

ESTABLISHED 1923

**SOUTHBRIDGE NEWS**

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## EDITORIAL

### Strong women make history

International Women's Day may seem like a new progressive holiday however it seems back to 1909 when planners organized a day for Women on Feb. 28 in New York. One year later, the International Socialist Woman's Conference announced that a day for women be held each year.

Fast forward to 1917 in Russia, where, on March 8, women were given the right to vote. In 1975, the holiday was adopted by the United Nations.

The long and the short is that this day is a day to celebrate women past, present and future. With that said our staff chose to highlight the women that we feel have had a standout role in influencing how our world operates today. The list was endless, therefore naturally hard to choose, so in order to prevent a 200-page editorial we narrowed the list down to our favorites.

Social reformer Emmeline Pankhurst founded the Women's Social and Political Union in 1903 to campaign for the parliamentary vote for women in Edwardian Britain. 'Deeds, not words' being its motto. Pankhurst is described as a charismatic leader and powerful orator, Pankhurst rallied thousands of women to demand, rather than ask politely, for their democratic right in a mass movement that has been unparalleled in British history. The kettle did not come without consequences, she endured 13 imprisonments, leading her name and cause becoming known throughout the globe.

At the age of 15, Claudette Colvin was arrested at the age of 15 in Montgomery, Alabama when she refused to give up her bus seat to a white woman. This event gave the famous Rosa Parks the courage to do the same. Colvin was one of five plaintiffs involved in the federal court case filed by civil rights attorney Fred Gray in 1956, in which they challenged bus segregation. The outcome was that a judge ordered that the local laws in regards to bus segregation were unconstitutional. To find Colvin's name in a history book is rare. This in part because she was an unmarried teenager who apparently was with child. Colvin went on to become a nurse's aid. In an interview in 2005, Colvin said, "I feel very very proud of what I did. I do feel like what I did was a spark and it caught on."

As for recognition, Colvin said, "I'm not disappointed. Let the people know Rosa Parks was the right person for the boycott. But also let them know that the attorneys took four other women to the Supreme Court to challenge the law that led to the end of segregation."

Colvin's family has been trying since 2016 to have her recognized and honored in the National Museum of African American History and Culture. Colvin was not invited officially to the opening of the museum in 2016.

Marie Curie is the next on our short list. Curie was a Polish and naturalized-French physicist and chemist who was the first to delve into radioactivity Curie who was born in 1867, was the first woman to win a Nobel Prize, and the only person to win it two times. Collecting several firsts, Curie was the first woman to become a professor at the University of Paris. In a time when most women spent their days in the home taking care of their children and husbands, Curie had to smash several ceilings for her own advancement. Curie was known for her honesty and moderate lifestyle. All of her prize money she donated to scientific research and refused to copyright the radium-isolation process so that her fellow scientists could continue research unhindered. In 2011, Poland and France declared the year would be 'The Year of Marie Curie.' She became the first woman to be entombed on her own merits in the Pantheon in Paris in 1995.

In 1933, Eleanor Roosevelt turned the position of First Lady from benign symbol to an active and intellectually vigorous power center. Roosevelt served as the United States Delegate to the UN General Assembly from 1945 to 1952. Roosevelt was the topic of much controversy for her outspoken nature, especially in regard to civil rights for African-Americans. She was the first, First Lady to hold regular press conferences, host a weekly radio show and to speak at a national party convention. She was so bold to even disagree with her husband on certain policies. After her husband's death, Roosevelt spent her remaining years in active politics. She was the first chair of the UN Commission on Human Rights and chaired John F. Kennedy's administration's Presidential Commission on the Status of Women. Roosevelt was nicknamed the 'First Lady of the World.'

Last but not least is Agent 355, who was instrumental to the Patriot cause during the Revolutionary War. Agent 355 was a part George Washington's Culpeper Spy Ring. With the fear of a trip to the gallows in the back of her mind every day, Agent 355 managed to continue to help get crucial information to the General. Unlike the women we mentioned before, Agent 355 used her role as a quiet unassuming woman to make monumental gains that led to our freedom today. The identity of '355' is not yet known, however she is referred to as 'Lucky 355' in Washington's code book. The only direct reference to '355' was from ringleader Abraham Woodhull (known as Samuel Culper Sp) to Washington in which Woodhull described her as 'one who hath been ever serviceable to this correspondence.' We hope that one day her true identity will be discovered.

While we pay homage to strong women who have done incredible things, this does not negate the influential women we come into contact with in our everyday lives. As women we don't have to smash ceilings or gain notoriety to make a difference. We can be positive, powerful and influential in our everyday lives which in turn creates a domino effect that can last years after we're gone.

# OPINION

Viewpoints and commentary from the Tri-Community and beyond

## Who decides what a meaningful life is?

BY CINDY HOWARD  
PRESIDENT/CEO  
CENTER OF HOPE FOUNDATION

Let me start this letter with a quote by Cornelia Suskind, mother of Owen, from the wonderful Oscar nominated documentary, "Life, Animated." When asked by an evaluator who worked with Owen, a young man who has Autism, "What do you think Owen's contributions are to his community and family?" she quotes her husband, Ron: "Who decides what a meaningful life is?"

In the context of the movie, it touched me profoundly at the time, even though I have worked in the field for more than 30 years, as it brings into sharp focus how many of us think about the value of people, especially people with disabilities. Who does decide what a meaningful life is? Is a person's worth about the size of their paycheck, how many hours they work, how funny they are, their fame or number of volunteer hours? Unless you have a family member with a disability, the issues surrounding this world are just not given a second thought... but you do notice how much it costs to support them. Is it really worth that amount of money when they may not change that much, get a job or contribute tax dollars?

When our culture finally saw that people in institutions needed to be free to live more "normal" lives in their own homes with their families or in smaller groups and that it would be at a much more affordable cost, the revolution began. There has been so much progress made, but one consequence of this has been more than 3 decades of disparity in the rates of pay for people doing this work as compared to almost any other industry.

For all the years I've been advocating before the legislature and speaking in public settings on behalf of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, I have been saying that we all need to see the folks we serve as having enough value to deserve and receive enough funding to actually lead self-determined, purposeful lives. Everyone says, of course, that is what they believe too, but it is not followed up with the actions that prove that belief. As the years have gone by the funding level has deteriorated. Just think of what it would cost if everyone was still sent to institutions at birth?

This is a Civil Rights issue. People with ID/DD are still segregated, undervalued and often ignored. They have the same rights as every other minority, every other human being to live, work and play based on their own decisions, not what other people think they should have or become. We believe in the values of full participation of people with disabilities in all aspects of community life through providing person-centered services. This necessitates support that allows people to walk their own path, use their own unique talents, follow their own preferences. This requires a partnership with the individual and their family that leads towards a life full of opportunity, wellbeing and contribution to their community. Much of this is accomplished with the work of the Direct Support Professional.

Our private provider agencies support many thousands of people in our area so that they have productive lives were having a crisis with attracting and retaining staff, especially the Direct Support Professional (Direct Care) for years before the pandemic, but this has been greatly exacerbated since then. Since we have been trying to return to the services we provide, we have been unable to bring back more than 20 per-

cent of the people we serve because we cannot employ enough staff to allow them to return. Multiply that by all of our types of agencies in Massachusetts and 7,000 people have been waiting at home to get back to services after being at home for over two years, not including the hundreds of people who should be moving into adult services and cannot.

Now, imagine being their parents or caretakers who cannot work or get a break for more than two years. The world is coming back to normal, but not for them, as there are no staff for people with complex medical and behavioral needs.

Also imagine the residential homes staffed by DSPs whose individuals cannot go to day programs or out in the community because they do not have enough staff. Again, stuck at home for more than 2 years with staff who have to work many hours of overtime because there is no one to replace them.

We have grown from the time when we were considered just caregivers FOR people to focusing on empowering people to make their own decisions and helping people to do things for themselves. This requires the DSP to be a jack of all trades, being teachers, therapists, clinicians, counselors, chauffeurs, case managers, health aides, personal care attendants, nutritionists, vocational instructors, etc., etc. It is a complex job requiring many skills that really make a difference in people's lives. They are not babysitters. Yet, after their rewarding, but exhausting day, they have to work another job just to make ends meet. Some may even have a third job in order to stay in the field. Sometimes the person with a disability will get a job that pays more than the job coach that supports them. This system is not sustainable, so they eventually have to move on to jobs with higher pay and almost all other jobs have higher pay causing turnover at close to 50 percent!

Again, almost every other profession pays more. Our folks live at poverty levels, or close to it. Many other industries can pass the increased costs of their goods and services on to their consumers. We are dependent on state and federal funding. The meager increases we receive do not come close to addressing the cost of living.

Why does this disparity continue? It's a big price tag to have the government fund us adequately, but the consequences for not addressing it cost more... more regression in independence, more emergency room visits, more hospitalizations, more mental health issues, more institutionalizations, more dependence on state and federal benefits, more need for overtime rather than using those savings for better wages in a regular work week, etc. The legislature needs to understand this, but so does the public. We cannot be short sighted. The investment in addressing the funding gap will bring competent, well trained people into the field who will contribute to the taxes that fund our programs, use less state benefits, use private health insurances and contribute to their economy.

More importantly people with disabilities deserve to be treated with all the dignity and respect that every other human being deserves. That cannot happen with the current system. People do not stop having a disability because there is less funding. The pendulum is swinging backward. This is a moral imperative.

"Who decides what a meaningful life is?"

## Avoid tax filing errors



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It's tax season once again. You've got until April 18 to file your taxes for the 2021 tax year; but if you think you'll get a refund, you'll probably want to get going as soon as possible. However, it's important not to rush so much that you make errors, which, at the least, could delay your refund. So, take the time you need to prepare your taxes – and be sure to avoid these common filing mistakes:

- Failing to include all W-2 forms – You need to include official copies of all your W-2 forms from your employer (or employers). The wages and withholdings listed on these forms must be combined and reported on your tax return.

- Forgetting necessary paperwork – Make sure you have all the documents you need before filing, such as forms from investment companies, including Form 1099-DIV for dividend income.

- Entering an incorrect Social Security number – An incorrect Social Security number can cause the IRS to reject your return. So, double-check your SSN, and that of your spouse, if filing jointly, before submitting your return.

- Using the wrong column from Tax Tables – If you do your own taxes, you will probably have to refer to the 1040 Tax Tables page to make the correct calculations. But if you look at the wrong column, you could miscalculate – a mistake that's not uncommon, according to the IRS.

- Making math errors – If you file a paper tax return, be sure to check your math to make sure the figures add up. Of course, if you use a software program, or work with a tax professional, you won't have to do the math on your own, but you should still double check it. It's always important to review your return.

- Entering the wrong routing or account number – If you want your tax refund to be deposited directly into your bank account, which is the fastest way to receive it, you need to provide the correct routing and account numbers. A simple mistake can result in the IRS sending you a paper check or, even worse, someone else receiving your refund.

- Failure to sign and date your return – Signing your return is an easy task – but it's also easy to overlook. If you file your taxes electronically, as most people do, you may be able to use a Self-Select PIN as your digital signature. If you're filing a joint return, you and your spouse must use your respective PINs.

- Missing the filing deadline – If you don't think you can finish your taxes on time, file for an extension before the April 18 deadline. You'll still need to pay the taxes you owe (though you may have to estimate the amount) by April 18, and if you owe more, you'll likely accrue interest, but you can avoid failure-to-file penalties, which can be hefty.

Keep in mind that, when you submit your return electronically, the e-file system can detect typical errors, allowing you to correct them immediately, according to the IRS.

And, of course, working with a tax professional can greatly reduce the likelihood of mistakes. But even if you're entrusting your tax returns to someone else, you still should be quite familiar with all your documentation – and everything else that goes into your taxes, too, because how you manage your taxes will always be part of your overall financial strategy.

*This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor. Please contact Trevor Nielsen, your local Edward Jones Advisor in Sturbridge at 508-347-1420 or trevor.nielsen@edwardjones.com.*

## Maple Syrup Part II

As noted in last week's column, for many New Englanders, the silver lining of a long, cold winter is the promise of the season's first sweet maple syrup. The centuries old-ritual of tapping sugar maple trees remains a familiar sight on country roads. Thus, in recognition of the state's longtime annual tradition of tapping trees, March has been designated Maple Month by the Massachusetts Maple Producers Association.

I thought it fitting that this week we continue the celebration of maple, marvelous maple! Read on for more virtues of the sweet stuff as well as some recipes and fun facts about maple: Virtues of Maple: While most people favor the thick, sweet syrup as the crowning glory of a stack of pancakes or plate of waffles, the virtues of maple are many, and the syrup is being rediscovered as a natural and diverse sweetener.

Pure maple syrup, with its rich, unique flavor is quickly being appreciated by those who prefer a natural, unprocessed sweetener. The natural syrup contains the same calories as sugar; and offers a higher concentration of minerals than honey.



TAKE  
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HINT  
KAREN  
TRAINOR

In addition to the extraordinary taste, there are many more virtues of maple. The zinc supplied by maple syrup acts as an antioxidant and has other functions that can decrease the progression of atherosclerosis.

Moreover, research reveals manganese, the other trace mineral amply supplied in maple syrup, can help raise the level of HDL (the "good" cholesterol). Maple syrup also includes small and trace amounts of calcium, B2, B5, B6, riboflavin, potassium, pantothenic acid, pyridine, phosphorus, niacin, iron, biotin, and folic acid.

In fact, according to Maine Maple Producers Association, the medical jour-

nal Pharmaceutical Biology revealed that pure maple syrup contains up to 24 different antioxidants.

These antioxidants, in the form of phenolic compounds, are beneficial for reducing free radical damage that can cause inflammation and contribute to the formation of various chronic diseases.

Note: Whenever possible, select darker, grade B maple syrups since these contain more beneficial antioxidants than the lighter syrups do.

Making the Grade: The first maple syrup, produced in the beginning of the season is usually light amber. As the season continues, medium, dark and finally Grade B syrup is produced. "Grade A Light is very light, which has a delicate taste, is used to make maple sugar candy and is also a favorite for crepes or waffles."

"Grade A Medium Amber is a bit darker, and has more maple flavor. It is the most popular grade of table syrup, and is usually made after the sugaring season begins to warm, about mid-season."