

# OPINION/COMMENTARY

**Auburn News**  
 A STONEBRIDGE PRESS WEEKLY NEWSPAPER  
 25 ELM STREET, SOUTHBRIDGE MA 01550  
 TEL. (508) 764-4325 • FAX (508) 764-8015  
[www.auburnnews.net](http://www.auburnnews.net)

**FRANK G. CHILINSKI**  
 STONEBRIDGE PRESS  
 PRESIDENT AND PUBLISHER

**ADAM MINOR**  
 EDITOR  
 THE AUBURN NEWS AND THE WEBSTER TIMES

## EDITORIAL

### The wind in my sales



THE MINOR  
 DETAILS  
 ADAM MINOR

I'm about to write something I may regret. But you know what? That's what this column is all about — honesty.

Give me a second to collect myself as I prepare to share a piece of myself with the readers of this newspaper.

...  
 OK, here goes. I like tag sales. There, I said it. My guy friends will probably never let me hear the end of it, but it's just a fact. I like tag

sales, and I'm not going to apologize for it. My wife and I kicked off our tag saling adventures last Saturday, May 7, and I have to admit, although our haul wasn't very impressive, the value we got on our items was second to none.

And that, my friends, is the joy in tag saling — like Forrest Gump once said, "Like a box of chocko-lates, you never know what you gonna get."

We started in Woodstock, Conn., at the Chic Tag Sale at the East Woodstock Covenant Church, and I picked up a few books for my collection, 25 cents a piece. Not bad!

We next went down the road to the Faith Bible Evangelical Free Church — where, get this — they hold a weekly FREE tag sale. That's right, that capital word is "free," as in, no cost. It's a ministry the church holds each season to help out local residents.

Now, don't get the wrong idea, I don't go to an event like this looking to be greedy and scoop up everything I want and leave nothing behind. That's not the purpose of a sale like that. Many times, items should be left for people who need them, not for people that "want" them, and as far as I know, people understand that.

After seeing a baseball I liked (a man can't ever have too many baseballs), a few more books and an Elmo stuffed toy (that one was for my wife and future child, although, who doesn't like a little Elmo every now and then?), we scooped up a friend (and fellow tag saling fanatic) and headed to my first Town-Wide Tag Sale in Pomfret, Conn.

We picked up a map at Pomfret Community School and after another book sale (fill a bag for \$5!) set out on part two of our quest for the ultimate deal. As I opened the treasure map, expecting to find a few "X-marks-the-spot" locations for some primo deals, my eyes widened as I saw there were more than 50 locations all over Pomfret holding tag sales.

Clearly, I was in over my head. It was obvious we were not going to be able to make them all, so we set out toward the most busy clusters, roads marked with the most locations.

Our mission: Find a dresser for our "in-progress" nursery.

Long story short — Mission failed. Oh well. We did find a soccer ball lamp, several children's books, and even some brand new baby clothes. Not a complete failure, but hey, it was money well spent nonetheless.

But at least I have my baseball — and Elmo.

*Recent tag saling convert Adam Minor may be reached with tag sale leads at 508-909-4130, or by e-mail at [aminor@stonebridgepress.com](mailto:aminor@stonebridgepress.com).*

## SOUND OFF!

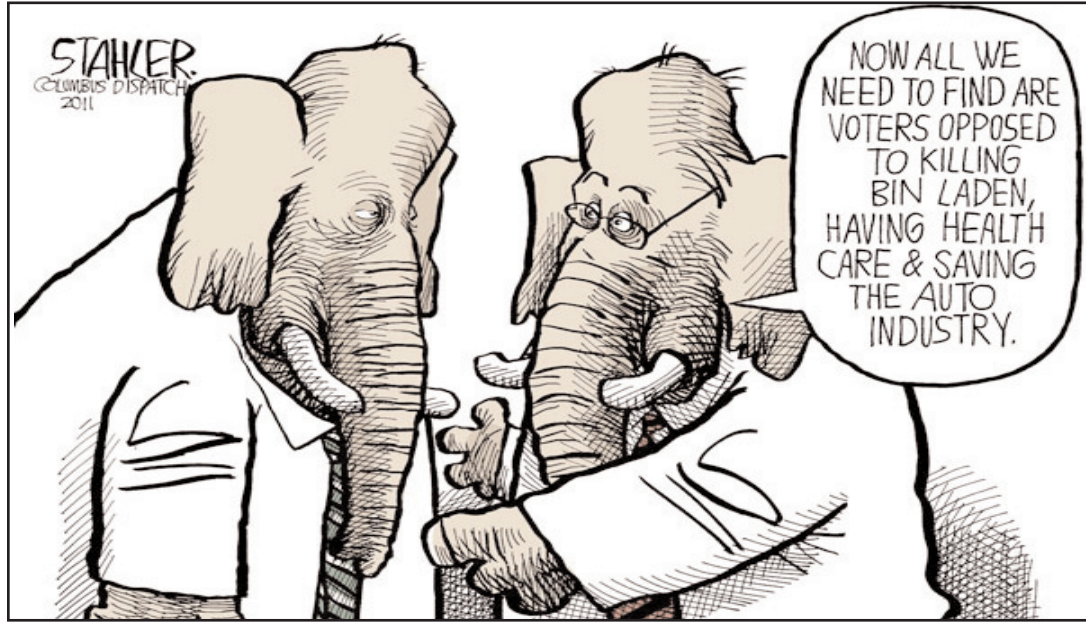
**WE KNOW you've got an opinion, so what are you waiting for?**

**Sound Off!**  
 It's a fast and easy way to let everyone know what's on your mind. What's more is if you're worried about putting your name out there, don't be! With Sound Off! you don't have to leave a name.

Just call our Sound Off! line at 508-909-4073, wait for the prompt and presto, that's it — time to talk.

OK, so there are a couple guidelines: We ask that you speak clearly enough so we can accurately transcribe your message. You'll want to keep your remarks relatively brief so we have enough space in the newspaper to include it all.

If you don't want to leave a message, that's OK. You can e-mail your Sound Off! to [SoundOffAuburn@stonebridgepress.com](mailto:SoundOffAuburn@stonebridgepress.com). Just remember to label it as a Sound Off.



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Residents invited to garden tours

To the Editor:  
 Each year, hardy New Englanders manage to survive and even thrive through our extensive winter season; but, personally, may I reflect that surviving this frigididity would not be possible without our ingenious imaginations and lofty plans that we contrive for the next season's botanical transformation.

Perhaps this year, having endured more cold and snow than most can tolerate, we are especially looking forward to the greening and blossoming of our landscapes!

The Auburn Woman's Club, under the leadership of club member and director Ann Marie Wisialko, proudly invite you to our Secret Gardens Tour. Yes, Auburn has some secret gardens that local gardeners are opening for your viewing and enrichment on June 11. Six local homes with extensive gar-

dens will be readied for you, and yes, sun and pleasant temperatures have been requisitioned as well. The tour is from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and the admission fee will benefit the Auburn Woman's Club Scholarship Fund.

We cordially invite you to attend to enjoy a day of special treats for your senses — "Where you tend a rose my lad, a thistle cannot grow!"

Please join us in the secret gardens of Auburn. Tickets may be purchased at the Auburn Public Library on June 4, or at the garden sites on June 11. Garden sites in Auburn include: 5 Bancroft Street; 103 Elmwood Street; 101 Central Street; 1 Claire Drive; 6 Montclair Drive; 9 Jade Hill Road.

BETH JOHNSON  
 PRESIDENT, AUBURN WOMAN'S CLUB

## May is Older Americans Month: Let's embrace the new!

With the threat of frost finally over, this past weekend I decided it was safe to invest a little "sweat equity" in my garden, so I planted some petunias, some snapdragons, and — my favorite of all — a patch of beautiful regal burgundy geraniums.

Like so many of you, I enjoy gardening. There's something refreshingly elemental about getting your hands into the earth and adding some beauty to your corner of the world. It takes a little work, but the results are always fulfilling, which in a way is the theme of this month's column.

May is Older Americans Month. This year I'm especially excited about Older Americans Month because the theme — Older Americans: Connecting the Community — pays homage to the many ways in which older adults like you bring inspiration and continuity to the fabric of our communities, and highlights how technology is helping older Americans live longer, healthier, and more engaged lives.

We cannot overlook or ignore the increasing importance and prominence of technology in keeping us connected to our loved ones and to our communities in general. Just this morning I read an article in the Wall Street Journal titled, "My Grandparents R My BFF." Whereas three or four years ago most of you might have attributed that phrase to incomprehensible "teen-speak," these days you probably know what that means — and how to respond, too!

It's not just texting that can help us stay connected to our loved ones. There's a lot more to social networking, and it's all pretty easy, once you get the hang of it — from posting photos and chatting on Facebook, playing online games (like Scrabble), and Skypeing (online videoconferencing), technology gives seniors more frequent and meaningful interactions with distant family members. We at the Auburn VNA strongly encourage our clients to learn about and embrace social networking

EDUCATING SENIORS BRING YOUR HEALTH... HOME

BRETT L. CAMPBELL

because we see first hand how it keeps seniors connected and involved.

Sure, new technology can be daunting and it's hard to find those little keys on your smart phones. Not everyone is "all thumbs." Like I said above, it takes a little work at first but I assure you, you'll be pleased with the results. You're never too young to surprise your loved ones with a text that says, simply, "ILU."

While you're learning to use these valuable communications tools, recall that in your lifetime you've accomplished things far harder than learning to text or uploading photos to Facebook — and people appreciate you for doing so.

In his proclamation honoring Older Americans Month, President Obama said: "Having lived through many of our Nation's most challenging times, older Americans have shaped the story of America and secured the promise of our future. We are privileged to recognize these treasured citizens during Older Americans Month, and honor both the impact they have made and their accomplishments yet to come."

As always, the Auburn VNA Health Network Team is available for your health and wellness needs with a complete range of home care services. For more information or questions, please call us at 508-791-0081. Be happy, be well and be safe!

*Brett L. Campbell is the Director of Public Relations & Fund Development of the Auburn VNA Health Network. The AVHN provides more than 19,000 home visits annually to more than 700 individuals in Auburn, Worcester and surrounding towns. Brett welcomes your questions and comments about any specific social media concerns and she will be delighted to assist you in learning how to text! You may reach her at [bcampbell@auburnvna.org](mailto:bcampbell@auburnvna.org) or 508-791-0081.*

## Preparations being made for Memorial Day parade

Welcome to May!  
 Finally, it seems that we have waited for years for this month to arrive. I hope everyone is preparing for a great summer. I am not so sure about these gas prices though.

Another fantastic Memorial Day parade is planned for this year. The great bunch of "parade planners" at the Tuttle Post will have flyers out shortly around town. The parade starts at Dooley's Cleaners promptly at 10 a.m. and travels to the Hillside Cemetery where ceremonies will be conducted immediately following. If you wish to march in the parade or have a group interested in marching, please call 508 832-2701 and let the Legion Post know ASAP. It's necessary to coordinate a smooth and enjoyable time.

Each year, the Chester P. Tuttle American Legion Post 279 does its best to make sure the Memorial Day Parade is successful. The next time you see one of the members of Post 279, say "Hello and thanks!" I am sure they would appreciate it. The Melha Shriner's will also be in attendance with the cars, clowns, and marching units. Let's put out a great attendance number this year. Show your appreciation and support for our annual parade.

What would we do if we could not have a parade? Think about it.

Also, the local chapter of Vietnam Veterans

Chapter 554, will be holding their semi-annual fundraising Road Block in June. This raises funds to help them continue supporting veterans in need locally. I am proud to be associated with this great group of veterans as well as with the American Legion. Watch for them and help them out.



VETERAN'S UPDATES  
 LARRY CORBIN

Speaking of fundraisers, if you receive a phone call from anyone requesting donations for veterans causes be careful. I would ask the local police department or like some of you have done, call my office at the town hall and check to see if it is a legitimate group.

There are too many non-approved groups out there trying to steal your monies. Be aware! All fundraising activities should be done with the group notifying police of the dates and cause for approval before contacting our veterans and families.

I hope everyone is aware that all the flags are now up and waving proudly in the Memorial parks. They will remain there until a few days after Veterans Day in November.

*Lawrence J. Corbin III, is retired from the United States Air Force. He is the Director of Veterans' Services for the Town of Auburn. He may be reached at (508) 832-7706, or by e-mail at [lcobin@town.auburn.ma.us](mailto:lcobin@town.auburn.ma.us).*

## Share the giving spirit

Parasprokian of the week: "To be sure of hitting the target, shoot first and call whatever you hit the target."

They're out there, everywhere. And they're out to get you. Whether you're watching a Little League game or visiting your local library, taking a quiet stroll downtown or hiking for a worthy cause, they're there, and their presence is felt.

We're talking about volunteers, and despite the fact that they seem to be about as plentiful as the walking wounded in a zombie flick, they're out to get YOU. But remember this: we really couldn't live without them.

An early morning trip down Hamilton and West Streets in Southbridge last week put us in mind of their work and their (omni)presence. They were disguised as school crossing guards, quietly standing at the curb one minute, then boldly marching into the street the next, raising arms and hands to stop traffic and assure the safety of youngsters trying to get from one side of the (very busy) street to the other.



AS YOU LIKE IT  
 MARK ASHTON

They're there every morning — actually whenever kids and buses and commuters are at odds with one another

and in need of someone to take charge. They brave nasty weather, work crummy hours, and deal with disgruntled drivers and off-inattentive pedestrians. Sure they get to wear bright snazzy vests, and to wave no-nonsense signs in the direction of oncoming traffic, but even on the best of days, they put themselves at risk, in harm's way, in order to clear the way for kids under their important stewardship.

They're like the "traffic cops" we used to have in wooden boxes at busy downtown intersections decades ago — except they don't have any protective boxes. They're like Moses parting the Red Sea for an exodus of backpack-wearing little wanderers. They're like Michael, the hero of Robert McCloskey's "Make Way for Ducklings."

They're also just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to volunteering (we're assuming here that these stalwart crossing guards are indeed working gratis. To us, they appear to be service-minded retirees. If we're wrong on this point, if it turns out they're [very] part-time paid workers, it still doesn't negate the fact that everyone else we're about to discuss indeed fulfills very important roles for free).

Last month (April) was officially Volunteer Appreciation Month across America, and we're sorry we didn't get around to highlighting this fact sooner (perhaps we need an intern — volunteer, of course — to help us stay better abreast of these things in timely fashion). But it's never too late to remember all the good that gets done by way of volunteering.

Like what, you ask? Well, think about it. Almost everything worthwhile that takes place in your community gets done with the help of committed volunteers. They're the ones coaching Little League baseball (and basketball and football and hockey and soccer) and whatever athletic endeavor your personal pee-wees are into. They help newcomers learn English in hopes of becoming more productive citizens. They walk (and ride bikes) to collect pledges funding Special Olympics, supporting heart research, and trying to put an end to the ravages of cancer. They keep "The Rez" shoveled for young skaters in winter and local trails cleared for hikers of all ages in summer.

They help build homes, and havens — along with Cub, and Boy, and Girl Scouts, and Campfire kids; they beautify local parks and historic downtown districts; they teach, instruct, mentor, and manage. They give of themselves, their time, their talents, and their life's experiences. They embody — and share — the giving spirit.

We work with some wonderful folks for whom volunteering is not only second nature but a first priority. They give time every Friday after work to the hospital gift shop; they serve on planning committees and boards of directors to see that things get done that otherwise wouldn't. They're prime examples of not only the "can-do" spirit but the "will-do" willingness to see that needy neighbors are cared for; and that our communities are cleaner, safer, and more comfortable. Lucky for us, their caring attitude can be contagious.

They organize local bazaars and festivals (of lights and ethnic foods and fun); they march in parades and promote patriotism and other causes they believe in. They help out at food pantries, bishop's storehouses, and homeless shelters; they donate time and energy to see that other people enjoy the same blessings for which they are truly grateful.

The Center of Hope in Southbridge recently honored dozens of clients at a Volunteer Breakfast for collectively giving more than 7,000 volunteer hours last year. These special donors helped out at nearby farms and nature sanctuaries, cleaned local churches, bagged food orders, and accomplished great things — individually and in work crews — for countless others in their communities.

Along with now thinking of them, we hope you'll consider thanking them (you know who they are! They're all around you). You may already even be one of them. If not, remember this: they're out to get you. And you really can't beat 'em, so you might as well join 'em.

*Mark Ashton writes a weekly column for Stonebridge Press publications.*