



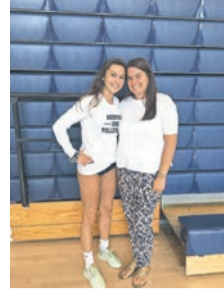
GOV. BAKER  
NOMINATES  
LOCAL WOMAN  
AS JUDGE

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NEW MUSIC  
DIRECTOR AT  
SOUTH CHURCH

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GIRLS'  
VOLLEYBALL  
HAS NEW  
INTERIM COACH

PAGE 17

OUR 130<sup>TH</sup> YEAR

# Andover Townsman

Issue No. 44

SEPTEMBER 27, 2018

\$1.00

## Baker: Recovery complete by Nov. 19

### 'We're bringing every available resource,' he says

By KEITH EDDINGS  
Staff Writer

All 48 miles of gas line affected by last week's explosions and fires will be replaced and 8,600 homes and businesses that lost service will be back online by Nov. 19, Gov. Charlie Baker announced Friday. He laid out an ambitious, military-style plan for restoring normalcy to a region still deeply shaken by the disaster.

retired U.S. Navy captain and a former admiral.

As the reconstruction of the pipelines in Lawrence, Andover and North Andover gets underway, 7,000 hot plates and 24,000 space heaters will be distributed in the three communities, beginning in Lawrence on Saturday — the first day of fall — Baker announced at the hour-long press conference at Northern Essex Community College.

deliver hot plates door-to-door in Lawrence, but said residents of Andover and North Andover will have to pick them up at claims centers operated by Columbia Gas, the utility that owns the affected distribution lines in the region. Many Lawrence residents don't own cars.

A second phase of the relief effort will begin Monday, when the space heaters will be delivered to homes and businesses that have first been inspected by plumbers

More about the gas disaster pages 9 and 10

and electricians to ensure that their electrical systems can handle the extra load. Those that can't may be rewired, or the residents may be provided other housing, Baker said.

Another phase of recovery will begin Wednesday, when Baker said plumbers and electricians, accompanied by Guardsmen and translators, See RECOVERY, Page 2



TIM JEAN/Staff photo

Andrew P. Flanagan, Andover town manager, speaks during a press conference at Northern Essex Community College's Lawrence campus.

## Family that lost everything gets some help



TIM JEAN/Staff photo

Sara Wells, left, Bancroft School PTO president, helped with the school's efforts to get items for Roxana Mircea, right, who, with her son Sebastian Croitoru, lost everything in the gas explosions. Wells's son Julian Blais is at left.

## Benefit for Andover family

By JESSICA VALERIANI  
Staff Writer

Roxana Mircea and her son Sebastian Croitoru, 5, were traumatized last Thursday when natural gas forced its way into the basement of their apartment building at 57 High St.

As smoke billowed up from the basement and the fire alarm wailed, she and her son left behind all their belongs and fled shoeless into the street.

"It was not a day I want to repeat," said Mircea, who moved to Andover with her husband from Romania in March 2017. Despite the calamity that has befallen her and her family, Mircea is buoyed by

the outpouring of support from the town of Andover and its residents.

During an interview in her new apartment in Lawrence, Mircea recounted how she started to smell gas, which was followed shortly after by the ear-piercing sound of the fire alarm.

"We panicked," Mircea said. The two headed to a neighbor's house, where Sebastian was able to play with their kids to keep his mind occupied from the burning apartment across the street.

Once she saw her own home engulfed in flames, she had to leave.

"I couldn't watch," Mircea said. Their neighbors put a

blanket around her shoulders, gave Sebastian some Legos, and they were on their way, by foot, to another friend's house, where they would spend the next few nights.

Mircea's apartment was completely destroyed. The apartment building where she lived was one of the worst hit structures in Andover as a result of the high-pressure gas spike that sparked fires, building explosions, multiple injuries and even the death of a teenager in Lawrence.

As the victims have reeled from the ordeal, those not immediately affected by the gas disaster have risen to the occasion across the Merrimack Valley.

Sara Wells, Bancroft Elementary PTO president for the last five years, said that over the weekend following the initial disaster, she learned that some Bancroft families had been affected by the gas explosion.

"I actually got out my directory and looked through all the addresses, and essentially figured out who they were," said Wells.

She recognized the High Street address from an Eagle-Tribune article about the explosions, and realized Sebastian was in the same kindergarten class as her 5-year-old son, Julian.

She reached out to the See BENEFIT, Page 3

## Portable hot showers in use at Poms Pond

By BILL KIRK AND  
JESSICA VALERIANI  
Staff Writers

ANDOVER — Ted Teichert takes really fast showers these days.

He has to. He, like thousands of other people in Andover, North Andover and Lawrence, has no hot water.

"I'm in and out of there in a minute to a minute-and-a-half," said Teichert, of 5 Duffton Road, Andover. "What's the average shower, 5 to 10 minutes? Not anymore. You are in there for a minute. You're not dilly-dallying."

For the last seven days, since a high-pressure natural gas spike hit the Columbia Gas system causing fires and explosions in homes and businesses in Lawrence, North Andover and Andover, Teichert and many others have had to alter their lifestyles.

Without natural gas to power appliances, not only can people no longer take hot baths or showers, but it's affected those with gas-powered dryers and washing machines as well. Teichert noted that he's "going old school," hanging wet laundry outside. He said he may try to buy one of those old umbrella-type, fold-out clothes racks commonly seen in backyards throughout America in the 1940s and '50s. It also means washing pots and pans

in cold water and hoping the dishwasher's internal heating element is strong enough to clean dirty dishes.

Fortunately for Teichert, the YMCA on Haverhill Street has hot showers. But for others who aren't members of a gym or who don't have friends or relatives whose homes are unaffected by the gas disaster, help is here or on the way.

The town of Andover and the city of Lawrence have contracted with New England Restrooms of North Reading to set up 10 portable shower trailers at three different locations.

Four trailers are now up and running at Poms Pond in Andover and a handicapped-accessible shower trailer has been set up at the Punchard Senior Center in Andover. Another four showers are scheduled to be set up in Lawrence, although Mayor Dan Rivera was unable to provide information about when or where the showers would be set up. Rivera noted he and his staff were still trying to work out the details of the city's overall humanitarian effort, which includes the shower trailers.

Tom Harris, president of New England Restrooms, said he got a call from Andover at 4 p.m. on Tuesday, Sept. 18. By the following day, he had four shower trailers at See SHOWERS, Page 2



AMANDA SABGA/Staff photo

Emergency showers are available for use at Poms Pond in Andover

## 19th annual Hike for Hope this Sunday

By JESSICA VALERIANI  
jvaleriani@andovertownsman.com

Hike for Hope, one of the year's biggest fundraisers for the Lawrence homeless shelter Lazarus house, is back. But this year, it's not just the shelter and its many programs that will benefit from the 19th annual event.

Organizers say they will also be accepting donations for the victims of the Sept. 13 gas fires and explosions. People can drop off gift cards no larger than \$50 to stores like Target, Walmart, Stop & Shop and Market Basket. March organizers will also be accepting

non-perishable food items.

"We are grateful to be here for the immediate needs our community faces, and grateful to be here for any need they will have tomorrow and each day after that," said Lazarus House spokeswoman Gabriella Cruz.

On Sunday, starting at 11:30 a.m., an estimated 700 participants will gather at The Park at the intersection of Bartlet and Chestnut streets to register for a fee of \$25, which includes a T-shirt and a ticket to the post-walk barbecue in The Park. Cruz said the organization hopes

See WALK, Page 3

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**SHOWERS**

Continued from Page 1

Pomps Pond and one handicapped-accessible trailer at the senior center. The town's public works crews hooked them up, and by Thursday afternoon, people were taking hot showers for the first

time in seven days. "I've been at Pomps Pond all day listening to people come out of the showers," he said. "One older guy said: 'This is the best thing Andover ever did.'" Harris added: "If you don't have a hot shower every day, you feel gross." Andover Selectman Paul

Salafia said the town is doing whatever it can to make people feel comfortable in an uncomfortable situation. "This is not ideal, but the whole situation is not ideal," he said. "But we are going to provide services to help people in any way we can." Harris said he has delivered his shower trailers to

disaster scenes all over the East Coast. In fact, his portable shower trailers were headed to North Carolina for victims of hurricane/tropical storm Florence when he got his first call from Lawrence, which signed a deal for his services. When he got the call from Andover, he tapped into a

network of shower-trailer businesses around the Northeast and had five more trailers shipped to the Merrimack Valley. "I found out who had some," Harris said. "We got some out of New Jersey, Connecticut and New York. I just started calling all these guys." For people like Teichert,

a former school committee member and selectman, going without may be something to get used to. He said he was told that his home may not have gas for a long time. "I've been told it's not just weeks, but that it could be months" before natural gas is restored, he said. That's a lot of cold showers.

**RECOVERY**

Continued from Page 1

will conduct "a full top-to-bottom assessment" of all affected homes and businesses to determine the damage that may have been done to their gas service equipment and appliances when over-pressurized gas was fed into the lines on the afternoon of Sept. 13, igniting the explosions and fires and causing widespread evacuations in the three municipalities over the weekend.

He said he expected the first 2,000 homes and businesses will be back on line within weeks.

"It's been a difficult week for everyone impacted by the gas explosions in Greater Lawrence last Thursday," Baker said as he began his remarks. "This tragic event has created incredible hardship and immeasurable sadness for the families who've lost their homes and for those injured in the explosions, and for the family of Leo Rondon, who lost a wonderful young man."

Rondon, an 18-year-old student at Phoenix Charter Academy, was killed when a house on Chickering Road in Lawrence exploded moments after he pulled into its driveway, sending a brick chimney toppling onto the Honda he was driving. He was the only fatality of the day, although dozens of others were injured. "We all share the same

goal, which is to get people back to their normal daily life, whether it's a hot shower, a home-cooked meal, or the ability to open a business," Baker continued. "We're bringing every available resource to make this happen."

Columbia gas will pay for the entire effort, Baker said. He did not offer a cost estimate.

Joe Hamrock, the chief executive of NiSource, which is the parent company of Columbia Gas, stood beside Baker at the press conference but spoke for only a minute or so. On Friday, Sept. 14, a day into the disaster, Baker said he was dissatisfied with the company's initial response and declared a state of emergency so that he could sideline its leadership from the effort and put EverSource in charge. The utility serves Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Connecticut.

"I want to again express our deep condolence to the family of Leonel Rondón," Hamrock said, mispronouncing Rondón's last name. He corrected himself, then thanked his company's crews and others who responded to the disaster and predicted "a remarkable rebirth in this time of great difficulty."

The press conference was a full-court press by all the major players in the disaster and the upcoming reconstruction and relief effort, including Joseph Albanese, a retired captain in the Navy's

Civil Engineer Corps and the founder of Commodore Builders, a construction management firm based in Boston. Baker put Albanese in charge of the effort. Albanese's second in command will be Richard Cellon, a retired rear admiral who ran the Naval Facilities Engineering Commands and now is president of Cellon and Associates, a management consulting firm.

"This is a classic engineering contingency operation, one that I'm trying to do with my military experience behind me and my construction experience in the local markets," Albanese said. "Safety will be paramount. Working with our team and Columbia, we've assembled dozens of highly qualified firms and thousands of workers, underpinned by the extraordinary support of the Massachusetts National Guard. This has been and will continue to be an overwhelming effort."

Albanese said 20 construction crews already have begun the work of replacing the cast iron and bare steel pipelines and installing safety features that include excess flow valves that automatically shut off the gas if a service line is damaged. He said 60 crews will be on the streets Monday and 195 by Oct. 8.

While the leadership of Columbia Gas has been sidelined, its crews have not. The company will hold a job fair all day Saturday, seeking plumbers, electricians, customer service representatives



TIM JEAN/Staff photo

Gov. Charlie Baker speaks about long-term recovery plans during a press conference at Northern Essex Community College's Lawrence campus.

and technology professionals to aid in the reconstruction. The fair will run from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. at the Greater Lawrence Technical School at 57 River Road in Andover.

Meanwhile, the enormous task of replacing the 48 miles of pipelines began at 2 p.m. Friday in Lawrence, where crews were venting gas from underground pipes near the intersection of Amherst and Beacon streets and at 209 South Broadway. Anyone in the area should expect an odor of gas and loud noises. People with questions should log onto ColumbiaGasMa.com for details.

Baker waived off a question about how the high-pressure gas was routed into low-pressure lines that Thursday, causing the explosions and fires. He noted that

the National Transportation Safety Board and the federal Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration are investigating.

He referred a question about how so much pipeline can be safely replaced so quickly to Albanese, who said he is building "a safety organization and a quality control and inspection organization to ensure that we do double due-diligence at every point and turn."

Lt. Gov. Karyn Polito also attended the press conference and promised that other relief beyond the hot plates and space heaters is on the way. She said the state Division of Revenue is extending deadlines and waiving penalties for individuals and businesses that are late filing income tax returns due

between Sept. 12 and Oct. 1. The state also will be loaning money to businesses that have had to shut their doors after losing power, she said. And the state Department of Unemployment Assistance is sending staff to the three municipalities to help people who have been laid off apply for benefits.

Lawrence Mayor Daniel Rivera, North Andover Town Manager Andrew Maylor and Andover Town Manager Andrew Flanagan also attended the press conference.

"We know this week for all of you must have seemed extremely long, and quite frankly the message we're delivering today must have seemed at times like it wasn't coming," Maylor said. "But that day is here."



AMANDA SABGA/Staff photo

Raymond Roy, of Columbia Gas of Massachusetts and NiSource, talks to a group of utility workers.



Eva Birt, NiSource talent acquisition manager, goes over offer paperwork with Joselyn Marte, Juan Guzman and Gisela Vasquez.

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**Job seekers want to help towns recover**

By MIKE LABELLA  
Staff Writer

ANDOVER — There was a consistent theme among those attending the Columbia Gas job fair Saturday at Greater Lawrence Technical School: they want to help the three area towns recover from last week's devastating gas explosions and fires.

The offer of temporary part-time and full-time employment at \$24 an hour was enticing, but the desire to help Lawrence, Andover and North Andover recover drove many to apply for customer service and translator jobs, where the main requirements were fluency in English and Spanish, English and Portuguese or English and Vietnamese, as well as basic interpersonal skills. "We have a language barrier in Lawrence and this is a way for me to give back to my community," said Ana Javier, 50, a substance abuse prevention coordinator who lives on Ferry Street in the Lawrence's Prospect Hill area. "I work with a lot of

clients with children and I'm very concerned about them. They need to be able to cook a hot meal and take a hot shower."

Javier sought work as a translator, working with families whose primary language is not English, and whose homes will have indoor gas meters with new, safer outdoor meters, officials said. The new outdoor meters have pressure relief valves and allow unfettered access for gas company workers or first responders without entering the dwelling. Gas lines from the street to houses and businesses and main gas lines are being replaced as well, officials with Columbia Gas said.

"We'll be replacing about 8,600 meters and we'll need to explain to customers exactly what work will need to be done," Ken Stammen, a Columbia Gas spokesman said.

Javier said she plans to work part-time as a translator, while continuing her work with the Lawrence Methuen Community Coalition.

"I'm here to help accelerate the gas restoration process," Javier said shortly after being offered a job.

The job fair took place from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. After three hours, about 25



A group of utility workers listen during a job fair hosted by Columbia Gas.

people had been offered, and accepted, work as translators.

Columbia Gas said it needed 200 people as the company promised to rebuild the area's gas distribution system by Nov. 19. Applicants were encouraged to reach out to friends and family in hopes they would apply for jobs.

The company is seeking tradespeople such as electricians, plumbers, and IT professionals. The hiring process for them is more extensive as it requires verification of trade certifications and conferring with union halls.

The repair work is expected to begin on Monday. People hired as translators were scheduled to attend

orientation and training on Sunday, Sept. 23, before beginning their jobs as early as Monday.

Stammen said his company needs people with bi-lingual skills to serve as customer service agents and translate what repair work needs to be done house-by-house and business-by-business in Lawrence as well as in North Andover and Andover.

"People have been through a lot already and we don't want to have language as a barrier to restoring gas service," he said.

Columbia Gas' parent company, NiSource, plans to rebuild the natural gas distribution system in South Lawrence, Andover and North Andover and that it will require a lot of conversations with residential and commercial customers to inform them of the work that will take place.

"What we're about to do is what we are doing in all seven of the states we serve and where we have bare, un-coated steel or cast iron gas lines," Stammen said. "Many of those lines are pre-1970s and we're replacing all the mains in this area."

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**BENEFIT**

Continued from Page 1

parents and told them to let her know if there was anything they needed.

"Roxana texted me a list," Wells said. "I sent it to Sebastian's class at Bancroft, the communications chair for the PTO, Bancroft secretary, and Andover Mum's Facebook group."

Within a couple hours, Bancroft parents had agreed to purchase every item on the list, including toys, a queen-sized bed, maternity clothes for Mercia, who is five months pregnant with a baby girl, and much more.

The Bancroft school community also raised \$2,000 for Mircea and her family.

"The support has been intense and amazing," Wells said.

Wells said some people had dropped off items to her home on Coventry Lane, while others drove directly to the family's new apartment.

After staying at Mircea's friend's home for a few



Roxana Mircea, right, watches her son Sebastian Croitoru, 5, center, play with his friend Julian Blais, both 5, and students at Bancroft School.

nights, they moved into an apartment in Lawrence on Monday evening.

"We got the apartment Sunday, and moved in Monday," Mircea said.

The town has also stepped up to help, as the school has adjusted the bus route so that Sebastian can be picked up at his new home in Lawrence and still attend Bancroft.

"We thought we were

lucky to be in Andover before, but now we're really lucky," said Mircea. She said the Bancroft School community has been amazing.

She said the most important thing her family wants everyone to know is how grateful they are.

"This is just a new beginning for us," said Mircea.

Mircea and her husband moved to Andover from

Romania in March 2017 and have no family here, so the outpouring of support is that much more meaningful.

Mircea compared the reaction of friends and neighbors in Andover to her experience in Romania.

There, she said, "if you have problems, you have to fix them yourself, adding that her country "is not so put together."



A gracious Roxana Mircea talks about the support her family has received from the Bancroft School PTO.

For Sebastian, the fire was difficult for another reason. "It was really hard to explain to Sebastian that he can't get back his toys," Mircea said, noting that Bancroft families were generous in giving him new ones.

**WALK**

Continued from Page 1  
the 3-mile walk, which starts at 1 p.m., will raise around \$162,000.

Lazarus House serves people who are poor, sick or homeless in and around the Merrimack Valley. The money raised will go toward their many services.

Cruz said the Hike for Hope is one of the three big fundraisers of the year, which also include the Sharing Our Bounty Gala, to be held this year on Saturday, Nov. 17 at Andover Country Club. The other big fundraiser is the organization's annual golf tournament, held in July.

She noted that less than 1 percent of the budget comes from government funding, meaning the more than \$9 million budget is funded "almost wholly by

**IF YOU GO**

- **What:** Hike for Hope, fundraiser for Lazarus House
- **When:** Sunday, Sept. 30; 11:30 a.m. registration; 1 p.m. start of 3-mile walk
- **Where:** The Park, Chestnut and Bartlet streets, Andover
- **Cost:** \$25 registration fee, includes T-shirt and cookout
- **For more information see:** lazarushouse.org

individual donations, foundations, businesses and in-kind donations."

We have three major fundraising events, the Hike, the Gala, and our Golf Tournament in July.

Perhaps most important, Cruz said, is that the Hike for Hope is as much a fun, family event as it is a fund-raiser.

"It encourages students,

teammates and family members to do something fun together that also means something," she said, adding that the walk will also be a chance for people to meet the guests at Lazarus House, an opportunity that does not present itself often.

"Everyone who makes Lazarus House what it is comes together for one another at this event," she said. "It is a beautiful example of everyone in our community coming together."

The day will include a cookout, activities and a DJ. Organizers say it's not just a walk, but also a great community event.

Last year, close to 700 people gathered for the 18th annual hike, and this year the expectations are the same.

Dave McGillivray, longtime race director of the Boston Marathon, started the event

in 2000 when he proposed that Lazarus House create its own fundraiser. He offered to run the event and continues to be involved today.

Lazarus House has nine buildings throughout Lawrence, including an emergency shelter with about 40 beds that serves as short-term housing for families and individuals. There are also three transitional housing units and a food pantry that provides nearly 800 families each week with emergency food supplies.

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# In pursuit of income: Dividend-paying stocks vs. bonds

## Financially Speaking

John Spoto



Investors, especially retirees, often use their portfolios to generate income.

With bond yields and interest rates on CDs and money markets at record lows, these investors are searching for alternatives to meet their income objectives. Spurred by the

headlines in some of the popular consumer finance magazines many of them are heading down what could prove to be a perilous path, trading their bonds for dividend-paying stocks and the mutual funds that invest in them.

On the surface, the idea of replacing low-yielding bond investments with blue chip stocks that offer not only a higher yield but also the potential for capital appreciation if stock prices continue to climb seems like a sensible move. However, upon closer scrutiny, the logic of this

strategy contains some serious flaws. While both investments are used to generate portfolio income, savvy investors recognize that stocks, including those of dividend-paying, blue-chip companies, are on opposite ends of the investment risk spectrum when compared to bonds.

Specifically, dividend-paying stocks are about four times more volatile and, therefore, carry four times the potential for loss than high-quality bonds. So, the strategy of substituting dividend-paying stocks for bonds to generate more

income results in a more aggressive and less diversified portfolio.

High-quality bonds provide important diversification and stability to investor portfolios particularly during times of financial crisis when it is needed most. The starkest example of this was the 2008-2009 financial crisis. Between the stock market peak on Oct. 9, 2007, and its subsequent low on March 9, 2009, the portion of investor portfolios consisting of high dividend-paying stocks lost around 50 percent of their value while the portion

consisting of intermediate-term U.S. Treasuries gained about 15 percent. Investors with equity heavy portfolios including those with dividend-paying stocks experienced steep declines and enormous emotional turmoil while those with balanced portfolios of stocks and bonds fared much better.

So, the key question you have to answer is: "Am I willing to, and can I afford to accept greater risk of a significant decline in my investments to earn a higher yield?" For most retirees who are drawing

down rather than adding to their portfolios, the answer is likely to be no.

John Spoto is the founder of Sentry Financial Planning in Andover and Danvers. For more information, call 978-475-2533 or visit [www.sentryfinancialplanning.com](http://www.sentryfinancialplanning.com). This article is for general information purposes only and is not intended to provide specific advice on individual financial, tax, or legal matters. Please consult the appropriate professional concerning your specific situation before making any decisions.

## REAL ESTATE TRANSFERS

The following real estate transfers were recorded recently in town:

**6 Durham Drive:** John J. and Lisa McDonald to William P. and Lauren P. Tammaro, \$999,900

**1 Francis Drive, Unit 303:** Pulte Homes of New

England to Robert N. Platt, \$347,670

**166 Haverhill St.:** David V. and Christine H. Nguyen to Vinod Aggarwal and Shimpy Walia, \$751,000

**422 High Plain Road:** 3 Beaches T. and Pamela A. Finelli to Haggetts NT and

Russell S. Channen, \$10,000

**422 High Plain Road:** 3 Beaches T. and Pamela A. Finelli to Michael J. Ristuccia, \$584,000

**33 Sutherland St.:** James F. Keating Estate and Jacqueline Keating to Cattle Crossing LLC, \$350,000

## BUSINESS BRIEF CASE



Claudia Soo Hoo

### Merrimack Valley YMCA promotes Soo Hoo

The Merrimack Valley YMCA is pleased to announce that Claudia Soo Hoo has been named

senior executive director of the Andover/North Andover YMCA. Soo Hoo replaces Alex Turek, the former executive director, who left earlier this year to become CEO of the Southern District YMCA in Exeter.

Soo Hoo has spent more than a decade working for the Merrimack Valley YMCA in various roles, and has been a member and program enthusiast for even longer than that. In fact, she attended preschool at the Andover/North Andover Y.

Soo Hoo will be responsible for the daily operations of the branch, recruitment and management of the volunteer Board of Managers, and annual fundraising.

The Andover/North Andover Y features three indoor pools, 13,000 square feet of wellness space, a café, a commercial teaching kitchen, a preschool and school age childcare wing, four group exercise studios, a gymnasium, and the Active Living Center for older adults.

Soo Hoo has worked full-time at the Merrimack Valley YMCA for 12 years, serving most recently as the district executive director, which included oversight of the Camping Services branch as well as the Lawrence branch. Since starting her career at the Y, she has overseen aquatics, youth and teen programming, branch operations, and more. She is also currently serving on the Y-USA Diversity, Inclusion and Global (DIG) Innovation Y Steering and Strategy Council.

### Merrimack Valley networking meetings

Merrimack Valley Networking Group, a free business networking group, meets on Wednesdays from 7 to 8:30 a.m. at Atria Marland Place, 15 Steven St., Andover. Bring business cards to hand out.

For more information, call Paul Lambert at 978-609-6420 or email [PDLLAW@comcast.net](mailto:PDLLAW@comcast.net).

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**Thanks for help during gas disaster**

**Editor, Townsman:**

My thanks to the first responders for their tireless work on Sept. 14 and beyond. Another big "Thank You" to my High Street neighbors, Deborah and Doug Cummings, for their invaluable help in keeping us informed, and assisting Eversource.

**JUSTIN ST. JAMES**  
High Street  
Andover

**In midst of crisis, election recount went smoothly**

**Editor, Townsman:**

This past week showed why Andover is such a wonderful community in which to live. Our town officials expertly and tirelessly responded to the chaos that ensued because of the natural gas explosions and fires, while countless residents and local businesses did all they could to help those

affected. It was a remarkable effort, as the town's first responders, the town manager and his team, and the Selectmen not only handled the enormous task of the town's response but also worked to keep residents informed throughout.

Our local leaders' performance and the response from our community at large should make everyone proud. Another example of exceptional local government occurred on Saturday, as the town conducted the recount in the Democratic primary for the 3rd Congressional District.

As one of the attorneys representing the Trahan campaign, I had the opportunity to witness firsthand the professionalism and thoroughness of our town election officials. As a resident and voter, I could not have left this process with more confidence in the people that are responsible for ensuring we have fair and accurate elections.

The recount went smoothly because the election itself was expertly

handled, as was the subsequent tallying of votes once the polls closed. Special credit should go to Town Clerk Austin Simko, Deputy Town Clerk Dawne Warren and the whole staff of the clerk's office for such a smooth recount process and successful election day.

The numerous poll workers who run election day across all 9 precincts should be commended retroactively as well. Additionally, the Board of Registrars, including Brian Major, Michael Sassin and William Melahn, were fair arbiters who conducted an efficient and open recount process. This team was well supported by Town Counsel Thomas Urbelis and Carol McGravey, who worked cooperatively with town officials and members of both campaigns throughout the process. Last but not least, the Andover Police Department played a key role in ensuring all went smoothly and orderly.

While the timing was not ideal, this recount success was another bright spot for

Andover and a reason why I am proud to call Andover home.

**EDMUND DONNELLY**  
Avon Street  
Andover

**Selectmen thank town employees for work on gas disaster**

**Editor, Townsman:**

The natural gas fires and explosions that struck Andover, North Andover, and Lawrence on Sept. 13 plunged our residents into a traumatic and unpredictable ordeal. While the road ahead remains daunting, one thing is clear: Our town has incredible employees, all of whom leapt into action and continue to work tirelessly in support of our community during its recovery.

The Board of Selectmen would like to recognize the tremendous efforts of our entire team, starting with Town Manager Andrew Flanagan, Police Chief Patrick Keefe, Fire Rescue Chief Mike Mansfield, and our first responders. Their leadership

from the very first moments of the crisis set the course for us all during this unprecedented event.

All departments across the town and schools were mobilized, and every employee stepped up to help. To our incredible staff: We want you to know how much we appreciate everything you have done during this tumultuous period. You sheltered our residents, served them meals, and provided them with information, empathy, and support. You worked around the clock and far beyond your job descriptions to organize services for anyone in need. Your efforts have been selfless and tireless, and we are deeply grateful.

Finally, to the residents and businesses of Andover: Thank you for your remarkable fortitude and kindness. We are truly inspired by the many acts of generosity we have witnessed during this ordeal, and humbled to live in such a strong and resilient town. In the weeks ahead, we will do everything we can to assist

in the recovery. As part of that effort, please join us by supporting Andover's businesses at every opportunity and shopping locally this fall.

**THE ANDOVER BOARD OF SELECTMEN**  
Alex Vispoli, chairman  
Laura Gregory, vice chairwoman  
Chris Huntress  
Annie Gilbert  
Paul Salafia

**Thanks to town for gas emergency response**

**Editor, Townsman:**

As one of the gas disaster affected resident of Andover, I want to express my appreciation to those keeping the town website updated. It is greatly appreciated. Thank you also to the Senior Center, the Youth Center for the shelter, snacks, warmth, WiFi and to Andrew Flanagan for managing an exemplary town response.

**RICHARD FINK**  
18 Arundel St.  
Andover

**WHAT'S HAPPENING: MEMORIAL HALL LIBRARY**

Memorial Hall Library has a lot of programs and activities in store.

Here are some of the featured programs on the calendar:

**Friends' fall book sale**

The Friends of Memorial Hall Library will hold their annual book sale,

beginning with Preview Night on Thursday, Sept. 27, and continuing through Sunday, Sept. 30.

The sale will be held from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. on Thursday, Sept. 27; 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Friday and Saturday, Sept. 28 and 29; and from 1 to 4:30 p.m. on Sunday, Sept. 30. In

addition, on Sunday, CDs and DVDs will be four for \$1, and all teachers are welcome after 3 p.m. to pick up unsold books for their classrooms.

Admission to Preview Night is \$20 per person, but free for current Friends members. All proceeds will benefit the library and will be used for programs and projects for all ages. Anyone can join the

Friends of MHL online at [www.mhl.org/friends](http://www.mhl.org/friends) or pick up an application at the library.

Another event at the library includes:

**Career Networking Group,** Thursday, Sept. 27, 10 to 11:30 a.m. in Friends Alcove 1, ground level. Join this free group to expand one's network of business contacts, share ideas, and learn effective job search

strategies. Facilitated by Arleen Bradley, a certified career coach.

All events take place at the library, 2 N. Main St., Andover, and are sponsored in conjunction with the Friends of Memorial Hall Library. Registration is requested. For more information or to sign up, visit [www.mhl.org/eventcalendar](http://www.mhl.org/eventcalendar), or call 978-623-8401, ext. 31 or 32.

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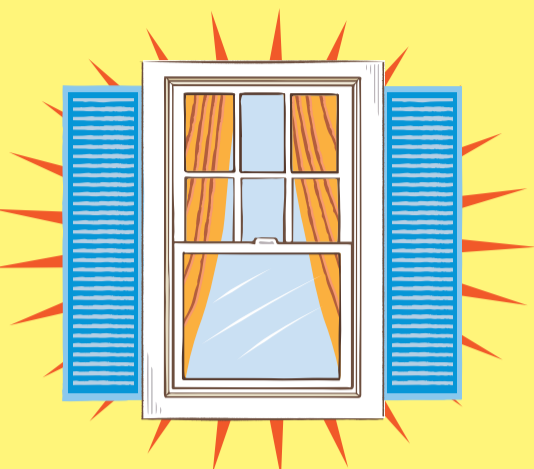


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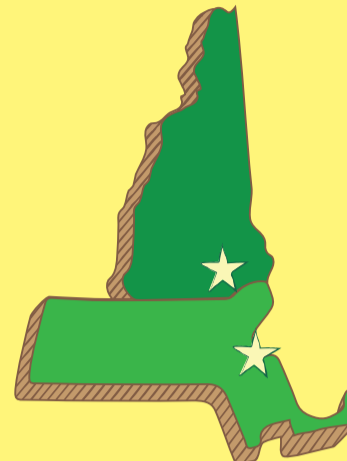
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<sup>1</sup>DETAILS OF OFFER – Offer expires 9/30/2018. Not valid with other offers or prior purchases. Get \$325 off each window and \$700 off each patio door and 12 months no money down, no payments, no interest when you purchase four (4) or more windows or patio doors between 9/1/2018 and 9/30/2018. Subject to credit approval. Interest is billed during the promotional period but all interest is waived if the purchase amount is paid before the expiration of the promotional period. Financing for GreenSky® consumer loan programs is provided by federally insured, federal and state chartered financial institutions without regard to age, race, color, religion, national origin, gender or familial status. Savings comparison based on purchase of a single unit at list price. Available only at participating locations. See your local Renewal by Andersen location for details. License number available upon request. Some Renewal by Andersen locations are independently owned and operated. "Renewal by Andersen" and all other marks where denoted are trademarks of Andersen Corporation. ©2018 Andersen Corporation. All rights reserved. ©2018 Lead Surge LLC. All rights reserved. \*Based on 2016 homeowner brand survey. Andersen family of brands aggregated: Andersen, Renewal by Andersen, Silver Line and American Craftsmen.



# Gas Disaster

## Columbia Gas claims center opens up at Old Town Hall

STAFF REPORT

The town announced last Tuesday that Columbia Gas would set up a claims center at Old Town Hall, 20 Main St. It opened at 1 p.m. that day.

The center is staffed by “multiple claims representatives,” and is open Monday through Friday from 1 p.m. to 8 p.m., and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday.

The opening of the center came about after a meeting between Andover Town Manager Andrew Flanagan, Deputy Town Manager Michael Lindstrom and Columbia Gas officials.

Claims also can be initiated by phone at 800-590-5571.

In the affected regions, all gas customers may have sustained damage to their service lines, furnaces, water heaters, and/or gas appliances. NiSource also has committed to either replacing all damaged infrastructure and appliances, or fully reimbursing residents who choose to and have the means to pay for repairs or replacement costs out of pocket, officials said.

If a resident cannot afford repair or replacement costs, NiSource will arrange for



Town workers greet residents entering the Andover Gas Disaster Resource Center at Old Town Hall which was set up to help people file insurance and reimbursement claims related to last week's massive natural gas disaster which effected Andover, North Andover and Lawrence.

RYAN HUTTON/Staff photos

this work to be done for free. If a resident is able and chooses to arrange for repairs or replacements on

their own, NiSource will reimburse all costs, according to the website. Residents who incur

out-of-pocket expenses will be required to save receipts and provide proof of damage, such as photos or police/fire

incident reports. The town of Andover is not charging residents or business owners any permit fees

### CLAIMS CENTER INFORMATION

- **Where:** Old Town Hall, 20 Main St., Andover
- **Hours:** Monday to Friday, 1 to 8 p.m.; and Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- **Claims by phone:** 800-590-5571

for the contracted work or repairs that need to be performed as a result of the gas emergency.

An office trailer is located behind Old Town Hall for contractors to pull permits at no charge. The trailer is staffed by state inspectors. At the town's request, NiSource is allowing residents to have any licensed contractor pull repair work permits to begin repair work. Residents do not have to use a specific vendor recommended by NiSource.

The trailer will be in place for as long as it is needed. This will allow contractors for residents in the affected area to quickly get started on vital repairs inside their homes.

Only contractors may pull permits for this work. Residents should not come to the trailer to obtain a permit.



Andover residents speak with insurance agents at the Andover Gas Disaster Resource Center at Old Town Hall last week.



Andover residents wait for their names to be called at the Andover Gas Disaster Resource Center at Old Town Hall last week.

## Columbia Gas withdraws scheduled \$33 million rate increase

By ZOE MATHEWS  
Staff Writer

Columbia Gas withdrew its \$33 million rate increase scheduled to take place in upcoming weeks, which would have helped the utility cover costs of ongoing repairs and replacement of cast-iron and steel pipes in the region.

The rate increase was planned before Thursday's gas explosions and fires, which killed one person, caused widespread evacuation, and destroyed dozens of homes in Lawrence, Andover and North Andover.

The utility, a subsidiary of NiSource, had reached a settlement with Attorney General Maura Healey earlier this month to raise rates for its 320,000 gas customers in the state.

The increase, filed with the state Department of Public Utilities, was expected to take effect on Nov. 1.

Columbia Gas said the move will allow it to focus on service restoration to those

affected by the natural gas disaster, and relieve customers of increased burden on top of “long-term service disruptions and outages.”

“Our team is fully committed to restoring the affected communities, rebuilding peace of mind and reestablishing trust in our company,” said Columbia Gas of Massachusetts President Steve Bryant. “This action is fully necessary at a time when we must maintain our focus on supporting our customers.”

The case was originally filed in April 2018 with the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities.

Columbia Gas announced earlier this week they will replace the entire 48-mile cast-iron and bare steel natural gas distribution system serving 8,600 customers in the affected areas.

The system in the area will be replaced with new plastic lines that feature modern safety features, including pressure regulation and excess flow valves.

Columbia Gas has been

involved in a multiyear effort to modernize its gas distribution system. The utility said it would accelerate that work in the affected area.

Approximately 97 percent of natural gas distribution pipelines in the U.S. were made of plastic or steel at the end of 2017, and the remaining 3 percent is mostly iron pipe, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration. It was not immediately clear what percentage of the pipeline that services Andover, North Andover, and Lawrence has been upgraded to the newer plastic piping.

On Wednesday, Columbia Gas announced it had crews in the area working on preliminary repairs and staging equipment to replace portions of the pipe system.

“This preliminary work will help expedite pipeline replacement for a limited portion of the gas line in the affected area, and is not part of the long-term restoration

efforts,” according to a press release from Columbia Gas.

The company had announced a series of gas line repair projects in the Greater Lawrence area last Thursday, just hours before over-pressurization caused a series of explosions and fires that killed one person, injured dozens and displaced thousands of people.

Federal investigators from the National Transportation Safety Board are still in the Merrimack Valley investigating the explosions and fires and collecting “perishable evidence,” according to Keith Holloway, NTSB spokesperson.

“There is no new information to report at this time. We will provide updates about the information we gather and the facts we can confirm, but we will not conduct any analysis or discuss cause at this time,” he added, via email.

Holloway said the NTSB, when it investigates, generally issues a preliminary report within a few weeks.

However, the preliminary reports don't provide any discussion of cause but rather “factual information we've been able to verify at that point of the investigation.”

“NTSB investigations are comprehensive and take considerable time to complete. Major investigations, such as this one, currently take between 12 and 24 months to complete,” Holloway said.

This weekend, NTSB Chairman Robert Sumwalt said the explosions and fires do not appear to be suspicious at this time.

The pressure in the pipelines when the explosions began was 12 times higher than it should have been, according to a letter sent by Massachusetts Democratic Sens. Elizabeth Warren and Edward Markey to the heads of Columbia Gas on Monday. Sumwalt said the pressure buildup occurred “in this neighborhood,” as he spoke at a press conference in Lawrence on Saturday.

Some of the gas pipes in this area are cast-iron and

100 years old. Others are plastic and brand new, Sumwalt said.

Thirteen gas-pressure regulators, located underground in the area and accessible through manholes, will be tested by the NTSB during the course of the investigation.

The pressure increase was detected in the control room of a gas pipeline monitoring area in Columbus, Ohio, Sumwalt said.

NTSB investigators are developing a timeline starting several weeks before Thursday night's incident to see if there were complaints about gas odors here.

Sumwalt said the NTSB will also be looking closely at Columbia Gas, its record keeping and oversight of contractors, testing, failures and inspections.

First responders, who have worked around the clock since the first calls at 4 p.m. Thursday, will also be interviewed as part of the probe.

Staff writer Jill Harmacinski contributed to this story.

## Gas contractor says workers acted properly, safely on day of explosion

By JILL HARMACINSKI  
Staff Writer

LAWRENCE — A private contractor who was working in the city on a gas issue said he and his colleagues were acting “professionally, safely and correctly” the day explosions and fires occurred in this city, as well as in Andover and North Andover.

Feeney Brothers contractors issued a statement through a public relations firm, saying the company is cooperating with investigators.

Some 8,600 Columbia gas meters were affected Thursday, Sept. 13, when an over-pressurized gas line caused dozens of explosions and fires in the three communities.

South Lawrence was evacuated, as were portions of Andover and North Andover. Gas and electrical services were shut off in the area.

According to the statement, a Feeney Brothers crew “was working at the direction and with instructions from Columbia Gas on a low-pressure to low-pressure gas main tie-in at the intersection of South Union and Salem Streets on September 13, the day of the tragedy in the Merrimack Valley.”

All of Feeney's work was done with Columbia Gas's oversight and according to written procedures provided to its crew by Columbia Gas and directly overseen by a union inspector employed by Columbia Gas. Feeney's crew and Columbia Gas's

inspector were interviewed by Columbia Gas managers in the early hours of Friday morning after which Columbia Gas reported that our crew was solid and had done nothing wrong. This was subsequently confirmed by other Columbia Gas representatives who indicated that Feeney followed the Columbia Gas procedures correctly and as directed,” the statement reads.

Federal agents with the National Transportation Safety Board are investigating the incident and have been in the area doing so since last Friday.

NTSB Chairman Robert Sumwalt said an over-pressurized gas line in the area was detected on a gas pipeline monitoring console in

Columbus, Ohio.

NTSB investigators are gathering evidence and will issue a report on the incident, which could take up to two years.

Feeney “assisted” the NTSB with its investigation and four crew members were interviewed.

“While the investigation will take time, we have no doubt that Feeney's crew will be found to have done their work professionally, safely and correctly. We stand by our crew and all our workers,” the statement continues.

Feeney said it's “standing by” to help in the area and “whoever is working to restore gas as soon as possible to this resilient community,” the statement

concludes.

The state's Department of Public Utilities, which oversees electric power, natural gas and water companies in Massachusetts, did not respond to requests for comment about contractors working in Lawrence or to Feeney's statement.

On that afternoon, as fire and explosion reports started rolling in, a firefighter can be heard telling the chief about a situation at South Union and Salem streets on Lawrence Fire Department audio.

Firefighter Pat Ruiz said he was talking to someone “over here with the gas company” about a problem they are having with a high-pressure gas line. Several minutes later, Fire

Chief Brian Moriarty asks for an update on the situation at Union and Salem streets.

“They think a regulator somewhere blew up. ... One of the guys almost got killed over here,” Ruiz says in the audio.

Moriarty warns crews that they were going “to have multiple calls.”

“Everyone stay calm,” he says, urging crews to rescue those trapped and shut the gas down at burning properties.

Firefighter Giovanni Bonet Inness remains unruffled as he initially handles the calls.

In addition to Bonet Inness, dispatchers Larry Foote and Thomas Arcand and Firefighter Ron Lavallee handled the influx of emergency fire calls that night.



RYAN HUTTON/Staff photo

Melissa Gauthier, manager of LaRosa's in Andover, scoops up some tomato and mozzarella pasta on Tuesday afternoon. The business continued to operate despite the continued lack of gas caused by last week's natural gas disaster that affected Andover, North Andover and Lawrence.



JESSICA VALERIANI/Staff photo

Andover Town Manager Andrew Flanagan, center, speaks to the media following a closed-door meeting with 50 to 60 business owners at Town Offices last Wednesday morning. He is flanked by Gov. Charlie Baker, left, and Jay Ash, secretary of the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development.

# 'We need money now'

## Restaurants, bodegas can't pay bills as disaster lingers

BY JESSICA VALERIANI  
Staff Writer

ANDOVER — As the natural gas disaster stretches into day six, business owners are starting to confront an uncomfortable reality: Without natural gas, they can't open and if they can't open, they can't pay their bills.

John Ingalls, who owns Palmers Restaurant, a popular eatery at 18 Elm St., Andover, closed his kitchen last week after being told to turn the gas service off when gas mains in the area experienced a spike in pressure that started fires across the Merrimack Valley.

"We need money now," Ingalls said. "I have employees who are owed money and have lost wages. They have mortgages, rent and bills to pay, and there's no money."

Ingalls has 40 employees, some whom he has worked for him for a long time. He said he feels obligated to them, but since his restaurant was forced to close following Thursday's gas explosions, he doesn't have any work for them.

"I want to help my employees but it's very limited," he said. "We have limited resources. ... You can only hang on for so long."

Ingalls is not the only one



AMANDA SABGA/Staff photo

Owner Rolando Vinas shows the empty meat cases at his family's store, Jacqueline's in South Lawrence. Local stores and restaurants are facing the effects of losing power over the weekend and not having gas after a massive natural gas disaster that affected Lawrence, Andover and North Andover.

suffering. Many other businesses in Lawrence, Andover and North Andover are looking for answers about when they will be able to reopen again, whether in the coming weeks or, even worse, the coming months.

John Farrington, owner of Carleen's Coffee Shoppe, 209 So. Broadway, Lawrence, is worried about not only losing his employees, but also his customers.

"It takes a long time to build up a clientele," said Farrington, adding that he knows customers might start to head to other businesses for their food.

Farrington said he isn't stressed about the situation, because he just feels numb.

"If I'm closing down for a week, I can sort of figure that out, but if it's three months, I don't know how to plan for it," he said.

Joe Bevilacqua, president of the Merrimack Valley Chamber of Commerce, said the organization has been in contact with many of the affected businesses.

He said the impact is like a trickling effect. Customers need to know how they can access businesses, and suppliers need to know what businesses they can supply to.

"The biggest issue is uncertainty," said Bevilacqua.

Restaurant owners are not the only ones that are starting to fear for the future.

Small business owners in Lawrence, like Rolando Vinas, owner of Jacqueline's Supermarket on Lowell Street, said he is devastated about what has happened to his store.

Vinas has lost nearly \$20,000 over the course of the weekend. He said 50 percent of his sales come from hot food, which he hadn't been able to sell over the weekend due to lack of electricity.

He has lost a lot of business, and every day he said he is losing a lot of money.

"I'm going crazy and I don't know what to do,"



RYAN HUTTON/Staff photo

A sign on the door of the Bertucci's on Main Street in Andover lets customers know it is closed due to lack of gas caused by the Sept. 13 natural gas disaster.

Vinas said.

Isidro Polo, owner of La Carniceria Supermarket on South Union Street, and his cashier, Any Mercedes, spent their afternoon studying extensive receipts and recording how much money their business has lost.

"We don't know exactly how much money, but it's been too much," said Mercedes. "We are too broke."

Many other restaurants, like Boston Chowda Company on Main Street in North Andover, hope to open later this week. Their voicemail apologizes for being closed due to lack of gas, and says they are trying their best to open by Thursday afternoon.

# Baker vows to help area businesses

BY JESSICA VALERIANI  
Staff Writer

ANDOVER — Gov. Charlie Baker Wednesday tried to reassure local business owners affected by the ongoing natural gas disaster that the state is looking out for them.

He told 50 or 60 people during a closed-door, morning session at Town Offices on Bartlett Street that Jay Ash, secretary of the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development, was working on a plan to mitigate their losses and accelerate the restoration of gas services.

"It's hard to run a restaurant without hot water and heat, right?" he said to reporters after the meeting with business owners. "For us, this was an opportunity to hear from these folks about their immediate concerns."

He noted that Secretary Ash came to the meeting to listen to the concerns of business owners and that "over the course of the next several days would be laying out a plan" to help out those affected by the disaster.

"We will get that started as soon as we have the resources to do it," Baker said.

According to Town Manager Andrew Flanagan, who was also at the morning meeting and ensuing press conference, more than 100 businesses in Andover have lost gas service as a result of the over-pressurization of gas lines last Thursday afternoon. The high pressure in the lines caused explosions and fires in Andover, North Andover and Lawrence, and in many cases damaged or destroyed gas-powered appliances, such as stoves, ovens, deep-fat fryers and other machinery necessary for the operation of a restaurant.

Of the 100 Andover businesses affected, 70 of them are restaurants, Flanagan said. In Wednesday's editions of The Eagle-Tribune, a number of business owners, including John Ingalls, owner of the popular Elm Street eatery Palmers, said he couldn't pay his employees because he doesn't have an income stream.

He said Wednesday that he was happy to have met with the governor.

"As bleak as things are for me right now, there

*"There are all these businesses that can't do anything right now. Some places are buying electric hot water heaters. Others may have to change the menus at restaurants. People have to make payroll at restaurants, and the margins are so thin. You hope people can keep their businesses alive."*

Andover Selectman  
Alex Vispoli

was light at the meeting," Ingalls said, adding that the town is planning to "get more boots on the ground," and get more electricians and plumbers to figure out cost estimates for business owners.

Flanagan said a timeline of assessment and mitigation would be released Friday, adding that it would be a unified response plan, in terms of restoring both businesses and homes.

"We are going to help expedite any required permitting for businesses," Flanagan said. "I plan to deploy all of the town resources to facilitate this process."

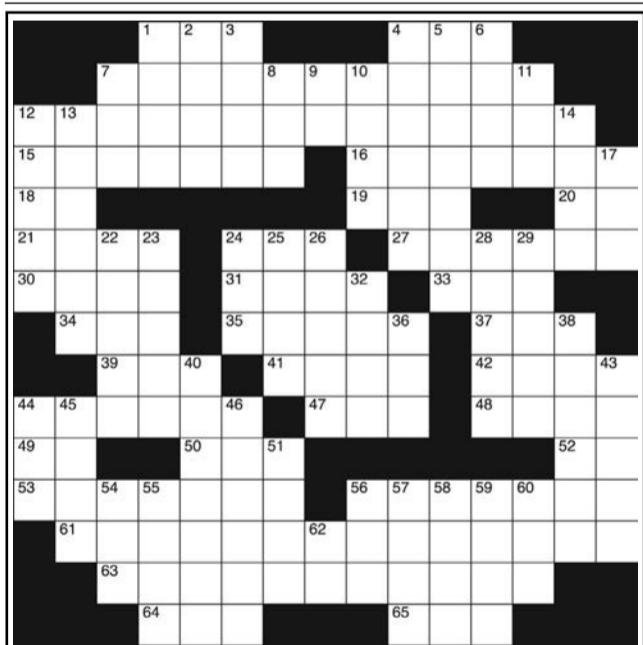
Board of Selectmen Chairman Alex Vispoli, along with Selectman Paul Salafia, were also in attendance at the meeting and press conference.

Vispoli said the governor was "empathetic" and that "people appreciated him being there."

"There are all these businesses that can't do anything right now," Vispoli said. "Some places are buying electric hot water heaters. Others may have to change the menus at restaurants. People have to make payroll at restaurants, and the margins are so thin. You hope people can keep their businesses alive."

Baker noted in his remarks that the impact of the gas explosions and fires has turned into a humanitarian crisis as much as an infrastructure problem.

"Most of those businesses were not talking about themselves," he said. "They were talking about their employees."



### CLUES ACROSS

- Superhigh frequency
- Sinatra's ex-wife
- Unity
- Not useful
- One who mocks
- Teachers
- "Pollock" actor Harris
- Fifth note of a major scale
- A type of coalition
- Aircraft transmitters
- Where golfers begin
- We all have them
- Monetary unit
- Calendar month
- Pouch-like structure
- Winter sport tool
- Minneapolis suburb
- \_\_ student, learns healing

### CLUES DOWN

- Turfs
- Handle
- Floating ice
- Railways
- Breathe in
- Neutralizes alkalis
- Coenzyme A
- Make a mistake
- Tin
- Parts of a machine
- Midway between northeast and east
- Prizes for victory
- Great amount
- Goodwill (archaic)
- Suspicion of having committed a crime
- Signed one's name
- Quake
- Exercise system \_\_-bo
- Round Dutch cheese

### Solution in Classified Section

- Keyboard key
- Brief proposal
- Gasteyer and Ivanovic are two
- Lunatic
- Cool!
- Japanese musician
- Successor to League of Nations
- Actor Diesel
- The Constitution State
- Go back over
- One long or stressed syllable followed by unstressed syllable
- All of it
- Seriousness
- Adds color
- \_\_kosh, near Lake Winnebago

9/27/18

# Two in Andover injured in darkened homes

BY PAUL TENNANT  
Staff Writer

ANDOVER — Two Andover residents suffered serious injuries due to falls in darkened homes during the weekend, according to a press release issued by Town Manager Andrew Flanagan, police Chief Patrick Keefe and fire Chief Michael Mansfield.

Andover Fire Rescue responded to a medical alert alarm at a Railroad Street home at 8 a.m. Saturday. Rescuers found an elderly man who had fallen in the bathroom.

An on-scene evaluation

indicated the 88-year-old man had fallen in the dark during the night and the medical alert was activated Saturday morning. The residence did not have electricity because of the continuing gas incident, officials said.

The next day, at 3:10 p.m., police and Fire Rescue went to a Shawsheen Road home after receiving a report of an unresponsive woman with head trauma. Rescuers were met by the victim's housemate, who had been away since Thursday.

While he was away, he reportedly made numerous attempts to call her with no

response. When he returned home, he found her in bed with a serious head wound. She was unresponsive, officials said.

The 55-year-old victim was transported to Lawrence General Hospital, then airlifted to a Boston hospital.

Preliminary investigation indicates that the victim fell down a flight of stairs and struck her head, according to the officials. A still-lit flashlight was found at the bottom of the stairs where the fall apparently occurred.

The home did not have electricity, again because of the gas disaster. Officials believe she fell

sometime during the previous night, found her way back to her bedroom and lost consciousness.

The victim is in critical condition. This incident is under investigation by the Andover Police Department and state police detectives assigned to the Essex district attorney's office.

Andover Fire Rescue treated 20 patients with various injuries from 4:20 to 11:59 p.m. Thursday, the day the gas disaster happened. Fourteen of those patients were transported to area hospitals. All 20 are expected to recover, officials said.



# Townspeople



MIKE SPRINGER/Staff photos

John Alexander, chief medical officer at Holy Family Hospital, speaks during the Merrimack Valley Chamber of Commerce's annual health care luncheon at the Andover Country Club.

## Health care leaders tout Merrimack Valley service

By JESSICA VALERIANI  
jvaleriani@andovertownsmen.com

Health care officials and business representatives gathered at the annual Healthcare Conference presented by the Merrimack Valley Chamber of Commerce touted the high quality and low cost of health care across the region.

The conference, sponsored by Benchmark Senior Living, was held at the Andover Country Club earlier this month.

"It's easy to talk about quality health care when you have a reliable and highly qualified staff," said John Alexander, chief medical officer at Holy Family Hospital.

Other speakers included: Dianne Anderson, president and CEO of Lawrence General Hospital; and Karen Gomes, president and CEO of the Home Health Foundation.

Quality health care focuses around delivering the care people need at the right time, and providing the right amount of care that is customized to an individual, said Alexander.

"It needs to be efficient, effective, accessible,



Karen Gomes, president and CEO of the Home Health Foundation, applauds a speaker.

affordable and timely," he said.

That is the approach Alexander said Holy Family Hospital has taken.

Anderson agreed with his remarks, saying that: "The vision of Lawrence General Hospital is to be known for the highest quality health care."

She also said the hospital can be, and has to be, a lot more affordable because there are rising concerns about the cost of health care in the United States.

"The United States is the most expensive country for health care, but not the highest for life expectancy," said Anderson, adding that Massachusetts is the most expensive state for health care in the country.

Gomes said Home Health Foundation focuses on minimizing health care costs by avoiding re-hospitalization.

"We want to avoid unnecessary services," she said.

"Our goal is to provide exceptional care that allows patients to stay in their



Dianne Anderson, president and CEO of Lawrence General Hospital, speaks at the luncheon.

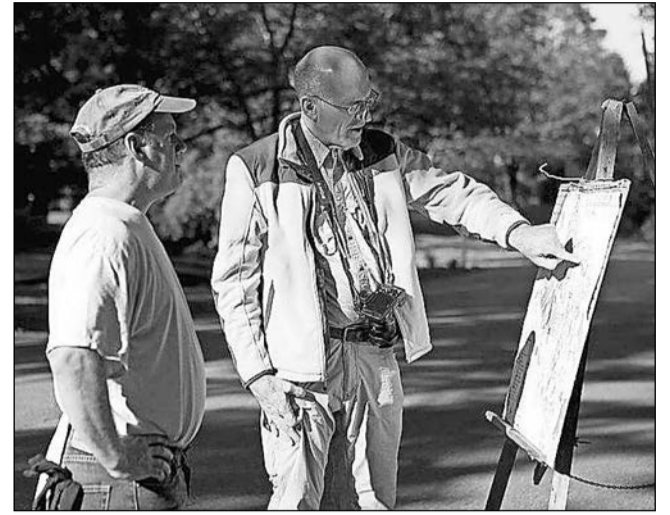
home, in a comfortable setting," Gomes added.

Gomes said many patients would choose to be at home during their time of serious illness, but they need the right support in order to do that.

"We need to give them the right care at the right time," Gomes said.

"We are very fortunate to have the level of health care that we do in the Merrimack Valley," Anderson said.

There were about 150 people in attendance at the conference. A question-and-answer session followed the three guest speakers.



File photo

Steve Fink, right, points at a map of conservation land during a trail cleanup day at Sakowich Reservation in 2014 as volunteer Andy Menezes looks on. Fink is being honored by the Andover Center for History & Culture this year for his volunteer efforts.

## Andover Center for History & Culture to host annual fundraiser

By JUDY WAKEFIELD  
jwakefield@andovertownsmen.com

### IF YOU GO

With one foot set firmly in the past and the other taking a stride toward the future, the Andover Center for History & Culture will hold its annual "Be Giving" fundraising gala next month in North Andover.

The Be Giving gala celebrates community history and engagement while raising funds to support the mission of Andover Center for History & Culture. The history center connects people with each other and their community by gathering and sharing Andover's stories.

The guest of honor will be community volunteer and leader Steve Fink.

The Center describes Fink on its web site as "a mentor for Andover High School's Environmental Science Internship Program. He was one of the leaders of the Historic Mill District project, and continues to be involved in the Mill District and the re-imagining of Andover's downtown. For the history center, Steve is an advocate, advisor, friend, and supporter. In Steve's honor, this year Be Giving will also include the opportunity to share your thoughts on Andover's past, present, and future."

Elaine Clements, executive director of the Center, added: "Andover's history is always at the center of Steve's work with Andover Tomorrow, the Historic Mill District, and community placemaking projects. He actively promotes the role of history and its ability to bring people together around their shared story

- **What:** Andover Center for History & Culture's third annual Be Giving fundraising gala
- **Where:** Stevens Estate, 723 Osgood St., North Andover
- **When:** Thursday, Oct. 11, 6 to 8 p.m.
- **Cost:** \$75 per ticket
- **For more information:** Call 978-475-2236 or visit [AndoverHistoryandCulture.org/Be-Giving](http://AndoverHistoryandCulture.org/Be-Giving)

in positive ways. He first connected with the history center through the Historic Mill District project, and has been an advocate, partner, and collaborator ever since."

Board member and past Be Giving honoree Don Robb agreed.

"We're so happy to honor Steve and all he has done for the history center and the Town of Andover," he said.

At the event in the historic Stevens Estate, guests will find treasures from the history center collection, along with storytellers who will entertain guests with stories about the treasures. The stories and treasures are interesting, unusual, and diverse and range from a 1950s prom dress to an unusual oil "banquet lamp" with the Greek god Atlas holding up the heavens. Guests who visit all the stories will enter a door prize drawing.

Guests will be able to support Andover's stories in live and silent auctions, and a special fund-a-need auction. Auction items include a private dinner served in the 1820s Amos Blanchard house, framed prints, gift certificates, and more.

## South Church hits high note with new music director

By JUDY WAKEFIELD  
jwakefield@andovertownsmen.com

Six months ago, Cathy Meyer barely knew where Andover was but within six hours of reading the job description, she kept hearing, seeing, and reading the word "Andover" everywhere.

"I spent a lot of time in prayer to determine whether I felt called to South Church," Meyer said. "God made it so obvious."

Playing the Bozeman Organ is a significant part of the Minister of Music's job at South Church — and she does.

After she got over the fact that a person didn't have to be 100 years old to play the organ, she started lessons at the age of 15 and had her first church job within a few months after that.

Meyer went on to earn a Bachelor of Music in Organ Performance with a Specialization in Church Music from the University



Cathy Meyer

of North Texas and a Master of Sacred Music from Boston University's School of Theology with a concentration in organ.

Meyer sees music ministry as one of the most tangible places for all people, regardless of age or skill, to sing or play their praises.

"God instructs all of us to make a joyful noise," she said.

In addition to playing organ and piano for worship services, Meyer directs the Sanctuary Choir and the handbell choir while also working closely with the Pentecostal Pickers — a Rockabilly/Folk/Praise band. There is a Carol Choir for children in elementary school and Meyer looks forward to talking with middle and high school youth about choirs specifically for them.

Meyer is especially excited to expand the music program for the youngest of singers. Members of the Andover community who are ages 0-5 are welcome to come (with their caregiver) to gather for 45 minutes to play, enjoy music and movement with a variety of fun activities and instruments. This group will sing for worship approximately once a month.

She is also planning a community-wide Hymn Festival on Sunday, Oct. 21 and a South Church Musical Showcase on Sunday, Nov. 11. The Hymn Festival will be a special event, open to the community, for anyone who would like to come and celebrate the rich tradition of hymn-singing. Neighboring church choirs will present anthems based on hymn tunes and the entire congregation will join voices in singing hymns, ancient and modern.

Meyer is a teacher with the Young Organist Initiative with the Boston

American Guild of Organists. With a passion for bringing people of all walks of life coming together for good, she is the Musical Director for The Lord's Prayer Experience, an interfaith journey into song and spirit. She has recorded on the organ with the Beauport Classical label, is the featured organist on the accompaniment recording for book The Everything Guide to Stress Management by Melissa Roberts, and was a contributor for the new book for church leadership entitled God's Business by Kurt Glacy.

When not making music, Meyer spends time with her husband and three children volunteering, baking and gardening.

South Church, part of the United Church of Christ Congregation, is located at 41 Central St. For more information about South Church music programs, email Cathy Meyer at [Cathy@southchurch.com](mailto:Cathy@southchurch.com) or visit [southchurch.com](http://southchurch.com).

### MEMORIAL HALL LIBRARY TEENS

There's a ton of fun in store for teens at MHL.

Upcoming events at the library include:

**Craft Buffet:** Thursday, Sept. 27, 4 p.m. Teens who missed a craft this month, or are looking to unleash their creativity,

can make their own project with the library's supplies.

**Free Form Friday:** Friday, Sept. 28, 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. Play Super Smash Brothers in the Activity Room and do a drop-in activity in the Teen Room. Different activities are held

every week.

All programs and activities are at Memorial Hall Library, 2 N. Main St., Andover. MHL events are for teens in grades six through 12, and are free to attend. Register online at [www.mhl.org/eventcalendar](http://www.mhl.org/eventcalendar)

or call 978-623-8401, ext. 31, for more information. Check out the blog for news, events and other fun stuff at <http://mhlteenroom.tumblr.com> and follow the Teen Room on Instagram, Twitter and Snapchat @mhlteenroom.

### MEMORIAL HALL LIBRARY CHILDREN'S ROOM

Here's what's in store for young people at the library at 2 N. Main St.:

**In-Betweeners: Create a Sunflower Card,** Thursday, Sept. 27, 4 p.m. Open to students in grades four and five. Space is limited. Registration is required.

**Around the World in 30**

**Minutes,** Friday, Sept. 28, 9:30 a.m. Infants to age 5 and their adult caregivers can explore different languages through songs, rhymes, stories and games. For native speakers and those who want to expose their child to different languages and cultures at an early age.

Pick up a token in the Children's Room.

**Dads and Doughnuts,** Saturday, Sept. 29, 10 a.m. This story time targets dads and children ages 2 to 5, although all are welcome. Take part in stories, songs, rhymes and a craft, and then have some coffee,

juice and doughnuts. Pick up a token in the Children's Room.

All events are sponsored by the Friends of Memorial Hall Library; registration is requested. For more information or to sign up, visit [www.mhl.org](http://www.mhl.org), or call 978-623-8401, ext. 31 or 32.



Courtesy image

The Andover Center for History & Culture, formerly the Andover Historical Society, is headquartered at the Amos Blanchard House, 97 Main St., Andover. The group is hosting its annual fundraiser in October.

### ON CAMPUS

Winfield Field was named to the summer 2018 president's list at Southern New Hampshire University.

Local students enrolled at Clemson University for the

fall 2018 semester include: **Olivia Luisa Gaspar**, who is majoring in nursing; **Kyle Ray Lattanzio**, who is majoring in computer science; and **Kyle J. Vumbaco**, who is majoring in general engineering.

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TOTAL AT SIGNING: 3,699.95 | PURCHASE OPTION: 11,271.20

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CASH OR TRADE: 2,995 | A.Q. FEE: 645 | SEC DEP WAIVED | EXCESS MILES: .15  
TOTAL AT SIGNING: 3,759.95 | PURCHASE OPTION: 13,170.95

**\$17995** | 24 MONTH/10,500 MILES A YEAR LEASE  
CASH OR TRADE: 2,995 | A.Q. FEE: 645 | SEC DEP WAIVED | EXCESS MILES: .20  
TOTAL AT SIGNING: 3,819.95 | PURCHASE OPTION: 18,443.75

**\$19995** | 24 MONTH/10,500 MILES A YEAR LEASE  
CASH OR TRADE: 2,995 | A.Q. FEE: 645 | SEC DEP WAIVED | EXCESS MILES: .20  
TOTAL AT SIGNING: 3,939.95 | PURCHASE OPTION: 23,463.45

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**\$15995** | 24 MONTH/10,500 MILES A YEAR LEASE  
CASH OR TRADE: 2,995 | A.Q. FEE: 645 | SEC DEP WAIVED | EXCESS MILES: .20  
TOTAL AT SIGNING: 3,799.95 | PURCHASE OPTION: 32,453.60

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THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
Not as warm	Clouds and sun	Sunshine; pleasant	Clouds and sun	Mostly cloudy	Showers possible	Cloudy
<b>High: 67°</b> <b>Low: 53°</b>	<b>High: 68°</b> <b>Low: 55°</b>	<b>High: 71°</b> <b>Low: 45°</b>	<b>High: 66°</b> <b>Low: 49°</b>	<b>High: 70°</b> <b>Low: 56°</b>	<b>High: 68°</b> <b>Low: 58°</b>	<b>High: 70°</b> <b>Low: 55°</b>

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**WHAT'S HAPPENING: HAROLD PARKER STATE FOREST**

Harold Parker State Forest in Andover has plenty of activities in store, from nature walks and quarry hikes to animal tracking.

**Owl Power:** Saturday, Sept. 29, 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. Find out what makes owls such unique creatures at the Campground Nature Center. This program will include a short demonstration of owl adaptations and owl pellet dissection. Appropriate for ages 6 and up.

**Gone Fishin':** Saturday, Sept. 29, 2 to 3:30 p.m. Families can learn the basics of pond fishing in New England at Frye Pond Beach. Rods and bait will be provided or participants can bring their own. All ages are welcome and children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult.

**Birding for Beginners:** Sunday, Sept. 30, 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. Learn about the local bird population from the park interpreter while enjoying some amateur bird watching; meet at the Campground Nature Center. Bring binoculars if possible. Appropriate for children 6 and up.

**Soapstone Quarry Hikes:** Sunday, Sept. 30, 2 to 4 p.m. Take a moderate guided hike to the remnants of the Jenkins family blue soapstone quarry. Learn about the park's history and resources while getting some exercise; meet at the Campground Nature Center. Appropriate for ages 6 and up.

Participants should bring water, wear sunscreen/bug spray, dress in layers, and wear appropriate footwear. An adult must accompany children. Binoculars and cameras are also recommended for many of the programs. All activities are canceled in the event of rain.

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