

Merrimack Valley 50+

December
2025

Active *Life*

Season's
Greetings

A Carol For The
Season

Things to Do:
Merrimack Valley
Community
Calendar

Free

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Merrimack Valley 50+
Active Life
December 2025

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Active Life

Published by Merrimack Valley Parent, LLC
www.merrimackvalleyactivelife.com
978-427-3676

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The holidays are again upon us as we ready ourselves and our families for the season ahead. Whatever your faith and set of beliefs may be, we are beginning the season of celebrating with our families and friends. Whether it be Christmas, Hanukkah or Kwanzaa that you observe, this time of year will

hopefully bring us closer together. We live in difficult times throughout the world and having a chance to reflect on our lives and what we believe in is an opportunity to look inward and find purpose. It is not all about physical gifts, although that exchange is an important part of the holidays. I believe

that finding joy and contentment in our exchanges with our family, friends and neighbors is ultimately where we want to be. Being part of and celebrating common bonds of brotherhood and sisterhood provide a great opportunity to give of ourselves and feel the solemnity of the season. With all that we experience in our collective worlds every day, it is like a soothing balm to find a time where we can enjoy fellowship.

One of my favorite holiday stories is A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens. To me it represents redemption of the heart and mind and provides great motivation for finding and celebrating the true meaning of the season. Dickens understood how difficult life was in mid-1800's England. There were great income disparities between the haves and have-nots. Child labor was rampant throughout society in order for lower income families to make ends meet. It was not uncommon for children to work in factories under the worst of conditions. Dickens himself worked in a shoe polish factory at the age of twelve. His father was sent to prison because of his debts. As a result, much of Charles Dickens' writing are colored by his difficult personal family experiences.

Suffering, hardship and redemption provide the backdrop for Dickens' immensely popular story. The central character, Ebenezer Scrooge, exem-

plifies the cold-hearted miser who has shut himself off from society, all in the name of wealth and profit. He has shielded himself from past emotional injuries with his family and the former love of his life, Belle, to the point where he lets nobody in to his world. As a consequence, Scrooge does not believe in Christmas or in giving from the heart. To him, he has suffered too much and as a consequence, has shut himself off from society and his family. He even refuses to acknowledge his nephew, Fred, who visits Scrooge at the counting house to wish him Merry Christmas and to invite him to dinner with his family.

The magic of the story is in redemption, second chances and being able to see the world in an entirely different light. Scrooge undergoes this transformation after being shown his past, present and future selves by three spirits. Although at first, he refuses to acknowledge and believe his former and now dead partner, Jacob Marley, who visits him as a specter to warn Scrooge to change his ways or he will end up like Marley, roaming the earth in chains. Marley tells Scrooge that he will be visited by three spirits during the night, to which Scrooge mutters "humbug" in disbelief. Scrooge refuses to believe this warning and goes to bed in disbelief.

by Gary Kalajian

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Merrimack Valley Calendar of Events



December



Monday, December 1
HOLIDAY STRESS RELIEF MEDITATION
WORKSHOP - VIRTUAL
MONDAY, DECEMBER 1 6:00—7:00 PM
Zoom

The holidays can be really stressful. Participants will learn healthy anxiety coping skills, breathing techniques, and meditation that can be used on the go to bring more peace, connection, and joy back into the season! Class is 60 minutes with an intro, guided practice, then time for Q&A. Open to all levels and beginners welcome! This workshop is led by Amy Rutledge and will be held over Zoom.

Registration is required.
Amy Rutledge came to the study of meditation as a path toward personal healing after struggles with the effects of Lyme Disease as well as depression and anxiety and found that it helped her in ways when many other approaches failed. This led her to training as a Mindful Meditation Teacher at the Nalanda Institute for Contemplative Science in Manhattan.

She has taught classes and led meditation exercises for a wide range of business and cultural institutions, from IBM, NACTO, and Jet.com (Walmart) to the Girl Scouts of America to public institutions such as the Los Angeles Public Library and Jersey City Public Library.

Ms. Rutledge brings to her classes and workshops a graciousness for the second chance that mediation has given her and a passionate desire to aid others with their suffering as she has similarly been aided. She has an expertise in Loving-Kindness/ Metta meditation and skills in leading meditation toward mindfulness, self-healing, self-worth and creative visualization. In addition to her skills with mindfulness and meditation, she has significant experience in the arts as an actress and producer, as well as experience as a ceramicist and owner at RoughWare

MITTEN TREE GLOVE DRIVE
MONDAY, DECEMBER 1—SATURDAY, JANUARY 3 ALL DAY Newburyport Public Library
Newburyport Public Library, 94 State Street, Newburyport, MA, 01950
Enjoy the warmth of giving this holiday season with Newburyport Public Library and the Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center! In the spirit of giving, we are inviting our community to join us in the innocent joy

of useful gifting this season. Based off the book, "The Mitten Tree" by Candace Christiansen, community members are invited to bring donations of mittens, gloves, and other small winter wear items to the library. All donations can be placed on the lit tree in our lobby or in the drop box under the tree. With the help of the Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center, these small gifts of comfort will help the most vulnerable in our community to enjoy the warmth of the season.

About the Book:
The Mitten Tree by Candace Christiansen is the story of an elderly woman and the joy that she feels in surprising the young children in her community with warm mittens so that they can enjoy playing in the snow. This title will be on display in the lobby or you can place a hold to enjoy a copy at home HERE.

About the Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center:
The Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center provides comprehensive services to meet the complex needs of adults and children that have experienced domestic violence, at no cost to them. Their team of advocates, mental health counselors, and lawyers provide an integrated web of support as needs shift from crisis intervention to long term healing and independence.

All donations will be distributed by the Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center to families in need this winter. Please do not wrap donations.

Gift Wrapping Station
MONDAY, DECEMBER 1—WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 24 ALL DAY Reference Desk 2nd Floor Newburyport Public Library, 94 State Street, Newburyport, MA, 01950

Check a task off your holiday to-do list! This year we are happy to provide a self-serve Wrapping Station to all library visitors. All standard supplies are provided so that all you need to bring are your gifts and holiday cheer. If you are feeling adventurous, we invite you to try out some of our fun wrapping tutorials to create unique bows, bags, and boxes that will add a little extra pizzaz to your giving this year. Supplies, including wrapping paper, ribbon, bows, and tape will be available for free while supplies last.

No appointments are necessary for this walk-in service.

Tuesday, December 2
CHESS CLUB
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 2 6:00—8:00 PM
Milhender Room Haverhill Public Library
99 Main Street, Haverhill, MA, 01830
Are you looking to challenge someone in a game of Chess? Drop by our monthly Chess Club! All ages welcome! We will have a few sets available for use, but we recommend bringing your own if you are able!
No Registration Required

CLASSIC MATINEES: ALL SNOWED IN
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 2 10:00 AM—12:15 PM Johnson Auditorium Haverhill Public Library 99 Main Street, Haverhill, MA, 01830
Join us in watching some of the best films where the snow doesn't want to let you go...today we watch The Thing (1982), rated R.
No Registration Required

CHRISTMAS MARKETS IN PRAGUE AND GERMANY (VIRTUAL)
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 2 2:00—3:00 PM Virtual Program Newburyport Public Library, 94 State Street, Newburyport, MA, 01950
Visit amazing Christmas markets in Prague and four cities in Germany. With very few international tourists and mostly locals enjoying good food, good friends, and a festive atmosphere, December trips are quite different from summer visits.

About the Presenter:
Gene Flynn is an Illinois native who has taught at the College of Lake County and Harper College, and serves on the board of the Institute for Continued Learning at Roosevelt University. He frequently gives travel presentations to libraries and senior centers around the country, and has traveled to more than a dozen European countries.

This program is presented in collaboration with the Tewksbury Public Library and is in partnership with a multitude of MA & NH libraries.

Virtual registration required. Register HERE. Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/817598673933?pwd=ZWVJSDQybRLeGmCFL7YtGHQ>

A CHARLES DICKENS CHRISTMAS (VIRTUAL)
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 2 7:00—8:00 PM Virtual Program Newburyport Public Library,

94 State Street, Newburyport, MA, 01950
Charles Dickens has famously been called "The Man Who Invented Christmas." Inspired by the writings of Washington Irving earlier in the 19th century, Dickens wrote five Christmas novellas between 1843 and 1848 and over a dozen short stories between 1852 and 1866. Each of these—including the perennial favorite A CHRISTMAS CAROL—helped to shape how the holiday season is celebrated in Britain and America. This program explores these wonderful flights of holiday fantasy and their lasting influence.

About the Presenter:
Dr. Bill Thierfelder is a retired professor of Arts and Humanities, with a PhD in English Literature, an MA in Theology, and a BA in English with additional concentrations in music history and art. After teaching Second Grade for four years and High School seniors for six months as a replacement substitute, Bill spent the next 32 years teaching a variety of Arts and Humanities courses at several New York and Long Island universities and colleges, including St. John's University, Hofstra University, and Dowling College. He is currently docent emeritus at the American Museum of Natural History where he continues to give both Zoom and in-person presentations, work on special editing projects, and give tours. He also lectures regularly for libraries and educational organizations nationwide via Zoom. Bill's classroom, library, and Museum vocations have taught him that life is all about "making wings," hence, the name of his website: Making Wings. Indeed, Bill's philosophy—rooted in years of practical study and life experience—is simple: The most important thing you can do is to make wings for yourself and fly to places that fulfill your potential, that allow you to develop your unique gifts, and that open you up to a world of possibilities. This program is presented in collaboration with the Groton Public Library and is in partnership with a multitude of MA & NH libraries.

Virtual registration required. Register HERE. Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/817598673933?pwd=ZWVJSDQybRLeGmCFL7YtGHQ>

Wednesday, December 3
VIRTUAL: 50+ JOB SEEKERS NETWORKING GROUP -- SECOND ACT CAREERS ("THINK-

A Carol For The Season
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The beauty of this timeless story is in the transformation that Scrooge undergoes after being shown his life by the spirits. It is heartwarming to see Scrooge changing his whole demeanor or after first shutting his eyes, mind and heart to the spirits who mirror Scrooge's world to him. For example, the spirit of the past reveals all that he lost because money was more important to Scrooge than love. And the spirit of the present who reveals to Scrooge the hardship of Bob Cratchit and his family, which has a particular and profound effect on Scrooge. This hardship is multiplied with the love Cratchit's family has for each other and their sickly youngest child, Tiny Tim, despite their lack of wealth. The clincher is when the spirit of the future reveals Scrooge's headstone in the cemetery as a final warning as to where Scrooge is headed unless he changes his ways.

To me, the magic of the Christmas Carol is in the belief that we all have an opportunity to grab hold of the present and give of ourselves to others, especially during the holiday season. Each of us have some regrets or things we would change about ourselves if we closely examine our past. However, the beauty of the story is the lesson that in the very act of giving to others we forget about our troubles or regrets from the past. It is a chance to provide joy and goodwill to our family, friends and neighbors, even if it is difficult to do. This exchange allows us to forget our own hurts and problems and provides us an opportunity to help others in need. The very act of greeting others and wishing them well during the holiday season can change not only the recipient of a genuine and warm reception, but also ourselves. It is contagious when we provide warmth and joy to others, especially during the holiday season.

The timeless story of A Christmas Carol is like perfect batch of warm chicken soup on a cold day. It is good for the heart, mind and soul. The message is universal and the ending is transformative. Dickens somehow knew how to move his readers emotionally with his writing throughout all of his novels,

this story in particular. The timeless tale of redemption of the heart and lives of people, will always resonate and move us emotionally. Scrooge tells us himself that he has changed his ways after encountering the three ghosts, when he says, "I will honor Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year." This message is truly a great reminder for all of us as we enter the upcoming holiday season.

Photo by Gary Kalajian



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