



CAMBRIDGE DAY

THE WEEK OF MARCH 26 – APRIL 2, 2026

FREE

Looking at the literacy gap in Cambridge schools

By JULIA CARPI

Longstanding gaps in literacy rates in the Cambridge public schools have created a sense of urgency for addressing the problem. Frustration with the gaps led two School Committee members to move to hold back third graders who did not meet standards. A vote on the motion was deferred, but some in the community are calling the literacy gap a societal crisis that must be resolved now.

“There’s a pervasive culture that is accepting of some groups of kids not reaching their full academic potential, and for some people, the status quo is okay,” said Richard Harding, a member of the School Committee and a co-sponsor of the motion to hold third-graders back.

Anthony Galluccio, former mayor of Cambridge and chair of the school committee, said “Cambridge has a very long history of



Bruno Muñoz-Oropeza

Anthony Galluccio (left), former Cambridge mayor and School Committee chair, listens to David Murphy, Cambridge Public Schools superintendent, at an event in February.

race and class issues. Inequities in the school system have persisted in part because the district has used “certain programs as mas- cara to make schools look more balanced,” without addressing the root of achievement gaps, he said.

“I think schools have historically been okay with failing if they’re failing kids who don’t have advocates,” agreed Tony Clark, the co-president of My Brother’s



Courtesy of Richard Harding

Richard Harding, School Committee member.

Keeper, an organization dedicated to addressing opportunity gaps for young men of color. “And, I think that now it’s a moral issue, and there are more kids who are non-Black, non-poor, who need services,” Clark said.

Only about 60 percent of Cambridge third graders fully meet reading proficiency goals, as assessed by Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) scoring. Of these,

76 percent of White third graders met or exceeded grade-level reading expectations on last year’s MCAS, while only 33 percent of Black students and 46 percent of Hispanic and Latino students did. Outcomes are similar by other high-need groups; 30 percent of Students with Disabilities and 41 percent of current and former English Learners meet proficiency. This demographic pattern persists for later grades.

Achievement gaps based on racial and socioeconomic groups have persisted in Cambridge for decades, despite the district spending more per-pupil than all but a handful of districts. State testing data show the district’s low-income students, students of color and students with disabilities perform lower on measures of literacy.

The oldest data from the state’s current MCAS system is from 2017, when Massachusetts transi-

tioned to “Next Generation Tests,” from its older method, “Legacy Tests.” That year, 72 percent of White students were meeting or exceeding third grade reading expectations, compared to 37 percent of Black students, 13 percent of Hispanic or Latino students, and 18 percent of Students with Disabilities.

Specific scores from the old and new MCAS systems are not comparable, according to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Middle School Education, but older data did display similar achievement gaps.

Annual comparisons of third grade ELA testing show how little improvement in the number of students meeting grade-level reading expectations. That number was 9 percent in 2022 and 2023, and 10 percent in the last two years.

See LITERACY GAP, page 4



Ruth Tam

Susumu Shingu's "Gift of the Wind" sculpture outside of the Porter Square T station. It was unveiled in 1985.

Kinetic sculpture repairs stuck in budget limbo

By RUTH TAM

On a breezy Saturday in March, the plaza outside the Porter Square T station was alive with people eager for a taste of spring.

There were sisters sharing a weekend ritual of a run, followed by bagels from Bagelsaurus. A

man enjoying a cigarette and a mystery novel. A woman selling flowers out of a bucket.

Animating the square was the playful chatter of four toddlers curious about the “windmill” in the sky that looked like an ice cream cone.

Few others looked up to admire

a sculpture that had been standing there for 40 years.

When the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority extended the Red Line from Harvard Square to Alewife in 1985, the project was considered a milestone for the nation’s first public transit system. To herald this achievement, the MBTA created the Arts on the Line program to commission 20 works of contemporary art at its new stations.

See PORTER SQUARE, page 3

A Cambridge teen is the nation’s best junior épée fencer



Mohamed Mostafa

Natalya Cafasso (right) in a bout.

By MATTHEW WUSCHKE

A 16-year-old Cambridge resident has become one of the nation’s top-ranked fencers. Now she’s preparing for the world championships next month in Brazil.

Natalya Cafasso ranks first in the United States in both the junior (under 20) and cadet (under 17) categories in épée. Épée is the only blade in fencing for which the whole body is the target, unlike the two other blades, foil and sabre.

For her, competing at the 2026 International Fencing Federation Junior & Cadet World Fencing Champion-

ships is a dream come true. She has been fencing since she was 6 years old and competing since she was 13. “It feels amazing. I never thought I would be in this position,” said Cafasso, a sophomore at Cambridge Rindge & Latin School. “Representing USA is a big deal, and it feels amazing that I can represent my country at the highest level.”

On top of her dominance in the U.S. junior and cadet categories, Cafasso is ranked seventh in the world in junior women’s épée and 13th in the U.S. in senior women’s épée.

See FENCER, page 11

METRO

City Council ‘ayes’ gender-neutral bathrooms

By JANE PETERSEN

New public spaces in Cambridge may come with gender-neutral bathrooms, thanks to a unanimous approval of a policy order by councillors during their meeting March 23. The vote came ahead of Trans Day of Visibility on March 31, and took place against a backdrop of an increasingly hostile national political environment for transgender and gender nonconforming people.

The order requests that the city manager’s office confirm the council can enact an ordinance requiring any new public spaces to have at least one single stall bathroom with gender-neutral signage. Such a policy would affect both city properties and privately-owned spaces with public accommodations, like restaurants and shops.

Multiple residents spoke in favor of the policy order during public comment, saying it is a necessary step to make transgender and gender non-conforming Cantabrigians feel safer.

“I’m grateful to live in a city that declares itself a sanctuary for trans and gender-expansive people, particularly at a moment in history where trans rights and trans lives are under attacks that seem to increase daily,” said Jo Quest-Neubert, a Cambridge



Bruno Muñoz-Oropeza

Cambridge City Hall.

resident and Cambridge Public Schools teacher. “And I also know that to truly be a sanctuary, we need to follow up declarations with actions.”

The policy order was initially sponsored by Mayor Sumbul Siddiqui and councillors Marc McGovern, E. Denise Simmons and Ayah Al-Zubi. To demonstrate support, councillors Patty Nolan, Tim Flaherty and Vice Mayor Burhan Azeem asked to be added as co-sponsors.

“Folks should be able to use a restroom where they feel safe and where they feel comfortable,” said McGovern. “In the climate that we’re in today, where trans folks and non-gender-conforming folks are really under attack across the country, I know we

don’t think that necessarily could happen here, but anything can happen anywhere.”

McGovern said the city was also “late” to adopting a policy to ensure restrooms are accessible to trans and gender-nonconforming people. Denver and Philadelphia have already done so, as have five states: California, Illinois, New Mexico, New York and Vermont.

If city policy changes, it would not require existing buildings to construct new bathrooms, nor would it require bathrooms with stalls to be gender neutral, McGovern noted.

A visible demonstration

Councillors also approved that city hall be highlighted using

the colors of the trans flag (blue, pink, and white) for Transgender Day of Visibility and the week after. Both Cambridge and Massachusetts as a whole have adopted policies to improve the quality of life of transgender and gender nonconforming residents.

The current federal administration, however, has been adamant in its attempts to remove anti-discrimination regulations related to gender identity. During his first two weeks in office, President Donald Trump passed a flurry of executive orders targeted at eliminating federal acknowledgement of genders other than “man” and “woman” and threatening to cut funding for educators and healthcare professionals aiding children in their social or medical transitions.

While the city council has taken the first step toward requiring gender-neutral bathrooms in new buildings, such a policy will not be finalized until the city manager’s office reports back to council on how to proceed.

Correction Box

“What bald eagles tell us about rat poison” (March 19) misidentified that eagle 25C died from rodenticide poisoning and 26C was struck by a car. Also, eagle MK died Feb. 27, 2023.

Cambridge Public Health Department mum on Neal’s exit

By CHINANU OKOLI

The sudden departure week of chief public health officer Derrick Neal has again caused questions about Cambridge’s unusual public health structure. The Cambridge Health Alliance runs the department and the public health commissioner is CHA’s CEO, Assaad Saya.

Patty Nolan, a city councillor and chair of the Health and Environment committee, said neither the city council nor the city manager were involved in the decision to remove Neal. She noted, however, that it’s unusual for someone to leave without notice.

“I don’t know, honestly, if it was a mutual decision or a one-sided decision, to say that this was the time for Chief Neal and Cambridge Health Alliance and the city to part ways,” Nolan said.

The Alliance, not the city, will lead the search to replace Neal. It said Tracy Rose-Tynes, formerly senior director of clinical services, has come out of retirement to serve as the department’s interim chief.

Nolan said now was a good time to revisit whether it makes sense for CHA to run the public health department. The Alliance has become a regional health network that serves Somerville, Everett, Medford and Revere, as well as Cambridge. CHA does not



Derrick Neal, Cambridge’s former chief public health officer.

run the public health department in any of its other communities.

“I do believe it would be better for the public health employees to be part of the city, because so much of their work is with the city,” Nolan said, adding that “right now, there’s a bit of blurring of the lines. If you’re in the public health department at Cambridge Health Alliance, are you serving the residents of Cambridge only or are you serving all the residents of CHA and their patient base, which is far, far broader?”

Nolan has raised this question before, notably in 2023 after CHA made cuts to the public health workforce councillors didn’t want it to make. In 2024, Neal told city councillors that the public health department focuses

solely on Cambridge, and CHA’s regional ties helped it “leverage the partnerships with neighboring communities, so we can have a better impact on overall health outcomes when it comes to the citizens of Cambridge.”

The Alliance and public health department have not released any information on the steps to hire a replacement for Neal. CHA’s contract to manage Cambridge’s public health department runs until 2028.

Officials at CHA provided no details on why Neal, who has been chief public health officer for more than four years, was suddenly removed from his position. Neal took over the chief public health officer position in November 2021, after the July departure of Claude Jacob. He arrived amid a surge in Covid-19 infections and spent much of his time as chief working on health promotion and prevention efforts such as holding vaccination clinics, communicating data to the city, encouraging residents to take tangible steps to protect their health in various situations.

Nolan added that she’s heard from others that the department’s leaders aren’t as empowering and sensitive to the needs of the city as they should be. “That department, which does very important work and has great staff in it, they deserve a leader

who empowers them and allows the department to be as good of a public health department as it can be,” Nolan said.

Neal did not return a request for comment. His bio was scrubbed from the public health department’s website on Thursday and replaced with that of Rose-Tynes. Rose-Tynes said she is “happy to be back in Cambridge” and focused on helping to “create the conditions that support the health and wellbeing of everyone in the community.”

Neal has had bumps in other positions. In October 2021, a month before his hiring in Cambridge, Neal had accepted an offer to lead the health department in Sonoma County, Calif. He withdrew his acceptance less than a week later over concerns regarding the treatment of department heads of color. It later came out that in his prior position as executive director of the Williamson County and Cities Health District in Round Rock, Texas, Neal had made illegal recordings of district board meetings addressing racial discrimination complaints he made. In October 2022, less than 11 months after his arrival in Cambridge, Neal pleaded guilty to two misdemeanor counts of attempting to disclose a recording of a closed meeting and paid fines totaling \$1,000, the Austin American-Statesman reported.

CAMBRIDGE DAY

Published Thursdays
Cambridge News Inc.
955 Massachusetts Ave. No. 199
Cambridge 02139
(617) 230-9632

Mission

The Week by Cambridge Day is published by a nonpartisan, nonprofit media organization, Cambridge News Inc. Our mission is to provide our readers with impartial, informative reporting, and to be an outlet for civic engagement and discourse on public policy, politics, government and other matters of citywide concern.

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The Week by Cambridge Day publishes with gratitude to its generous readers, its board and advisers and the Cambridge Community Foundation.



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Cambridge voters fund streets and sidewalks



City of Cambridge

An example of a tree with a flexible sidewalk.

By JANE PETERSEN

Better sidewalks, safer streets, and increased access to transportation won the most votes in Cambridge’s latest round of participatory budgeting. The program, begun in 2014, lets residents pitch, develop and vote on public projects that are funded through a pool of \$1 million. More than 10,000 residents voted this year.

This year’s participatory budget options ranged from environmental enhancements, recreation opportunities, and support for area artists. Projects were pitched in the fall and then volunteers developed them into final proposals that appeared on the ballot. All Cambridge residents over the age of 12 were eligible to vote for up to five of the 20 final proposals. Results were released March 18, with voters funding nine projects before the \$1 million cap was hit.

The top vote getter was “Fixing Sidewalks, Saving Trees,” a \$100,000 project that will replace damaged pavement around trees with flexible pavement options that won’t interrupt their root systems. Rounding out the top three were a project to improve crosswalk safety, and free transportation for low-income or unhoused residents on their way to important appointments.

“Right now if you’re a senior, you have access to The Ride, and

that’s great. But a lot of folks who are low income and unhoused don’t have that type of assistance, and so this will help with that kind of essential transportation,” Mayor Sumbul Siddiqui told Cambridge Day. “I’m really excited that that’s being funded.”

Other projects that received funding will provide cold and wet weather kits for unhoused residents, stock libraries with free school supplies, aim to rats and give the city’s basketball courts a much-needed make-over.

Updating the courts was an option in last year’s participatory budget and was the highest vote-earning project to miss the cutoff for funding. This year, the just-missed project proposed providing free bikes to low-income residents, falling short by 60 votes.

Mayor Siddiqui reflected on the positive impact the program has had on Cambridge over the years.

“Some of these are things I think the city could be doing anyway, right? But it’s nice to know that some of this, it’s coming from the community, and that’s the whole point. People are voting and telling us what they want.” Participatory budgeting was first implemented in Porto Alegre, Brazil in 1989. According to the City of Cambridge, it has been implemented in over 7,500 cities across the world.

The list of programs eligible for funding this year:

Project	Votes	Costs	Cumulative costs
Fixing Sidewalks, Saving Trees	5,057	\$100,000	\$100,00
More Complete Streets	4,355	\$200,000	\$300,000
Transportation Assistance Services	3,868	\$50,000	\$350,000
Cold and Wet Weather Kits	3,757	\$60,000	\$410,000
Rain and Pollinator Gardens	3,621	\$100,000	\$510,000
Supporting Continuous Access to School Supplies	3,394	\$12,000	\$522,000
Residential Rat Control	3,335	\$110,000	\$632,000
Concrete Barriers for Bike Lanes	3,275	\$150,000	\$782,000
Basketball Court Upgrades	2,525	\$250,000	\$1,032,000
Free Bikes for Low-Income Residents	2,467	\$150,000	
Winter Indoor Recreation Open Hours	2,339	\$30,000	
Support Spaces for Artists	1,928	\$120,000	
Planters for Sidewalk Trees	1,711	\$75,000	
Outdoor Exercise Equipment	1,566	\$150,000	
Dog Park Improvements	1,146	\$100,000	
Pool Dryers and Equipment	1,079	\$20,000	
Outdoor Tools for Loan	955	\$15,000	
Improve Riverside Press Park Community Garden	934	\$275,000	
Bike Counters	931	\$209,000	
My Future, My Vote	916	\$5,000	

Porter Square

From Page 1

The project totaled \$695,000 — one half of one percent of the construction budget — and drew from the MBTA’s budget, as well as the U.S. Department of Transportation, the Urban Mass Transportation Administration (now the Federal Transit Administration) and the National Endowment for the Arts.

“... the MBTA is once again a national pioneer — this time in bringing contemporary, permanent works of arts into subway settings,” wrote the MBTA in a 1985 pamphlet for the project. “... This collection was not acquired to hang in a gallery, museum or private home, but was created specifically for these subway stations and the public that uses them.”

At Porter Square, as T passengers ascended from the system’s deepest station, they were charmed by bronze gloves that appeared to tumble down the escalator. Emerging from the station, they were greeted by an uplifting white aluminum and mylar mobile that caught the light through the atrium windows. Outside were sculptures made of undulating granite and sliced boulders. Towering above it all was “Gift of the Wind,” a 46-foot steel sculpture with vibrant red wings that rotated with the breeze.

Its creator, Susumu Shingu, told Cambridge Day that his kinetic sculpture was influenced by the energy and mystery of the



Ruth Tam

“Glove Cycle” by Mags Harries was installed in 1984 as the MBTA expanded the Red Line. There were originally 54 gloves.

wind. He wanted to make the invisible, visible.

At the time, the MBTA boasted the largest collection of art by a public transit authority in the United States and it inspired similar programs in other U.S. cities. Since then, the T has accumulated more than 100 works across its system.

But, less than a decade after installation, many pieces in the MBTA’s original Red Line collection had fallen into disrepair. At Porter Square, when a lead weight fell off the atrium mobile in 1993, it was taken down and not repaired or replaced. Many of the bronze gloves on the escalator have disappeared. The concrete benches near the outdoor sculptures have buckled and begun collapsing.

“Gift of the Wind” is perhaps the MBTA’s most prominent artwork. While its arms still move,

they have faded into a dull pink that borders on gray.

The sculptor, now 88, says he was “proud to participate in a movement of public art,” when each new T station was imbued with its own character. Shingu designed “Gift of the Wind” while he was living in Cambridge and teaching at Harvard University in the ‘80s. He now lives in Aimoto, Japan.

He says he last laid eyes on the kinetic sculpture “five or six” years ago and noticed that it had faded in color. At the time, he said it had “already passed the moment for maintenance. Now, it’s really necessary. It’s dangerous for the people who pass by.”

“Repainting it is necessary, but more importantly, the ball bearings and rotating parts need to be taken down and checked,” he said. “Many times we [asked] for the maintenance of that sculpture from the MBTA. But they didn’t do it. Every time it’s [because of] economical reasons.”

On Thursday night, Porter Square residents met to discuss what could be done to restore the sculpture to its former glory.

“The genesis of this meeting is ‘G——, we got to get this thing painted,’” said Ruth Ryals, Porter Square Neighborhood Association president.

For more on Gift of the Wind, scan the QR code.



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CONDOS	SINGLES	MULTIS
101	13	21

SOMERVILLE		
CONDOS	SINGLES	MULTIS
59	9	26

Source: MLS PIN statistics for “Market Pulse”

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Two Generations of Cambridge



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METRO

Cambridge's disability policies draw more questions than answers

By ALEX DEGTEREV

Few questions were answered about Cambridge's disability practices during a March 11 meeting of the Human Services and Veterans Committee, which heard from city departments about their accessibility practices and efforts to support residents with disabilities.

The committee is co-chaired this session by city councilors Marc McGovern and Ayan Al-Zubi. At the start of the meeting, McGovern said he called it because of concerns raised by residents. “It was brought to my attention by a number of folks who, rightfully, were concerned that we [may] think about disabled residents and their problems, but we don’t actually talk about them publicly that much.

The primary presentation came from Rachel Tanenhaus, the city's Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Coordinator and executive director of its Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD), about the role the group plays in citywide disability policy and programming.

Tanenhaus presented on the commission's work and its role in ensuring accessibility across city government, including working with the city to perform accessibility design reviews on all new city buildings.

"I want to be really clear that this is not abstract for us, these rights that we work for are also our rights," she said.

Tanenhaus discussed CCPD's support for the broader Cambridge community, saying that



Alex Degterev

Rachel Tanenhaus (center, back to camera) presents to the City Council's Human Services and Veterans Committee as several city department heads also listen.

CCPD acts as the go-between for disabled residents or concerned groups and any city department who can appropriately answer their questions.

"Sometimes city processes are not transparent, they are just not intuitive," she said. "We often get people calling and saying 'I am having this particular access-related difficulty, and I'm not sure who to talk to about it,'" which is when her team intervenes.

City departments discuss actions

Presentations were made by representatives from several city departments. Highlights of these included:

- The Department of Human Service Programs applauded the achievements of the Cambridge Warriors Basketball team, run by the Cambridge Program for Individuals with Special Needs, which has won 93 straight games.

- The Cambridge Community Development Department, the city's planning agency, mentioned the city's storefront improvement and retail interior grant programs. One recipient was Central Square Florist, which used funding to remodel its sales counter, lowering part of it to meet ADA standards.
- The Department of Public Works spoke about their snow cleaning programs and new practices of 'shaving' down raised edges of concrete in sidewalks, to remove tripping hazards and increase accessibility to mobility devices.
- Department of Transportation officials spoke about coordination with the MBTA and efforts to make bike lanes wider and crosswalks more visible to improve public safety.

See DISABILITY, page 10

Literacy gap

From Page 1

The district did make a full recovery in its general MCAS data after the pandemic, which drew praise in an equity audit conducted on the schools. Superintendent Dave Murphy attributed this to the work of educators.

The greatest improvement can be seen among students who partially or fully meet reading expectations. The number of third graders who partially meet expectations fell by four percentage points from 2022 to 2025, while the number of students overall who meet expectations rose by seven percent during the same period.

Agreement on the problem

While many stakeholders agree the literacy gap is a concern, how to close it is less clear. Holding back third graders who lack reading proficiency, with exceptions for students who English Learners or are on Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), drew resistance from a number of public commenters, many of whom were members of the Cambridge Education Association (CEA), the teachers' union.

The resolution is “another example of going to an extreme and thinking that there are silver bullet solutions to some of the biggest challenges that we face when we’re trying to educate all children,” said Chris Montero, president of the CEA.

Still, the data demand intervention, said Eugenia Schraa Huh, a CPS parent and former school committee candidate. "I don't think I'm in a position to say whether or not retaining third graders

is the way. But what I like is that it's extreme, because I think this is an extreme problem," she said.

Anne Coburn, also a CPS parent and former School Committee candidate, disagreed, saying retention “should not be a blanket policy.” Coburn argued that parents should be empowered to hold their children back as “a pathway forward.” Coburn has a daughter with dyslexia who repeated Kindergarten when she entered the Cambridge school system, a decision which Coburn said was helpful to her daughter’s educational journey.

The district's policy says "Retention should be considered a last resort and will take place only after very careful consideration and implementation of a retention intervention plan." At the elementary level, parents/caregivers can make the final decision on retention, as long as the student has not completed a grade successfully, according to the policy.

But at the March 3 meeting of the school committee, some committee members and public commenters expressed concern that retention impacts a student's sense of belonging and confidence.

Parents seeking to hold back their own child often face “a lot of resistance,” in the name of protecting the socialization of the child, Harding said. Galluccio agreed with Harding that retention is discouraged. Both said retention is a common measure of accountability in private schools.

Elizabeth Hudson, who co-sponsored the motion, sees the stigma differently. “The only thing more embarrassing than being in third grade and being held back is being in ninth grade and reading at a sixth-grade reading level, and you know it, and your peers know it, and your teacher knows it,” she said.

So while retention is not her goal, she thinks it might be necessary. Her co-sponsor Harding said, "In a perfect world, no one would be retained." But retention could serve as an "accountability system" to address literacy urgently. Galluccio also thinks the threat of retention could serve as an incentive for families to engage in steps such as out-of-school instruction: "To Hudson and Harding's point, you have to have enough teeth in it."

One skeptic is Clark, who said the motion “didn’t really seem thought out.” While it could work on a “case by case basis,” he thought retention won’t be effective if a student is put back in the same environment.

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BUSINESS & MONEY

Out of the Blue may run out of time

By GANDHARVIKA GOPAL

The future of Out of the Blue Gallery is in question after its owner decided not to move forward with the city’s leasing reapplication process at the Somerville Armory. Instead, Parama Chattopadhyay is appealing to the mayor and other city officials to let her remain at the Armory or offer her a settlement for relocating to a new space. If the city doesn’t agree to her requests, Chattopadhyay plans to move forward with a discrimination lawsuit, she told Cambridge Day.

Chattopadhyay and the gallery have called the Armory home since 2020, though her time there has been fraught with uncertainty and contention with the city. The city of Somerville seized the Armory from the Sater family, which also owns the Middle East nightclub and restaurant in Central Square, in 2021 in a \$5 million eminent domain acquisition. The 34,000-square-foot building at 191 Highland Avenue now holds just four small business tenants, along with The Center for the Arts at the Armory.

Out of the Blue gallery occupies a basement space brightly decorated with artwork, plants, and a colorful collection of mismatched furniture. There, Chattopadhyay hosts performances and community gatherings, many of them highlighting marginalized communities and social justice issues. “This is my life’s work,” Chattopadhyay, who also works as a teacher, said in an interview at the gallery. She and her partner live upstairs in a small live-work space, and the walls throughout the building feature art she’s curated.

Out of the Blue was formed in



Gandharvika Gopal

Parama Chattopadhyay in the basement space of Out of the Blue Gallery at Somerville Armory.

the 1980s by the late local arts legend Tom Tipton under the ethos that art should be accessible to all. For decades, Tipton and his collaborators provided a space for disabled, queer, and unhoused people to share art and find community.

The gallery took on different forms over the years and inhabited a variety of spaces, mostly in Cambridge. Chattopadhyay joined Tipton as his volunteer business manager in 2015, and the gallery moved to her former home in Medford in 2018 after rent increases forced it from its space in Cambridge’s Central Square. Tipton took a step back from the gallery in 2020, and Chattopadhyay led it to its current home at the Armory, a move prompted by a close relationship with former owner Joseph Sater, who died earlier this month.

After acquiring the Armory, the city worked with community members, tenants, and consultants in a tenuous process to set a plan for the space. A draft of that plan was released in November 2024. The finalized version,

released in June 2025, details the process for prospective and current tenants to apply for spaces. A volunteer advisory board, formed by the city over the summer, will guide the process and provide recommendations to the city.

The deadline to submit proposals was extended earlier this month to March 18. Interviews with prospective tenants are planned for April and May, and recommendations and selections by the advisory board and city officials will take place in May and June. Decisions will be announced on July 13, according to a tentative timeline by the city. Chattopadhyay did not submit a proposal, believing she would not “stand a chance” through the RFP process and that any space she might bid for would not be comparable.

Chattopadhyay and her partner, along with friends and supporters, made the case for the gallery in a public hearing with the Somerville city council’s Housing, Community Development and Equity committee on March 4. “I am a teacher. I am a philosopher. I am a community organizer,” Chattopadhyay said at the hearing. “Many people in this city know who I am, and I have served the community for a very long time.”

Fellow artists and long-time supporters of the gallery addressed the committee, praising Chattopadhyay’s work and urging the city to work with her.

For more on Out of the Blue, scan the QR code.



Fraden named to lead Cambridge Housing Authority

By SUE REINERT

The Cambridge Housing Authority, the largest affordable housing provider in Cambridge, has chosen Clara Fraden, its top planner, to head the agency after executive director Michael Johnston retires at the end of March. Fraden, 34, will have the title of chief executive officer and will be the first woman to lead the authority.

Fraden joined CHA eight years ago and advanced rapidly. Most recently she served as director of planning, “where she guided a multidisciplinary team advancing a redevelopment pipeline exceeding \$1 billion across more than 20 projects and 1,700 homes across Massachusetts,” according to an announcement given to CHA employees by human resources director Robert Kelsey.

The authority’s board of commissioners held a special meeting March 19 to authorize Fraden’s appointment. The record of the vote didn’t disclose terms of Fraden’s contract. The board had previously held executive sessions to discuss the search for Johnston’s replacement. Johnston is retiring for health reasons after working at CHA for 34 years, including nine as executive director. During his tenure, the agency markedly ramped up efforts to rehabilitate and expand existing projects and add new housing units.

A press release quoted Jean Hannon, a member of the Alliance of Cambridge Tenants, the organization representing public housing and rent voucher tenants, as thanking the board for its search and “for selecting



Cambridge Housing Authority

Clara Fraden

such a talented and energetic individual as CEO. I’d also like to let Clara know how grateful I am that she’s decided to pursue this role. I’m looking forward to working with her.”

The authority has renovated more than 2,100 units in Cambridge and added more than 230 apartments since 2010. CHA has also served as a consultant and partner to neighboring communities that want to finance and manage public housing construction projects and has provided advice to housing agencies as far away as Lewiston, ME. CHA says it serves more than 13,500 individuals, including 9,500 in Cambridge, through rent vouchers or low-income housing units.

Asked why Fraden’s title will be CEO rather than executive director, Johnston said in an email that because of his “expanded duties” at CHA compared to the responsibilities of heads of other public housing authorities, the CHA board decided “it was more appropriate to advertise and recruit for a CEO.” Johnston also said the search for his replacement was “a comprehensive process” that included finalists for the job meeting residents, union officials, senior staff, and touring CHA developments.

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EVENTS AHEAD MARCH 26 – APRIL 1

8 p.m. March 28
Somerville Theatre, 55 Davis Square, Somerville.

Global Arts Live presents Angélique Kidjo

\$60 to \$71. Beninese star and five-time Grammy winner Angélique Kidjo blends West African traditions with elements of American R&B, funk and jazz. NPR calls her “Africa’s greatest living diva.”

7 p.m. April 1
The Burren, 247 Elm St., Davis Square, Somerville.

Dust Jacket performs

\$15 to \$20. The Boston-based band plays punk, grunge and alternative rock tunes. Jad Oubala on vocals and guitar, Luca Croft on lead guitar and Karsten Lyle on drums.

5 to 9 p.m. March 26
Harvard Museum of Natural History, 26 Oxford St., Cambridge.

ArtsThursdays: Art to Reflect and Remember

Free. Discover Native American ledger art with Gavin Zempel, enrolled citizen of the Lower Sioux Indian Community, Bdewakantunwan Dakota and Harvard American Studies graduate student. Zempel gives two short gallery presentations on how ledger art asserts Native presence, memory and self-representation.

1 to 4:30 p.m. March 29
Mount Auburn Cemetery, 580 Mount Auburn St., West Cambridge.

A Writing, A Reading with poet & artist-in-residence Emily Duggan

Free. In this two-part poetry event, participants can head to Asa Gray Garden between 1 to 3 p.m. to take home a customized poem by poet and 2025-26 Artist-in-Residence Emily Duggan. From 3:30 to 4:15 p.m. at Bigelow Chapel, Duggan reads a selection of the poems she has written for visitors.

6 to 9 p.m. April 2
Lou’s, 13 Brattle St., Harvard Square, Cambridge.

La Diáspora Combo

Reservations. Led by lead vocalist and multi-instrumentalist Angel Javier Camilo, this intergenerational collective of musicians from Latin America and the United States honors the Latin American tradition of musical storytelling.

8 p.m. March 27
The Sinclair, 52 Church St., Harvard Square, Cambridge.

Old 97’s in concert

\$29. The alternative country band tours with its 13th album, “American Primitive.” Each ticket sold will result in a 25-cent donation to The Shout Syndicate, a nonprofit raising money for youth-led arts programs in Greater Boston.

6 to 7:30 p.m. April 1

Teju Cole on photography and political imaginaries

RSVP. Photography has played a central role in social movements, igniting desire for change and inspiring action. At the same time, it has been commandeered to consolidate power and stifle dissent. Cole, a professor at Harvard, and UC-Berkeley’s Leigh Raiford consider photography’s limits and possibilities in moments of political urgency and crisis.

12:30 to 1 p.m. April 2

Gallery Talk: Hanna Nagel’s “New Women” at Work

Free. Curator Lynette Roth examines recently acquired works on paper by pioneering German artist Hanna Nagel, active in the 1920s and 1930s. Nagel was among the first generation of female artists to study at German art academies, which didn’t open their doors to women until 1919.

7 p.m. March 27
Harvard Book Store, 1256 Massachusetts Ave., Harvard Square, Cambridge.

Tara Menon reads from “Under Water”

Free. Tara Menon’s debut novel tells the story of two friends, Marissa and Arielle, who meet while Marissa is visiting Thailand. It’s there where a wave takes Arielle’s life and Marissa must learn to navigate the loss of a good friend. Harvard’s Namwali Serpell joins.

APRIL 2

■ List your cultural happenings at events@cambridgeday.com.



Arts at the Armory, 191 Highland Ave., Spring Hill, Somerville.

7 to 10:30 p.m. March 26

Symphony Rave with Live Orchestra

\$25. Experience the immersive power of a 22-piece symphony orchestra without the archaic standards of the classical concert hall. Inspired by a mix of punk rock, EDM and heavy metal, you will be able to dance to it.

7 to 9:30 p.m. March 29

Acoustic Night: Concert for Suicide Prevention

Donation. Organized by Adi Uppal, an aspiring recording artist based in Boston, this event raises funds for mental health awareness and suicide prevention.

6 to 8 p.m.

Harvard Divinity School, 45 Francis Ave., Cambridge.

God After Atheism?: A New Account of Reality

RSVP. Philosopher and author Jack Symes and Executive Director of Faith Matters Zachary Davis examines a world where God is not confined to a single universe, but encompasses the full space of what is possible.

7 p.m. March 31

First Parish Cambridge Unitarian Universalist Church, 1446 Massachusetts Ave., Harvard Square, Cambridge.

Ibram X. Kendi in conversation with Rep. Ayanna Pressley

\$46, includes book. Author Ibram X. Kendi and U.S Rep. Ayanna Pressley (D-Mass.) talk about his new book, “Chain of Ideas.” The book examines how the “great replacement theory” spurred authoritarianism and how we can free ourselves from it. Sponsored by Porter Square Books.

6 to 8 p.m. March 31

Lamplighter CX, 110 N. First St., North Point, Cambridge.

Easter Vibes Soap-Making Workshop

\$35 to \$40. During the workshop, you’ll create one or two custom goat’s milk soaps, depending on your ticket selection. Choose from spring-forward colors, playful Easter-inspired designs and fresh seasonal scents like lavender, citrus, honey, vanilla and soft floral blends.

Noon, 2 p.m., 5 p.m. March 28

First Street Market, 59 First St., Cambridge.

13th Annual Empty Bowls Project

\$30 to \$55. A fundraiser to fight food insecurity presented by On The Rise and 1369 Coffee House, each ticket includes your choice of a handmade bowl and soup from local restaurants. Only the 5 p.m. seating has seats available.

6 to 8 p.m. March 30

The Foundry, 101 Rogers St., East Cambridge.

Artist talk and reception for “Machine Memory”

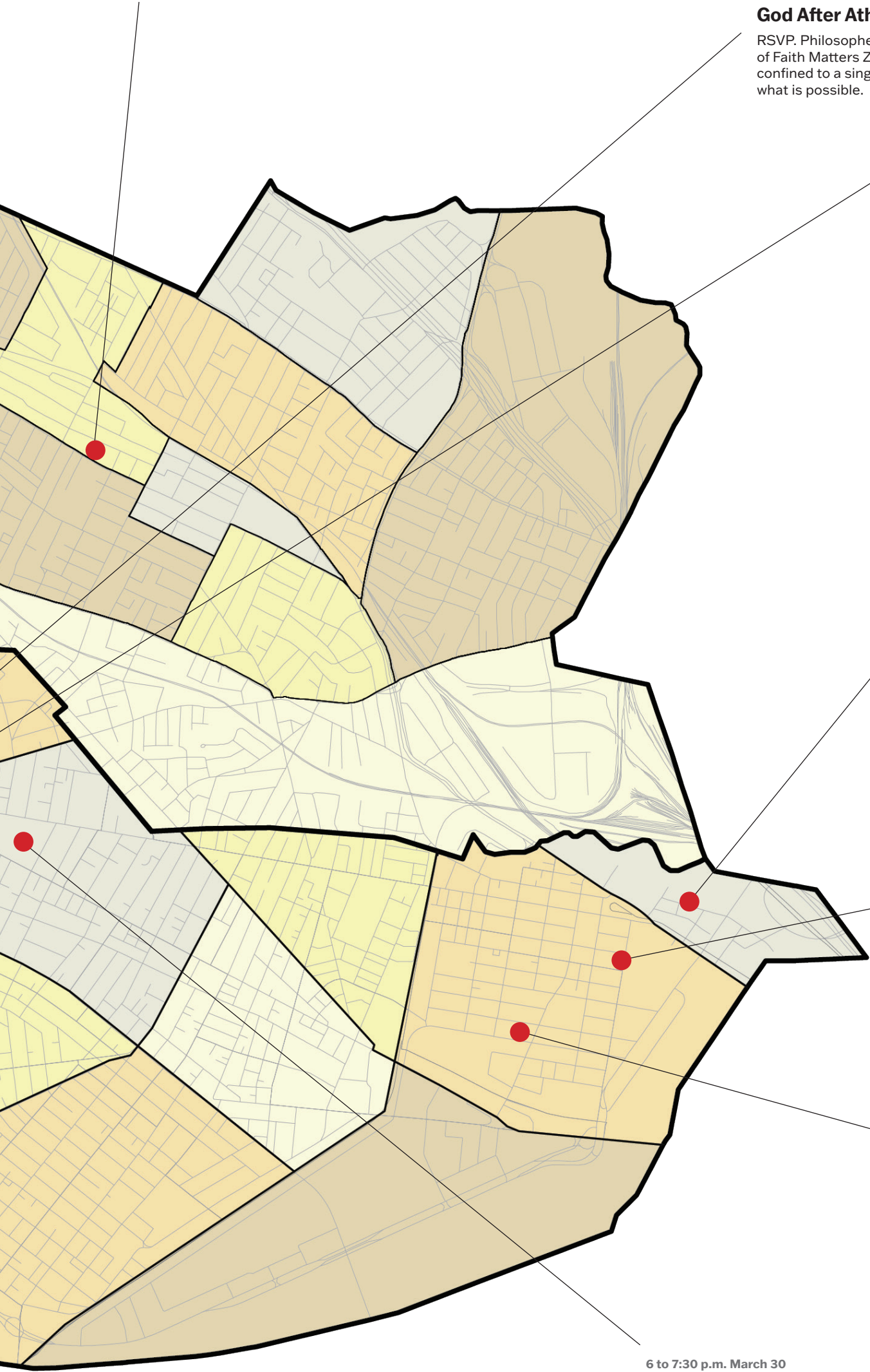
RSVP. Foundry artist in residence Lauren Safier presents her exhibition exploring the uncertain space between memory and history: what accumulates, what erodes and what remains when the two can no longer be told apart.

6 to 7:30 p.m. March 30

Cambridge Main Library, 449 Broadway, Mid-Cambridge.

Washington Remembered, Washington Forgotten: Washington and Slavery

Free. To mark the 250th anniversaries of the American Revolution and the founding of the United States, historians Kelli Racine Barnes, John Garrison Marks and Kyera Singleton explore the forgotten history of Washington’s involvement with slavery.



FILM & THEATER

LOCAL FOCUS



“Blue Roses of Forgetfulness” showcases the work of Lewis Klahr.

Cool vampires, maverick Shinoda, vintage Keaton and Lewis Klahr

By OSCAR GOFF

Vampires are, aptly, the most ageless of cinematic monsters; from Bela Lugosi to Michael B. Jordan, bloodsuckers remain the epitome of onscreen horror cool. This weekend, the **Brattle Theatre** presents brand new 4K restorations of two of the hippest vampire films of the 1990s. In Michael Almereyda’s “**Nadja**” (1995), Elina Löwensohn plays Dracula’s daughter as a chic Manhattan party girl, squaring off against a hippie burnout Van Helsing (Peter Fonda) to a soundtrack of shoegaze and indie rock. It runs concurrently to “**Cronos**” (1993), Guillermo del Toro’s directorial debut, in which a kindly antique dealer finds himself craving human blood after falling under the spell of a mysterious, beetle-like artifact. Both films run Friday through Tuesday, with plenty of after-dark screenings for all children of the night.

On Friday, the **Harvard Film Archive** kicks off a tribute to one of the most daring filmmakers of the Japanese New Wave. In **Sixties Shinoda**, the HFA focuses on a particularly fertile period for the late, iconoclastic director Masahiro Shinoda. The series begins on Friday with newly struck 35mm prints of “**Pale Flower**” (1964), about the relationship between a disaffected yakuza hitman and a self-destructive female gambler, and “**Dry Lake (aka Youth in Fury)**” (1960), a fiery look at youthful rebellion (the latter screening again Sunday). The series continues on Saturday with Shinoda’s stunning folktale “**Double Suicide**” (1969), along with the bleak, slow-burning “**Punishment Island**” (1966). The series continues through April with more from the maverick auteur.

New England cinematic institution **Jeff Rapsis** returns to the **Somerville Theatre** Sunday, providing live musical accompaniment to another silent-era classic, “**The Cameraman**” (1928), starring comedy legend Buster Keaton. Working in classic “stone face” mode, Keaton takes a job as a newsreel cameraman to win the affections of his sweetheart (Marceline Day). “Cameraman” was the first film Keaton made under contract at MGM and is widely considered the actor/director’s last true masterpiece before his struggles with the sound era, studio demands, and alcoholism. “The Cameraman” screens on 35mm

film, which, combined with Rapsis’ live score and the picturesque art deco of the Somerville’s main house, makes this as close as you’re likely to get to the experience of seeing Keaton on screen a century ago.

Also on Sunday, the folks at **RPM Fest** return to the Brattle, this time showcasing experimental animator and collage artist **Lewis Klahr**. In “**The Blue Rose of Forgetfulness**,” RPM compiles half a dozen of his films. Klahr will be on hand following the screening for a live conversation and Q&A with RPM curator Robert Harris. As always, RPM opens the door to a world of film far removed from your local megaplex.

On Monday, the HFA’s **Complete Stanley Kubrick** retrospective reaches one of the director’s most misunderstood films, “**Barry Lyndon**” (1975). Adapted from the novel by William Makepeace Thackeray, casts Ryan O’Neal as a raffish 18th-century opportunist who cons his way into high society, only to be undone by his own greed and arrogance. Despite being nominated for Best Picture, “Lyndon” was a commercial disappointment and received mixed reviews (Pauline Kael dismissed it as a “coffee-table movie”). However, time has been kind to the film, and new generations have embraced its staggering technical accomplishments (Kubrick obtained special lenses from NASA to shoot interior scenes by candlelight) and its often-hilarious social satire. (Note: at press time, Monday’s screening is sold out, but unclaimed tickets may be released at the door).

Wednesday is April Fool’s Day, and the Brattle celebrates with one of last year’s most proudly foolish films. In their reboot of “**The Naked Gun**” (2025), director Akiva Schaffer and star Liam Neeson pull out all the stops, sending up cop-movie cliches with a joke-a-second mix of puns, sight gags, and all-around buffoonery. To drive home the film’s gleeful dismemberment of the genre, the Brattle is pairing it in double features with two classic straight-faced police shoot-em-ups: “**Cobra**” (1986) on Wednesday, starring Sylvester Stallone as the titular trigger-happy supercop, and “**Dirty Harry**” (1971) on Thursday, whose iconic Clint Eastwood performance struck the mold for “The Naked Gun”’s Frank Drebin. Both double features represent the ideal mix of manslaughter and man’s laughter.

REVIEWS

“Project Hail Mary” a winner



Fans of Andy Weir’s “The Martian” — and Ridley Scott’s 2015 film adaptation starring Matt Damon — will find familiar bones in this deep space drama with a side of buddy comedy based on Weir’s third novel, “Project Hail Mary.” Weir’s self-published first novel was hailed for its deep scientific detail and accuracy but “Hail Mary” trades hard science for a more fantastical plot. As in Christopher Nolan’s weighty “Interstellar” (2014), we learn early on that the Earth is dying — here, because an alien microorganism called “Astrophage” is eating away the sun. Without adequate sunlight, famine will arrive in 20 to 30 years; the wars triggered by the diminishing food supply will crack civilization far sooner.

It’s not just an Earth problem, either. The ravenous Astrophage are devouring nearly all the stars in the galactic neighborhood — except one, some 12 light-years away. A team of astronauts has been sent to study this star, find out why it is resilient, and return to Earth with the solution. The caveat: The ship has only enough fuel for a one-way trip. The astronauts will send the solution back to Earth via probe, while they drift around for a few more years with various forms of painless euthanasia at their disposal. It’s not exactly something most people would raise their hand for. But the alternative is slow starvation — or worse — before your newly refinanced mortgage is paid off.

Enlisted into this world-saving effort is Dr. Ryland Grace (Ryan Gosling), a fallen scientist relegated to teaching high school, who just happens to be an expert on Astrophage and centrifuges. Grace’s role, under the command of mission leader Eva Stratt (Sandra Hüller, who knocked it out of the park in “Anatomy of a Fall” and is equally excellent here) is to advise the astronaut teams about all things Astrophage and how to harness its power as rocket fuel.

This is all told to us in flashbacks partway through the film. In the opener, Grace wakes up aboard the aptly named “Hail Mary” after a coma-induced journey to the star. Why he’s there is a piquant development I’ll leave for viewers to discover. Needless to say, Grace is not a trained astronaut and the rest of the crew are dead, so what’s an otherwise raffish man-boy supposed to do with the weight of the world — and the universe — on his shoulders?

Like Damon’s Mars-marooned astro-

naut, this period of despair is fleeting before our antihero gets down to the task at hand: staying alive and completing the mission. Since Earth is so far away, Grace can’t radio in a “Houston, we have a problem” distress call. But there’s an intimate encounter of the third kind when another ship shows up — a vast vessel, studded with spires, about three times bigger than the Hail Mary. The pilot of that ship, a three-foot-tall bipedal rock that moves like a chimp — Grace names him “Rocky” — is also the lone survivor of a mission to save another home planet.

Grace and Rocky struggle mightily to connect across the universe — their atmospheric needs are mutually toxic and then there’s the whole communication gap. But alien technology and Grace’s MacGyver-like determination get them beyond their early miming awkwardness. At first Rocky is imbued with the voice of Meryl Streep — an unexpected and brilliantly humorous injection — but later, the space odd couple settles on a more masculine register, voiced by James Ortiz.

As directed by Phil Lord and Christopher Miller, the tandem behind “The Lego Movie” and “21 Jump Street” (both 2014), “Project Hail Mary” plays with the cheeky energy of that latter spin-up, where differences divide as much as they bind. Here, the tone never erupts into a big guffaw but hangs as a warm, restrained grin. There are plenty of long-odds challenges that Grace and Rocky must surmount, and Miller and Lord, and their team of FX artists and editors, deftly make these scenes tense and suspenseful. David Pemberton’s lithe score pulls the audience into the emotional currents — grief, suspense, humor — of the film. Gosling, seemingly jumping off from the shaggy dog quality of his Ken persona in “Barbie,” carries the star-hopping picture with understated control. Not all of the pacing and tonalities coalesce but Gosling is the glue for any bumps. The result is a slick, feel-good sci-fi adventure that, like many of its genre, is best seen in a big screen format. I saw it in IMAX and suggest you do, too.

- TOM MEEK

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Tea and cake to help make the reaper not so grim



Alex Degterev

Corinne Elicone introducing the Death Café at Mount Auburn Cemetery's Story Chapel.

By **ALEX DEGTEREV**

On a cool Friday evening, as hundreds of people around Cambridge and the surrounding areas were gathering at bars and other watering holes to mark the end of the work week, dozens came to Mount Auburn Cemetery for tea, cake and conversations about death.

They gathered at the cemetery's Story Chapel to participate in this year's Death Café, an annual tradition that goes back more than a decade.

"Everyone is scared of death, even though it happens to all of us," said Lexi Ryan, a Cambridge resident, about why she thought it was important to hold such conversations. She frequently visits the cemetery to enjoy its restful environment. "All of us know people who have passed, or we will, and I think being able to talk about that is very important."

Participants broke off into small groups to discuss intimate personal stories about death, with facilitators from the cemetery stationed with each group, asking questions to help get conversations going.

People shared their thoughts on self-euthanasia and the dignity associated with having one's wishes respected. Disconnects can arise in hospice treatment, for instance, said Corinne Elicone, a facilitator and the event's host. She shared a story about a relative who was dying. "In her directives she asked to withhold food and water, and I kept walking into the hospital room and the nurse had hooked her back up to fluids," said Elicone. "I think a lot of our medical system is geared towards prolonging life at any cost."

The Death Café movement began in 2011 in a London basement by Jon Underwood, an administrator at one of London's boroughs who was inspired by a similar series of 'café mortels' started years earlier by Swiss sociologist Bernard Crettaz.

Underwood soon quit his job to focus his efforts on death

cafés, which have since spread to dozens of countries and thousands of locations.

Mount Auburn held its first café event in 2014 and has done so annually since then, other than a hiatus during COVID-19.

"We usually have a few people that I'll see at each one that are return visitors, but I find that most people are new to death cafes," said Elicone, who has worked at the cemetery for nearly a decade and led death cafes for even longer, since when she was an undergraduate at UMass-Amherst.

Holding them at the Cemetery adds a layer of meaning to the event, Elicone said. "You can host a death café anywhere," she said, "but Mount Auburn, from its founding in 1831, was meant to be a place of reflection and exploration of the themes of death, and holds a space for people to comfortably explore those things with strangers."

Matthew Stephens, president and CEO of Mount Auburn Cemetery, expressed similar sentiments. "Right outside [the chapel] there are 175-acres of incredible landscape, and there is something really special and soothing about [that]," he said. "It helps everyone in times of grief, and also helps set the stage that this is a safe place, this is a nice place and an ok place to open up about very sensitive topics."

Conversation over the nearly two-hour event last week didn't only touch on somber themes. There was relatively light-hearted banter about how people would like their bodies to be handled after death — whether that be cremated, buried or turned into eco-friendly compost blocks — and if they would want to know when they were going to die.

Serious or not, "Avoiding these conversations can make grieving for loss a lot more difficult or isolating," said Stephens. Besides, he noted, "Providing a space for people to talk about death often leads to a deeper appreciation for being alive."

FOOD

WHAT WE'RE HAVING

Vegan shortrib a delightful bite



Tom Meek

The Vegan Shortrib sandwich at George Howell Coffee Cafe & Wine Bar in Lovestruck Books.

BY **TOM MEEK**

Into romance books, roasted coffee and lite bites? Lovestruck Books and Cafe's got you covered. Need a comforting glass of vino or bubbly? They've got that, too.

The bookstore in the old Ann Taylor space in Harvard Square is a gem, and its café, formally the George Howell Coffee Cafe & Wine Bar, is part of the second act for Howell, a local roaster (Coffee Connection) who stymied global java giant Starbucks' expansion into New England. Starbucks couldn't beat him, so they bought his business. How times have changed: Starbucks has practically vacated Cambridge, and Howell's cafe ventures have multiplied around the Boston area. The coffee and wine bar is nestled into the bookstore, the same way Page & Leaf is integrated into the Porter Square Book Store.

The cafe is a rich hive of activity — people reading, studying, perusing or settling into an impromptu coffee klatch. The

coffee and tea menu includes the essential slate of iced and hot lattes, espressos, and mochas — all roasted/selected by Howell — and the nosh menu is also focused. The all-day menu features breakfast bites on toasted English muffins, bagels from Mamaleh's Delicatessen, a loaded avocado toast, a BLT, and, for the curious and meat-free, a vegan short rib sando.

The real stars of the sando are the tangy roasted tomatoes, marinated before being put to the fire, nestled in with rich, ripe avocado wedges, and topped with crisp arugula, pesto, and a balsamic reduction that offers a nice offset to the acrid bite of the arugula. The plant-based short rib — shredded meatless beef — is decent, but not a standout like the protein in the vegetarian short rib sando at Saus at Bow Market (different suppliers). And that's fine, since the symphony of glorious green, roasted red, and blackened plum is really the feature flavor of this two-hander that

I've had on both plain and multi-grain ciabatta on my multiple visits. It's a flavor-packed power bite — a messy one — that sates but doesn't weigh you down, making it a perfect hit-and-run nosh paired with your favorite coffee bar concoction (the herbal iced tea is a winner) or glass of wine, sipped while browsing the stack of nearby books.

Wine, beer, and a short slate of cocktails (you know there's an espresso martini) are available midday and into the evening. After 4 p.m., cheese and charcuterie plates join the menu. Natch, as Lovestruck is a bookstore, there are readings and events. The atmosphere is both homey and festive, with a charming dash of kitsch. There's a garden level patio, too, that should see more activity as the temperatures rise.

Have a favorite dish or dine out spot that we've not covered and think we should? Email Tom Meek at tmeek@cambridgeday.com.

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BOSTON CENTER FOR THE ARTS

LOCAL

Disability

From Page 3

Cambridge residents who commented voiced their concerns about the city’s accessibility practices.

CCPD Advisory Board member Nieta Greene pointed to the city government’s use of paper documents for various applications and other interactions, which she said made them inaccessible to many disabled residents, especially those with mobility issues who had trouble bringing documents to City Hall or city departments.

She also criticized elected officials for their inattention to disability issues. “I am really disappointed that the city council does not take an interest in our meetings, except for when it’s election time.”

Several parents also spoke.

“Access and accommodation are important, but I hope we don’t pat ourselves on the back too much for complying with federal law,” said John Summers, who spoke at the meeting about his experience as a father of a son with disabilities (disclosure: Summers is also a senior editor at Cambridge Day).

Summers said the city’s efforts to accommodate neurodiverse and disabled residents barely scratched the surface of what was needed.

That sentiment was echoed by others, who called for deeper investments. Cambridge resident Mai Lu called in via Zoom with questions about housing and employment opportunities for her nearly 18-year-old neurodiverse and disabled son, soon to be out of school and on the job market.

“What are the job opportunities? I know the city of Boston has residency [requirements] for a lot of basic jobs, but the city of Cambridge does not,” she said. Boston’s Housing Authority includes disability-related priority categories that can help

move applicants up waitlists, including for public housing, but the Cambridge Housing Authority instead maintains an entirely separate elderly/disabled housing list rather than prioritizing disabled residents in any general queue.

For residency, McGovern said “[t]he reality is that with the cost of housing in Cambridge, having a residential work requirement might be a challenge.”

Councillors raise questions

Several councillors also asked questions of the gathered department heads, but many were deferred.

Al-Zubi asked Housing Director Christopher Cotter about how disability needs are handled in the city’s shelter system. Cotter could not answer but promised to follow up.

Al-Zubi told Cambridge Day she had not received a response a week later. Councillor Catherine Zusy shared, through tears, the story of her late brother with special needs and how family support served as his safety net. “Not everybody is as lucky as my brother was,” Zusy said. “I do wonder how the city may support our residents with special needs in helping them find work?”

McGovern asked about the accessibility of the city’s online resources and parking passes for home health aides that were earmarked for follow-ups.

“We didn’t really get to next steps,” he said. “It is important to acknowledge the good things that are happening, but we can’t lose sight of making sure we critique what is not going so well.”

It is unclear when the committee might follow up on the questions raised. The committee is next scheduled to meet on April 8, but its agenda is to discuss a report on Rise Up Cambridge, a program that made cash payments to low-income families.

Walk for Change returns to Cambridge



Boston Area Rape Crisis Center

Walkers at the first Boston Area Rape Crisis Center benefit in April 2006.

By MADISON LUCCHESI

The Boston Area Rape Crisis Center’s Walk for Change is set to return to Cambridge, where the fundraising and sexual assault awareness event started 20 years ago.

The center, known as BARCC, hosted the walks at CambridgeSide Galleria from 2006 to 2013, and then at Constitution Beach in East Boston until last year, other than two virtual walks during the pandemic. Participants will once again gather at CambridgeSide April 26 to begin the two-mile walk.

When Kara Blue, BARCC senior director of external relations, asked her colleagues where the 20th walk should take place, there was “such a clear consen-

sus” stemming from good memories of the previous walks at CambridgeSide and a desire to bring the walk to the crisis center’s home base in Cambridge, she said.

“It’s a big year. It’s a big celebration,” Blue added. “Come be with people who understand this issue [and] support survivors ... because we think people really need it probably more than ever right now.” At 10 a.m., the event will kick off at Lechmere Canal Park, where participants will walk along the Charles River and cross the Longfellow Bridge, then loop back to the park.

Although the “issue of sexual violence is heavy,” the event is family-friendly, Blue said. Leashed dogs are welcome.

After crossing the finish line,

walkers can enjoy athletic events hosted by Knucklebones and catering by Everybody Gotta Eat, and view the Clothesline Project, a display of T-shirts survivors use to speak out about their experience with sexual or domestic abuse. BARCC also hopes to host face painting and a youth circus group, Blue said.

“This event is, number one, about honoring survivors,” Blue said. “And second, ... celebrating the great work that BARCC does.”

BARCC provides free mental health and legal support to sexual assault survivors in 29 Greater Boston communities, as well as trainings on forensics, and workshops led by survivors about how sexual violence impacted their lives.

What Cambridge is reading

#	TRENDING IN ADULT FICTION	#	TRENDING IN ADULT NONFICTION
1	<i>The Correspondent</i> (Virginia Evans)	1	<i>Strangers: A Memoir of Marriage</i> (Belle Burden)
2	<i>The Loneliness of Sonia and Sunny: A Novel</i> (Kiran Desai)	2	<i>The Unexpurgated Code: A Complete Manual of Survival & Manners</i> (J.P. Donleavy)
3	<i>This is Not About Us</i> (Allegra Goodman)	3	<i>London Falling: A Mysterious Death in a Gilded City and a Family's Search for Truth</i> (Patrick Radden Keefe)
4	<i>Kin</i> (Tayari Jones)	4	<i>A World Appears: a Journey into Consciousness</i> (Michael Pollan)
5	<i>The Keeper</i> (Tana French)	5	<i>One: Pot, Pan, Planet: a Greener Way to Cook for You and Your Family</i> (Anna Jones)
6	<i>Project Hail Mary: A Novel</i> (Andy Weir)	6	<i>Love's Labor: How We Break and Make the Bonds of Love</i> (Stephen Grosz)
7	<i>Brawler: Stories</i> (Lauren Groff)	7	<i>Stay Alive: Berlin, 1939-1945</i> (Ian Buruma)
8	<i>Heart the Lover: A Novel</i> (Lily King)	8	<i>Obsessed with the best : 100+ methodically perfected recipes : based on 20+ head-to-head tests</i> (Ella Quittner)
9	<i>The Things We Never Say</i> (Elizabeth Strout)	9	<i>The beginning comes after the end: notes on a world of change</i> (Rebecca Solnit)
10	<i>Clutch: A Novel</i> (Emily Nemens)	10	<i>Mother Mary Comes to Me</i> (Arundhati Roy)

Source: Cambridge Public Libraries

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For CRLS fencing, winning not the point



Bruno Muñoz-Oropeza

Sabre captain and senior Lee Van Voorhis in action.

By MATTHEW WUSCHKE

As the Cambridge Rindge and Latin School fencing team’s season came to a close, its members had more to reflect on than just the state tournament.

The Falcons started the season not expecting to make the state tournament. After six months of grueling practices and bouts on the strip — the area where fencing matches happen — they proved to themselves and the fencing community that they belonged, even though the team didn’t lift the gold at the state championship tournament.

CRLS had home strip advantage, hosting the tournament at the War Memorial Recreation Center. The men’s team placed fifth, while the women’s team placed sixth. (The co-ed Falcons split into men’s and women’s teams for the tournament.)

Finn Graham, who has been foil captain for three years, said he was impressed with the team’s progress. “I saw so much growth from past years in our team, community, and culture, and that was really nice to see,” Graham said. “It feels like I’ve helped to contribute to that.”

Gareth Flandro, junior captain of the épée team, said “I feel like I’ve gotten a lot better at fencing. I’ve improved and started to not just learn the techniques, but really start to apply them. It’s fulfilling in that way for me.”

Fencing may seem like an individual sport, but it is more than that. The CRLS team is co-ed, with teams in all three blades. The team is composed of freshmen through seniors, and they all work together for a common goal, to have fun and get better.

“I really like that it gives us an opportunity to be so close, because no one’s there to prove themselves,” Flandro said. “It’s just to improve, enjoy the sport

and eventually compete and work our way towards that.”

For many, the collaboration and camaraderie are what has gotten the team to where it is.

“When you’re just watching it, it can look like a more individual sport, but we really work hard together as a team,” Graham said. “It’s something that’s really great about the sport and about this team specifically, is the amount of collaboration that there is.”

Fencing is not a traditional high school sport, and to some of the players on the team, that’s what makes it unique. Some students may compete to get out of a physical education class, but for others it is the sport that they have found themselves in.

Gregory Berger, the team’s head coach, has adopted a mantra for the team.

“Fencing attracts the geeks,” Berger said. “Me and my coaching staff say, ‘We make athletes out of geeks,’ and the kids grow with it, and they like it.”

The mantra has worked for the team the team, with the players excelling on and off the strip.

“One of the things that I’m most proud of outside of fencing is that the combined grade

point average is over 90 percent,” Berger said. “I am probably the luckiest coach of all – I don’t have to bench anyone for bad grades.”

For some, the skills learned in fencing translate to both the classroom and into everyday life.

“I have definitely come really far in learning how to best support people and how to direct people in a kind, but effective way,” Graham said. “I definitely will be using those leadership skills beyond this, and being on the team and being captain really helped me a lot.”

Aside from the outcome on the strip, Berger and the program want the kids to have fun and enjoy competing. With the fencing season spanning through the bleak fall and winter months, it provides a great opportunity for kids to stay active.

“If the kids can join and enjoy it, I think that is the only thing I can ask for,” Berger said. “Placing on top is important, but participating is also very important.”

This story is part of a partnership between Cambridge Day and the Boston University Department of Journalism.



Bruno Muñoz-Oropeza

From left: Gareth Flandro, Finn Graham and Lee Van Voorhis at the 2026 Massachusetts fencing championships.

SPORTS



Mohamed Mostafa

Natalya Cafasso with the silver medal she won at the Cairo Junior World Cup.

Fencer

From Page 1

Even with her experience, the opportunity to represent the U.S. at one of the highest levels of fencing is a daunting task. Regardless of the pressure, Cafasso wants to stay focused.

“It’s always a lot of pressure, because you travel all that way for one event, but I try not to think about it at all. I try to be present in the moment,” she said. “The results don’t matter as much to me. Obviously they matter, but it’s not like hanging above me, like I need to do this.”

Cafasso had a rocky start to the season, but over the last five months she found success. In her last four competitions she has brought home a silver and three bronze medals.

She sees this run as a “butterfly effect.” Before her four medals, she narrowly made the U.S. roster for the junior world cup in Hong Kong in November.

“If I never qualified for that competition, none of this would have happened,” said Cafasso. “I think that’s really interesting to look back on, because my whole entire life would have been different if I didn’t make that one competition.”

Even though she placed 22nd in the competition, just having the opportunity to be on the team and compete showed her she belonged.

Daniel Hondor, Cafasso’s coach at the Olympia Fencing Center, noticed a shift in her attitude after the competition in Hong Kong. Ever since then, her game has taken a step up.

“Before the first one, she was, ‘Am I ready for this? Do I belong there? Do I not belong there?’ and once she actually made the

first bronze in Spain, she got the confidence and maturity that she needed,” he said. “Once she convinced herself that she belonged, she mastered it.”

Hondor and Cafasso have put in countless hours of work and training to get her to where she is. Cafasso spends five to six days a week at the Olympia Fencing Center working on her craft.

“There’s not a secret. It’s hard work, and she’s a pretty smart kid, which matters a lot,” Hondor said. “It’s pretty much high speed chess, and she understands it.”



Mohamed Mostafa

Natalya Cafasso celebrates after a win.

Aside from fencing, Cafasso holds a 4.0 GPA at CRLS. When she’s not competing, training or traveling, she spends her time studying and catching up on work. She often studies on overnight flights and in the airport.

Regardless of the outcome in Rio, Cafasso is striving for an even bigger goal in her future – the Olympics in 2028.

“The Olympics are very much the goal,” said Martin Cafasso, Natalya’s father. “At this point, she’s 13th in seniors, with two years to go before L.A.. It would be still a long shot for an 18-year-old, particularly in épée, to get there, but she feels like she can do it.”

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WILD THINGS

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Bernard Bragg

Koi are widespread. These were photographed in New Zealand.

exceptional size (3.31 feet), symmetrical body, vibrant orange markings, and immense breeding potential. (A female koi can lay 50,000 eggs per pound of body weight.) While it is not known how much S legend weighed, a three-foot koi often weighs about 35 pounds. But S Legend was unusually stocky, so she likely weighed more. Unfortunately, S Legend died suddenly in 2019.

Most koi live to be about 40. The oldest known koi, named Hanako, is said to have been 226 years old, as determined by a Japanese scientist in 1966, who viewed her scales through a light microscope to count the annual growth rings. Others dispute these findings, however, as counting rings is not an accurate method of determining koi age, and there are no scientific papers documenting the results. So Hanako's age is probably more legend than fact.

Don't feed the fish

If you walk by the koi pond in warm weather, the fish swim toward you hoping for food. Don't feed them — the fish are on a strict diet that changes with water temperature.

In the winter, the koi swim to the warmest part of the pond, near the surface, where an underground sump pump sends a stream of relatively warm 60-degree water. However, when it is extremely cold or windy, the surface water cools faster than the rest of the pond. During these

times, the koi settle near a bottom corner of the pond. This past winter was unusually cold, so the fish were often hidden away.

Koi enter a state of torpor when the water temperature falls below 40°F. Grad said koi cannot digest food at this temperature (reached this year in December). So he does not feed the fish again until the water warms above 40 degrees.

Many of the koi have been given names, but Grad says it is difficult to keep track of them, as their coloration changes as they grow older and larger.

The Linear Park path near Trolley Square is closed until December, so you have to choose either a northern or southern detour. If you take the northern detour, you can admire the koi in their ingenious stormwater pond. Of course, this is not the only koi pond in the area; both private residences and public businesses have them. There is even a lovely koi pond inside the greenhouse at the Harvard Business School's MBA Class of 1959 Chapel (on N. Harvard Street on the Boston side of the river).

Wild Things is taking questions

Do you have questions about birds, bugs, bees, butterflies or other wildlife? Send questions to wildthings@cambridgeday.com and we will find out the answer.

Koi a colorful sign of spring

By JEANINE FARLEY

Signs of spring are all around us: Red-winged blackbirds are returning, potholes abound, and street sweeping will soon resume. For me, I know it is spring when colorful fish return to the surface of their pond just off the Linear Park path in Cambridge. These fish are a kind of carp, called koi (short for *nishikigoi*, as they are called in Japan).

The pond is on the grounds of the Howard Street condominiums, which opened 18 years ago. According to Andrew Grad, the pond was built to temporarily hold stormwater runoff from the property. (The pond has a sandy bottom, so water slowly drains from it.)

Grad and his wife were among the first residents of the new condos. The pond was charming, but mosquitoes laid eggs in the pond, leading to a mosquito invasion in the summer. The condo added 25 goldfish to gobble up the mosquito eggs and larvae, and within

two weeks, the mosquitoes were gone.

The following year, an architect moved into the condos. He developed the current layout of the pond interior, which includes a raised center grate and a more constant water level. The pond transitioned from goldfish to koi. The pond is well-shaded, and this is not an accident. Koi need plenty of shade, as they can get sunburned if exposed to the sun too long.

Many people have helped Grad with the koi pond over the years — both people from the condos and from the community. Each year, Grad presents a budget to the condo trustees for the koi pond expenses, including the cost of food, maintenance and repairs. Since there are more than 100 varieties of koi, the fish in this pond display many different patterns and colors.

The origins of koi

Rice farmers originally bred koi northwest of Tokyo in the late

1700s as a food source during snowy winters when they could not get to markets. They kept the fish in irrigation ponds or terraced paddy fields. Farmers noticed color variations in the fish and began selectively breeding them to develop vivid, multi-colored fish. Today koi breeding is an art form. Breeders pay careful attention to color, patterns and body shape.

In parts of the world, people hold contests each year to select the best fish. The premier koi show is the All-Japan Koi Show, with thousands of entrants, held in Tokyo each winter. Similar to the National Dog Show in the United States, koi judges choose the best fish of each size and variety. The event culminates with the selection of a grand champion koi.

The most expensive koi ever, a nine-year-old female named S Legend, sold for 203 million yen (\$1.8 million) at an auction in October 2018. Collectors wanted this stunning fish because of her

Jeanine Farley



Jeanine Farley

Top left and above: Koi swim in the pond at the Howard Street condos last November.