This was a safe space for everyone to talk. It was so fun to hear about everyone’s experiences and points of views and ideas.”

“I initially thought it might be outside my comfort zone, but it’s been wonderful,” Lisa Wattine confessed. “I’ve really looked forward to it each week and it’s been great meeting everybody.”

George Sjoberg was impressed by “the energy and openness of the Seekers. They’ll look you in the eye – just that point alone – they’ll look at you and listen and let you know what they think.”

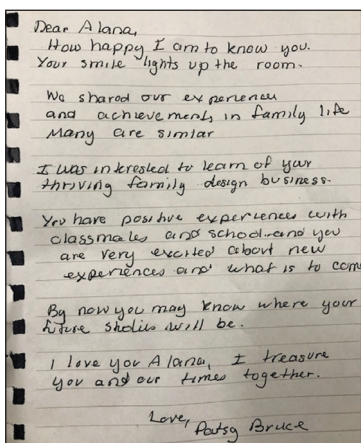
For Nancy McDermott, the key takeaway was the universality of our human experience. “As a group, you’re a very impressive group. You’re enthusiastic and honest and

all good things – all really kind people. You often hear negative things about this generation like ‘they don’t work hard’ and a lot of other not so positive things. It makes me feel really good about some of the things you think about and care about.”

She continued, “In the end, we’re really kind of all the same. The fact that we got many of the same things out of this experience highlights this. Kindness, compassion, and listening is what it all really comes down to.”

On the penultimate week of the program, the Seekers read tributes they crafted to their Sages. On this final session, one last tribute was left to be read – Maya Daly offering her appreciation to her Sage, Linda Sjoberg. The tribute came straight from the heart and concluded with a warm embrace. The tribute was followed by a request that the group plan a reunion – clearly, a bond had been formed.

A new cohort will be organized for a session tentatively scheduled begin in January. Coakley and Newcomb are hopeful to find high school students not engaged in winter sports who can devote one afternoon – about an hour and a half – for eight weeks. Individuals interested in taking part as either a Sage or Seeker should contact them at Chriscoakley@duxbury-ma.gov or AlexandraNewcomb@duxbury-ma.gov, or call the Duxbury Senior Center at 781-934-5774, ext. 5730.



Sage Patsy Bruce's tribute to her Seeker Alana Koplovsky.



Nancy McDermott and Lydia Kondry.