

Inside Worcester

A Journal of Observation & Opinion May 2015



The rebirth

A new Coes Pond Beach takes shape



Christa Drew, peacemaker
"Q" the resistance
Gaffney's "shaky" mayoral bid
Tammy Germain talks ID theft
City folk (A new feature)
SHOWTIME!

Above, Brian Toner of Working for Worcester prepares a wall of the bathhouse at Coes Pond Beach for repainting.

COVER STORY

Don't doze, stop by Coes

By ROD LEE

Even with a significant makeover and further improvements still to come, a now-freshened-up Coes Pond Beach may never be confused with the French Riviera, Cancun or the National Seashore.

But so far as the Coes Pond Task Force and a small army of erstwhile supporters are concerned, the area in Councilor Gary Rosen's "Beautiful District 5" is nothing short of a little



Life's a Beach. From the left, Lance McKee, State Rep. Kathleen Campanale, Councilor Gary Rosen, City Manager Edward M. Augustus Jr. (proudly sporting their Coes Zone shirts) and Councilor Konstantina B. Lukes.



Wax on. Wax off. Mary Kate Vanecko of W4W sands a wall of the bathhouse.

slice of heaven.

Although it would be hard to quantify how much Mr. Rosen's celebrated exuberance figured in the hugely successful cleanup-plus of Coes that took place on April 25th, he has every reason to feel proud; as do such other stalwart members of the "Coes Zone" team as Lance McKee, Susan Swanson and Roger Parent. As Mr. McKee wrote in an email a while ago, "Jerry's Walk-Bike Worcester works, Brittany's Park Spirit works, John Giangregorio's Canal District works, the universities' community service efforts work...why not Coes as well?"

Fortified by about one hundred members of Working for Worcester (W4W) and assorted elves (we even saw Jack Foley of Clark University and the Worcester School Committee with a rake in his hands), on a pleasant morning, the beach underwent a complete overhaul with an infusion of four hundred tons of sand, a coat of "bright sea

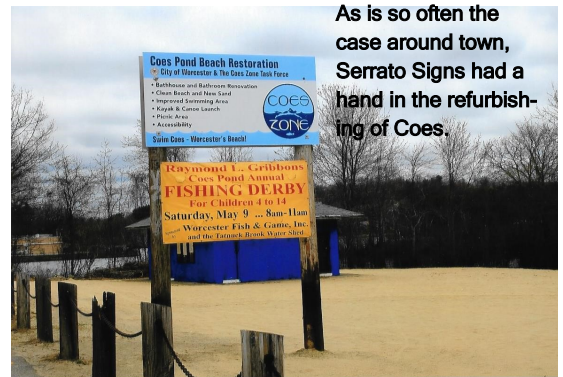
blue" paint for the bathhouse (the structure itself will be rebuilt in the fall) and placement of "a cool lifeguard chair" and "spectacular signage."

Anticipating what was to occur, Mr. Rosen couldn't resist the impulse to trumpet the project, which had been in the talking and planning stages for a year, to a large audience—in advance.

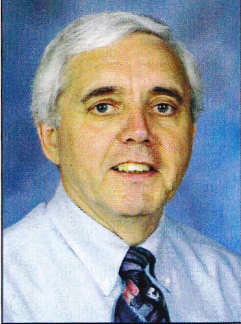
"Take a look at the new beach sign which was delivered today by Andy Serrato (of Serrato Signs). Sweet!" Mr. Rosen wrote in an email. (NOTE: Mr. Serrato is the same man who provided the strikingly handsome "Welcome to Webster Square" sign at Webster St. and Mill St. Ext. for the Webster Square Business Association).


Further initiatives to restore Coes Pond Beach to its full glory await. Perhaps Mr. Rosen may even succeed in having a hot dog truck on site, as a way to add "a little excitement and a little vibrancy" as an addendum to his having helped spearhead a unanimous vote by the City Council to rescind the city's silly seven-year-old "no-vendors-on-the-Common" policy.

With its own website (coeszone.com) and its own PO box (16033, zip code 01601), the Coes Pond Task Force is, as he likes to say, "making a splash."



As is so often the case around town, Serrato Signs had a hand in the refurbishing of Coes.





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OUR TOWN/ROD LEE

Q the resistance

Unlike Ksen, Quist is not a professional agitator

I wonder if anyone else has come to the same conclusion as myself about the recent highly publicized “protestations” exercised by **Kevin Ksen** and **Steve Quist**. Having met Mr. Ksen several times (in visits to Worcester Common Ground), and watched his machinations over the years, it is apparent to me that he is a certifiable dissident. A rabble rouser. His demonstrative and vocal exhibitions in support of the Black Lives Matter cause and more local jobs for redevelopment of the old courthouse are merely the latest evidence of his need to be seen as standing *against* injustice and *for* “workers’ rights.” But why would he or others involved in blocking traffic in Kelley Square desire any outcome other than being arrested for disorderly conduct and disturbing the peace? I would think that this *is* the actual objective of such activity, as it would be for the Berrigan brothers, Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr. or Martin Sheen. Contrast Mr. Ksen’s actions with those of Mr. Quist, who has been outspoken in questioning (courteously and diplomatically) the city manager’s call for the city to enter into an agreement with the venerable Worcester Tennis Club to move to the Newton Hill section of Elm Park. The objections registered by “Q” (as Mr. Quist is known) were not accompanied by a raid to confiscate tennis balls and tennis rackets, or a sit-in or lie-in as a statement that a precious wooded section of the west side of the city should be preserved from intrusion by a “private” entity. Both men are staunch advocates for what they perceive as the public good. But I like Mr. Quist’s “serve” technique better.



Tool time. Canafers Scott Fair and Dino Lorusso, on the job.

Gaffney at a glance

An initial perusal suggests that At-Large Councilor and mayoral hopeful **Michael Gaffney’s** strident tone in trying to differentiate himself from incumbent **Joseph M. Petty** on such hot-button subjects as violence in the Worcester Public Schools and the city’s pension liability predicament struck me as self-defeating. When I asked **John Giangregorio** during a Canal District clean-up (see photo, above) about whether Mr. Gaffney is helped or hurt by the confrontational stance he is taking, however, a different picture was drawn. “If he is defining the issues, his campaign could be quite successful,” Mr. Giangregorio said. Like Mr. Gaffney, Mr. G is not shy when it comes to second-guessing city policy. As for instance in the use of resources; like firefighters. “Why are we paying people to sleep on the job?” he asks. “Why is a hook-and-ladder sent for a fender-bender (accident) in Kelley Square?” And, “does the city have an economic plan?” Mr. Gaffney has distanced himself not only from Mayor Petty but some of his Council colleagues in moving to apply the allowable Prop 2 1/2 tax increase towards reducing the city’s pension obligations as part of the manager’s 2016 municipal budget (it was defeated). But there may be method to his madness, come election time.

The new T&G

There are those of us who will give the Telegram & Gazette the benefit of the doubt even though the newspaper’s revamped print edition landed with a thud on Tuesday. No baseball standings, no baseball box scores, on top of the facing Op-Ed page (which often featured provocative commentary by local in-the-knows) having apparently been eliminated. We’ll reserve judgment but our initial reaction is the publication continues to struggle in efforts to find its true footing.

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WSBA banquet packs a bang



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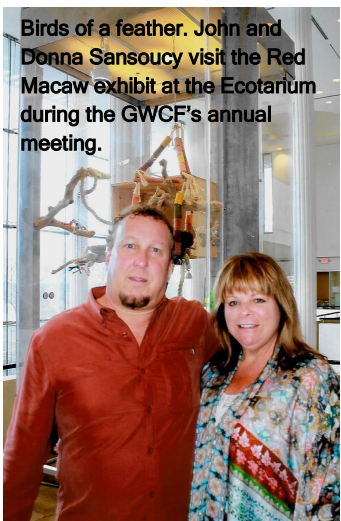
Bringing life to those we serve.

Clockwise from upper left, Webster Square Business Association student achievers and their parent/guardians join South High Principal Maureen Binienda for a group photo following the organization's 23rd annual Scholarship Awards Banquet at Clark University on Wednesday evening. Thousands of dollars in scholarships were presented; Mike Traynor, chief development officer with the city's Executive Office of Economic Development, offers remarks after accepting the WSBA's Business of the Year award on behalf of his department; and Clark's Jack Foley honors Steve Alzamor, principal of the New Citizens Center school, as the WSBA's Educator of the Year as Supt. Melinda J. Boone looks on. Worcester's DPW was also recognized for Community Service.

THE NEIGHBORHOODS

Giving for impact

HARRINGTON WAY—A “Black Hole” may have been one of the more intriguing exhibits at The Ecotarium to persons attending the Greater Worcester Community Foundation’s 2015 annual meeting, but it is



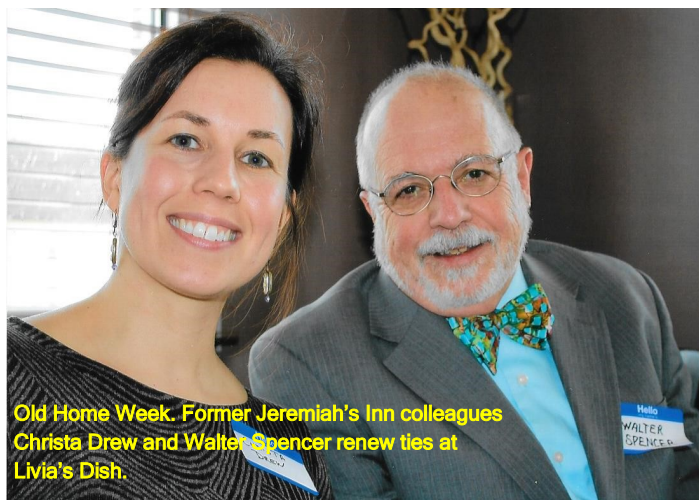
Birds of a feather. John and Donna Sansoucy visit the Red Macaw exhibit at the Ecotarium during the GWCF’s annual meeting.

not reflective of where the Foundation’s monies go—each year. The self-proclaimed “leading philanthropic organization serving the

region,” the GWCF takes great pride in the wide array of deserving groups it awards funding to. Among these are UGrow, the Worcester Art Museum, the Worcester Cultural Coalition, the Oak Hill CDC, the YWCA of Central Massachusetts, the Worcester County Poetry Association, the Central Mass. Housing Alliance, Community Health Centers and YouthConnect. As noted by Foundation President **Ann T. Lisi**, the GWCF has also invested significantly in the Ecotarium on a continuous basis since 1989—an indicator of the organization’s mission of “celebrating philanthropy, and immersing ourselves in education.” Appropriate, then, that the meeting was held at the Ecotarium, which has recovered nicely from a water-main break that closed the facility for a while (it also

knocked the GWCF meeting to a later date). “We’re back!” Ecotarium President **Joseph P. Cox** said. “Summer camp is 76% full.” That the Ecotarium and GWCF proved to be able hosts for the evening was evident in the quality of the food and drink—and in theater show that served as verification that it is possible to learn

something new every day. In this case, about “light” and more. Gamma rays, ultraviolet rays, radio waves, etc. For instance, that “lightning strikes 100x per second on earth.” Or that the dragonfly is “the greatest flier in nature.” The creature can fly upside down. Not even helicopters can do that. Which just goes to prove that some mysteries are almost unfathomable, obviously. Like the rumbling noise that disturbed a woman sitting next to us on a stone bench during “dinner.” “I wish they’d stop that,” she said. When she rose from her seat, having had enough, the noise abated. She was responsible for the roar, without even having realized it!



Old Home Week. Former Jeremiah’s Inn colleagues **Christa Drew** and **Walter Spencer** renew ties at **Livia’s Dish**.

the community,” by “working with the Worcester Public Schools in Main South,” for instance, Ms. Drew told a luncheon meeting of the Webster Square Business Association at Livia’s Dish on April 8th (her appearance marked a return to the neighborhood she once served as nutrition director at Jeremiah’s Inn). The challenge comes where one might expect it to. “We’re small, with not a lot of resources,” she said, “but we have a couple of core programs.” One of these is called Healthy Power, for about a dozen males at Sullivan Middle, addresses the twin issues of “conflict” and “cooperation.” There is a “lot of interest” on the Center’s part, she noted, “in changing school cultures. We are doing research and engaging partners. We incorporate mindfulness into our work. We include peace builders. There is,” she said, much “prevalent hopelessness and despair, here as elsewhere.” With a BA in Nonviolent Conflict & Change from Syracuse University and a Masters in Public Policy & Administration from UMass Amherst, Ms. Drew seems bound for even bigger things....in the political realm, maybe? Meanwhile, youth peace education programs are a main focus.

Christa, for peace

MAIN ST.—It comes as no surprise to people who have followed her career that **Christa Drew** wound up in her latest ascent as executive director of Worcester’s Center for Nonviolent Solutions—given her passion for making a difference. The brainchild of **Michael True** and **William Densmore**, the Center is feeling its way a bit since being founded several years ago. “We have a vision...to reduce violence in

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YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE AN OLYMPIC ATHLETE TO BE TREATED LIKE ONE

THE NEIGHBORHOODS

Stop, thief!

WEST BOYLSTON ST. (W. Boylston)—All is taken is **Bill Mitchell** from Business Communication Services (BCS) or **Tammy Germain** from Webster First Federal Credit Union talking about identity theft to get the apprehensions rising over lost personality, lost possessions. This was exactly the case when each of them in turn addressed a luncheon meeting of the North Worcester Business Association at The Manor on April 15th. Early in the proceedings we began to picture close acquaintances like **Maureen Raillo** of WLimo turning on us and pilfering the bottle of wine we'd brought as a raffle prize; or **Bob Dube** of Keller Williams Realty (the man NWBA President **Ed Bourgault** refers to as "The Good Dooby") registering for the event with **Neil Brosnan** as...us. Mr. Mitchell talked about telephone fraud. "In the 70s you needed a blue box to hack into a phone. Steve Wozniak called the Vatican pretending to be Henry Kissinger," Mr. Mitchell said. "These days a SWAT team would have been at the door. The man on the other end checked and said 'you are not Henry Kissinger,' swore at him in Italian and hung up." Mr. Mitchell issued a stern warning against default passwords. "If any of our customers have a default password, **Bret (Burdulis)** will smack them. I guarantee it!" Identity theft, Ms. Germain said, "is America's fastest-growing crime. It occurs every seventy-nine seconds. It affects everyone. Nine million Americans have had their identify stolen in a year." The ruses run the gamut, so beware, she said. Like, "We are pleased to inform you that you are a millionaire," or, "you are a lottery winner." But in order to claim your check you have to send in the tax money. Now you owe the credit union \$3000 and you've already sent that amount out." Lottery scams. Check scams. Dumpster diving. Phishing (redirecting the victim to a phony website). "Farming." Charity scams. With "a little bit of tweaking" with information that is part of the public record, hackers "can get everything they need," Ms. Germain said. Scary stuff. Reminds us Charles Baxter's book "The Soul Thief," in which "Jerome Coolberg" scoffs fellow grad student Nathaniel Mason's clothes and goes on to "appropriate his life story." **Some** people.



"Be on guard!" Ms. Germain: Protect your identify or suffer the consequences.

Talent show

Bravehearts loading up for June 5th home opener

JOLMA RD.—Like John Fogarty would say, "put me in coach I'm ready to play." So are the Worcester Bravehearts, whose 2015 season is now only about a month away. Recently, GM **Dave Peterson** announced, the team added "five impact players" including two pitchers from Manager **Justin Edwards'** home state of West Virginia. And how's this for family ties to the whole arrangement? One of four arms coming aboard, **Joe San Felippo**, pitches for Justin Edwards' father Terry Edwards at Wheeling Jesuit University. As a sophomore, he has held batters to a .227 BA in over thirty-eight innings on the mound. He also plays shortstop and as of late April was hitting .273 and leading the team with twenty runs batted in. Another West Virginian joining the Bravehearts is **Greg Stagani** who is a starting pitcher at West Liberty University where he pitched for Justin Edwards when Mr. Edwards was an assistant coach last year. At Edison High School, Stagani lettered in baseball, basketball and golf. He is currently ranked 35th in the nation with a minuscule 1.89 ERA in forty-seven innings pitched, which includes four wins and six complete games. Good pitching beats good hitting every day, right. So count on the roster also **Miles Sheehan** of Franklin Pierce University who leads all DII schools with a 0.44 ERA and **Chris Lake** of Flagler College who during his scholastic days at Nature Coast Technical High School boasted a .507 batting average his senior year while also posting a 3.07 ERA. Lake is a teammate of Chris Diou who was a member of the 2014 Bravehearts championship team. Then there is Adelphi University junior **Jonathan Mulford** who is expected to join the starting rotation in June, and Slippery Rock University outfielder **Logan Brown**. A redshirt sophomore who transferred to Slippery Rock from Youngstown State, Brown batted .400 in seventeen games in 2014 and is hitting .316 with eight home runs this year. The Bravehearts' home opener is June 5th at Hanover Insurance Park at Fitton Field. Tickets for all home games in 2015 are now on sale by calling 508-438-3773 or visiting worcesterbravehearts.com.



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A NEW FEATURE:

City folk

All hail SpencerBANK. Gathered for the ribbon-cutting and grand opening ceremony for SpencerBANK's new Elm Park branch location on January 24th (we're playing catch-up!) are Gregory J. O'Connor of Gregory J. O'Connor Associates Inc.; Timothy P. Murray, president/CEO of the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce; Francis W. Madigan III, president of F.W. Madigan Co. Inc.; Worcester Mayor Joseph M. Petty; SpencerBank President/CEO K. Michael Robbins; Worcester City Manager Edward M. Augustus Jr.; District 5 City Councilor Gary Rosen; District 1 City Councilor Tony Economou; and Preservation Worcester Executive Director Deborah S. Packard. "SpencerBANK has a history of helping Worcester County customers, dating back to the 1870s," Mr. Robbins said. "We are pleased to call the historic Fire Alarm and Telegraph building home, and look forward to continuing to serve generations of customers."



Swan song. "I'm retiring! Moving to Seattle; I have a daughter there," Diana Leofanti, banquet manager at The Manor, who boasts roughly forty years in the food business, tells attendees during the 21st annual Arthritis Charity Ball on March 28th. "She will be hard to replace!" The Manor's Savvas Fotiadis said.



Living the dream. Webster Square Business Association Educator of the Year Steven Alzamora, principal of the James A. Caradonio New Citizens Center on Main St., which is home to students from thirty-three different countries. "I have the best job in the city, learning about kids, their families and cultures." Mr. Alzamora is among the honorees for the WSBA's 23rd annual Scholarship Awards Banquet at Clark University on May 6th, along with the city's Office of Economic Development/Business Assistance and the Worcester DPW.



"You're what size?" Misook Segovia works the sales counter at her mom Jeanne's 4U shop in the Midtown Mall on Front St. The store specializes in women's clothing and accessories including wedding and prom gowns, jewelry and shoes. Boys tuxedos too!

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Blowing up a storm.
The Stooges Brass
Band, on tap June 27th
In the Canal District.

Strike up the...horns

Does Paul Collyer have the right connections? Judge for yourself. Added to the growing lineup for this year's eighth annual **Paulie's New Orleans Jazz n' Blues Festival** in the red-hot **Canal District** is the **Stooges Brass Band**—on 6/27. "When you think of New Orleans you think of the Mississippi River, Satcho, crawfish, huge-ass beers and second-line brass bands," Paulie says (well, we think of Fats Domino, too, but we'll give Paulie a pass on that one). In the Stooges Brass Band, which will be making its first-ever appearance here, Mr. Collyer has latched onto a group formed in 1996 that according to Bestofneworleans.com "puts on one of the most entertaining, audience-interactive shows of any band on the scene." Winner of "Best Contemporary Brass Band 2011" at the Big Easy Music Awards, the Stooges Brass Band plays festivals in the Deep South and elsewhere, and will be sand-



Mr. Nakamura

wiching the show here between gigs in Brooklyn. Its portfolio includes a tour at the request of the U.S. Embassy of Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Its song "Wind It Up" is featured on the soundtrack of Will Smith's most recent movie, FOCUS. Is Paulie excited! Yes! Are we? Yes! ..."Japanese myth and tradition in the contemporary imagination" are brought center stage with the exhibition **Samurai** now on display at the **Worcester Art Museum**; a show consisting of arms and armor from the WAM and John Woodman Higgins collection. Guest Curator Eric Nakamura is founder and editor

of Giant Robot Magazine. In a published interview Mr. Nakamura said "I come from a farmer-class family which is quite common but, growing up, you wanted to hear that your family was from a samurai class since farming is as boring as can be."... To say that the **DCU Center** has a lock on **graduation ceremonies** would be an understatement: Becker College, Worcester State U., QCC, Holy Name HS, Bay Path, Assabet Valley, Shepherd Hill, Worcester Tech, Burncoat, Doherty, North, Nashoba and South—stretching from May right into June! There is still time on the DCU Center calendar, though, for **WWE Live's** return for the first time in two years (5/23), highlighted by "John Cena vs. Rusev, a steel-cage match for the U.S. championship." Get your moves on, baby! Meanwhile the Chamber's Worcester Women's Leadership Conference returns bigger than ever to the DCU Center (6/5)... Forget those love triangles on TV; the only place to see a real tempest in a teapot (King Arthur, his beautiful new queen, Guinevere, and the dashing Sir Lancelot) is the **Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts** where the four-time Tony Award-winning musical **Camelot!** will be staged (5/8-10)... What would the month of May be without the **30th Annual Walk/Run for the Homeless** starting at **Elm Park** (5/17)? Did you know that \$250 gives a family a fresh start by providing money for a deposit on a new apartment? That \$500 prevents a family in Worcester County from becoming homeless? Last year's event raised \$145,000. This year's benefits The Donations Clearinghouse, Hope for Housing Program, CMHA Homeless Prevention Services, Youth Against Homelessness, Friendly House & The Interfaith Hospitality Network and the St. John's Food for the Poor Program.

THE ECHO CHAMBER

Konstantina B. Lukes

(Asked to introduce herself at a luncheon meeting of the WSBA at Livia's Dish): "On the Council floor my name is Mud" (riotous laughter).

(All of the following, on the April issue of Inside Worcester):

Meg Mulhern

"I just wanted to send you a quick email to let you know what a wonderful job you did on the cover story on Tony Economou! I enjoy reading your articles every month, and this one hit the nail right on the head!"

Q (Steve Quist)

"I really appreciate what you do...tremendous efforts and a tremendous product."

John Monfredo

"As usual great edition and I enjoyed the story on Tony. He does work hard and listens to the people in his district. Many thanks for the plug on our book drive. We're off to a great start. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt publishers are donating over 1000 new books and the Salvation Army wants to partner up and have us give over 500 books..."

Virginia Ryan

"Nice article on Tony Economou...he is [an] excellent district councillor."

Joan Crowell

(On the sale of the old Worcester County Courthouse to a N.H. developer): "Residential and business taxpayers, and rent payers, should be pleased that this proposed project will place a parcel on the tax rolls. The old courthouse will no longer be tax-exempt. Let's keep this momentum going! We can't wait for this golden egg to hatch. Brady Sullivan estimates a 12 to 14-month construction period."