

Dark skies week reminds us that our nights aren't so starry anymore

Somerville tenant served notice to quit
● Ahern field turf update paused

CAMBRIDGE DAY

THE WEEK OF APRIL 16 – APRIL 23, 2026

FREE

Middle-income home program makes changes



Marc Levy / file

The HomeBridge program helps lower- and middle-income buyers purchase homes in Cambridge, such as the one above.

By SUE REINERT

The Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust has narrowed eligibility for HomeBridge, its main program to help the middle-class afford homes in Cambridge. The popular program subsidizes market rate home purchases for individuals and families in Cambridge earning from 60 percent to 120 percent of the median family income or \$99,240 to \$193,080 for a family of four.

The agency also moved an additional \$10 million into a part of the program that helps finance purchases by households earning 60 percent to

100 percent of median income. Money available through that piece of the program had dwindled to \$1.1 million, a staff memo said.

The shifts were approved March 26, less than two weeks after the trust held a press conference touting its creation or preservation of more than 900 affordable homes from 2020 to 2025.

HomeBridge will now:
➔ Restrict eligibility to Cambridge residents. The program since 2015 had allowed non-residents who worked in the city to apply.

See **HOMEBRIDGE** page 5

Setting the crew's rhyth



Bruno Muñoz-Oropeza

CRLS coxswain Ada LaMaster before a recent crew practice. Despite a significant health condition, she has earned a college sports scholarship.

By GREG LEVINSKY

As Cambridge Rindge and Latin High School's top girls' rowing boat glided toward the end of The Head of The Charles Course, the four rowers needed a boost.

On pace for a program-best finish, senior coxswain and captain Ada LaMaster delivered the word her teammates needed to hear — and they still recall six months later — “rhythm.”

“The best thing [coxswains] can do is make you feel immersed in what you're doing,” classmate and teammate Laurel Moldrem said. “And that's what Ada does.”

The Falcons tied for the program's best finish at the world's largest rowing competition. LaMaster played a key role. Much of her responsibilities center around guiding the four rowers behind her while motivating them to push beyond their limits.

Moving beyond your limits

It's an attribute she learned from navigating through her own challenge. A rare neurological disorder diagnosed in sixth grade necessitated the use of a wheelchair at most times, forcing LaMaster to stop the activities she loved; skiing, soccer and

climbing. She eventually found rowing, and later coxing, the sport and role that in many ways defined her high school experience. She'll continue collegiately at the Division 1 level at the five-time national champion University of Washington, which has produced every U.S. Olympic coxswain since 2004. “I know that people have their limits, and a lot of times your limit isn't actually what you think it is,” LaMaster said. “It's something I learned in rehab and going through life like this.”

See **CRLS CREW**, page 11

Cambridge spots take a star turn



Courtesy of A24 Studios

Robert Pattinson and Zendaya browsing for books in the Seven Stars bookstore, changed up a bit for the movie “The Drama.”

By RUTH TAM

If you want to avoid tough conversations with your date after seeing A24's divisive new movie, “The Drama,” one easy diversion is to point out all the local spots where its stars Zendaya and Robert Pattinson filmed scenes.

The film opens with a meet-cute between main characters Emma and Charlie at the Tatte location in Copley Square. From there, their story travels north with key scenes filmed at The Dance Complex and Seven Stars

in Central Square, and Dear Annie (disguised as a flower shop) and Andy's Diner near Porter Square.

In Cambridge, where Emma and Charlie live, local moviegoers have enjoyed seeing their favorite places as the backdrop for A24's latest discourse-generator.

Best friends Tiago Xavier and Bella Morelli, who live in Malden and Everett, saw the movie when it was released. In the film's opening scene, they recognized Tatte. But the location that really excited them was the New Age bookstore, Seven Stars.

“We recognized it immedi-

ately,” said Morelli. “We were, like, screaming in the movie theater.”

The delight of spotting their local haunts hasn't dissipated. On a warm Saturday in April, the two stopped by Seven Stars. Xavier asked Morelli to take a photo of him.

“Wow, Zendaya was right here at this spot,” he said. “So cool.”

Xavier used to work at Walgreens, about a block away, and would visit the shop when he worked in the area.

Another fan of Seven Stars? Kristoffer Borgli.

See **THE DRAMA**, page 9

Somerville tenant receives new notice to quit

By CHINANU OKOLI

A Somerville man who in early April avoided eviction by winning a lawsuit against his landlord was served a new notice to quit.

The notice means Gary Rogers, who previously faced eviction after refusing to pay a 90 percent rent hike for two years, may have to leave his apartment by the end of May. Rogers lives in a one-bedroom apartment on the third floor of 22 Sargent Ave. The notice to quit was left at his door on Wednesday. It includes a reservation of his landlord's rights to accept payments Rogers makes as "use and occupancy," not rent.

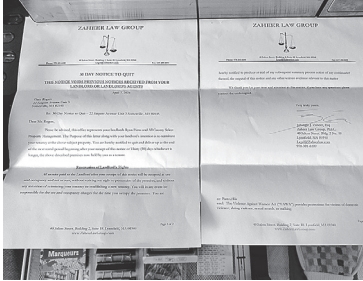
Rogers said he also received a receipt for rent he paid for the month of April. The receipt notes that the \$1,150 check he sent will go toward use and occupancy. The payment is also deducted from a balance of \$27,400 that Rogers said reflects the rent ledger, which has noted his rent as \$2,200 per month since spring 2024, and what he's actually paid, which is \$1,150 per month.

"They cannot collect any money that I have not signed an agreement to," Rogers said in a phone interview. "I think this ledger is for fear."

The notice to quit and use and



Chinanu Okoli



Courtesy of Gary Rogers

Left: Gary Rogers, in black trenchcoat, celebrated a victory with his supporters outside the courtroom. But the following week he received a new notice to quit from his landlord.

occupancy notice came less than a week after a jury ruled that Rogers could remain in his apartment. The jury found that Rogers' landlord, Ryan Pinto, who is based in California, terminated Rogers' previous self-extending lease in spring 2024, shortly after the increased rent of \$2,200 went into effect and Rogers refused to pay it. The jury also found that Pinto created a new tenancy for Rogers by accepting \$1,150 checks that Rogers labeled as "rent," effectively throwing out the eviction case.

Rogers said he was surprised to see his check labeled as "use and occupancy" because it was cashed before last week's verdict. He plans to keep paying the \$1,150 rate. "They should count that [check] as part of my new lease," Rogers said.

One of Pinto's attorneys, Jay Zaheer, declined requests for comment.

Zaheer previously told Cambridge Day that he and Pinto were unsure of appealing the jury's verdict or pursuing further litigation. Pinto had said after the trial he was considering selling the building.

Legal proceedings for Pinto and Rogers continue. The judge in the case reserved claims under the Consumer Protections Act for his own determination — the law prohibits unfair or deceptive marketplace conduct and applies to Pinto due to his status as an investment landlord. Each party has until May to file its own memorandum outlining specific claims and damages regarding sanitary and safety conditions in Rogers' apartment. A hearing

will then be scheduled.

Rogers said his attorneys and he believe that Pinto is purposefully trying to correct pre-existing issues in the apartment ahead of the hearing and a possible second eviction trial. Rogers said he was told this week that an independent contractor would enter his unit and make note of any necessary repairs. He added that Pinto sent him an email informing him that his non-functional oven would be removed from the apartment this week.

Rogers said he would not deny Pinto and the contractor entry into his apartment, though he thinks they're trying to fix issues so there is "nothing to complain about." Rogers said he is still considering appealing the claims Pinto was found not liable for: retaliation, breach of habitability and depriving his tenant of the right to enjoy his apartment.

"This feels like attack number two," Rogers said. "This is what everybody's going to have to deal with if they were in my situation."

Rogers acknowledged that he cannot stay in his unit forever and he may eventually decide to leave. Still, he said, he refuses to be intimidated by Pinto. "I don't like this guy. And I don't like his lawyer. And I'm a fighter," he said.

Ahern Field turf update put on hold

By JANE PETERSEN

During Monday night's meeting, Cambridge City Council voted unanimously to halt plans to install artificial turf in East Cambridge's Ahern Field until the city manager's office files a report back to council on why the decision to use turf was made, how members of the public were engaged, and if there are any public health concerns associated with using artificial turf.

Councillor Patty Nolan, probably the council's staunchest environmental advocate this term, brought the policy order to council. She said that while it was clear from last year's budget and planning cycle that plans for Ahern involved laying turf, at the time she and other councillors did not sufficiently engage users of the field. Since then, many neighbors have expressed their preference for grass and raised concerns about whether turf would reduce storm drainage or introduce PFAS and microplastics into what was once a natural environment.

"I really think this is a time when we need to make sure construction doesn't move forward until we have those issues addressed fully," Nolan said.

The issue drew significant attention during the public comment period, with many East Cambridge residents advocating to keep the field as it is, while representatives from Cambridge



City of Cambridge

A plan to resurface Ahern Field in East Cambridge with artificial turf has drawn criticism.

Youth Soccer (CYS) said turf was necessary to keep up with demand for durable space kids can use for practices and games.

Residents highlighted the many uses for Ahern beyond soccer, however. They said converting it to turf would hinder their enjoyment of the space for picnics, walking their dogs, and playing volleyball, which requires soft grass to put up nets.

Cambridge resident Sylvia Mangan, who lives across the street from Ahern, called the field "so much more than an athletic facility."

"I think of it as like Cambridge Common, a vital community space in a dense neighborhood."

"Grass is forgiving"

Several commenters raised concerns about turf's potential for increasing injury, affecting public health and environmental impact.

Cambridge 13-year-old Giulia Stevens shared how she and her friends had spent hours

cartwheeling, hula-hooping and playing tag at Ahern. "You can imagine my dismay when I learned that my beloved field would get turfed," she said.

"All of the sports and games that I mentioned before have one thing in common: falling. And when you fall on turf, it will give you turf burn. Grass is forgiving, fresh, and it doesn't release microplastics into the air. Also, it provides water drainage in case of floods."

Artificial turf also had support

Supporters of installing turf spoke at the meeting as well, although they were fewer in number. To some of them, having turf fields in the city was simply the cost of having youth soccer programs in the city.

"I don't think turf is the end of the world, as a parent of four kids who all played CYS," said Cambridge resident Joe Adiletta. He agreed that there should have been a deeper study on the city's end to determine how the city

wanted to use the field, but said turf is the best way to go if athletics are the priority. "If it stays a park, like Cambridge Common, that's great. If it's determined that it's going to be a multi-use season-long athletic field for game after game, the use of grass in New England in particular is certainly sub-optimal."

City representatives said updates to turf technology could help blunt some of the negative environmental effects. City Manager Yi-An Huang told Cambridge Day that the turf the city plans to use doesn't intentionally introduce PFAS into the manufacturing process (although it's unclear if trace amounts of PFAS could still end up in the final product). Deputy City Manager Kathy Watkins also assured the council that under-field drainage in Ahern could be installed whether artificial turf or grass turf was used.

Councillor Cathie Zusy said she still had concerns that the decision to use turf was short-sighted, pointing out projections for higher temperatures in years to come due to climate change that could make turf unusable on hot days. According to Zusy, surface temperatures of turf fields can reach 180 degrees on hot days.

For more on Field turf, scan the QR code.



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.

Board of directors

Niko Emack
Raffi Freeman
Rick Harriman
Mary McGrath
Amira Valliani
Kristen Wainwright, *adviser*

Editor-in-chief

Michael F. Fitzgerald
mfitzgerald@cambrideday.com

Join in the mission of covering Cambridge and Somerville as a writer, editor or in a support role. Contact the editor by phone or email to talk about the possibilities.

Please make contact with news tips or to express concerns about published material you consider to be in error of fact, quote or context.

Letters for publication

forpublication
@cambrideday.com

Communications

not for publication
notforpublication
@cambrideday.com

Listings

events@cambrideday.com

Advertising

advertising
@cambrideday.com

Printing

TCI Press, Seekonk

Distribution

EDS Distribution, Boston
Fernando Alves (781) 801-9457
Follow us on **Bluesky**
@cambrideday.

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



Cambridge
Community Foundation

Student screen usage audit will be released in May

By JULIA CARPI

An audit on screen time and its impact on learning requested by the School Committee in December is on track to be released in mid-May. It may inform a committee decision on limiting in-school screen use for the district’s youngest learners.

A particular question is whether screen usage in elementary years should be restricted throughout the school day. A motion introduced at an April 7 meeting of the school committee was set to pause non-essential screen usage in younger classrooms until the release of the report, but was ultimately deferred to Superintendent Dave Murphy pending the audit’s release.

Murphy called it a “high quality summary” of the impact of usage across the district’s 17 schools.

The motion to pause non-essential screen use, co-sponsored by Vice-chair Caitlin Dube and Member Luisa de Paula Santos, would have applied to Kindergarten, first grade and second grade classrooms. It included exceptions for continued use of technological curriculum materials and assistive materials for students on Individualized Education Plans (IEPs).

Dube spoke in support of the motion, citing a January report from the American Academy of Pediatrics that found strong correlation between levels of non-educational screen time and cognitive and social-emotional delays in kids below age five. “It’s important to act with urgency for kids who are this young,” Dube said about the district’s elementary students.

Dube also tied screen-time restrictions to closing literacy gaps. Some Cambridge schools, such as Tobin Montessori, already have more restrictive screen-use policies, she noted, and the motion would standardize them across the district. While Dube did not specify the regulations implemented at Tobin Montessori, most traditional Montessori schools emphasize less than two hours of screen time a day for younger learners.

During the meeting, some committee members urged against restricting screen time without data from the superintendent. Member Hudson said the data would inform the committee as to settings where screens can be used to enrich younger education.

Hudson co-sponsored a motion at the December 2 meeting requesting that the administration quantify screen use across grades and provide a policy recommendation. The motion was passed, co-sponsored also by Members Richard

Harding and David Weinstein.

Requests for a report come at a time of more scrutiny against technology use in the district, and schools across the nation. For example, students at Cambridge Rindge and Latin are about to complete their first school year with bell-to-bell cell phone restrictions. The committee has discussed the use of artificial intelligence in classrooms, but has yet to issue a district-wide policy. And on April 8, the Massachusetts legislature

“It’s important to act with urgency for kids who are this young.”

Caitlin Dube, vice chair, Cambridge School Committee

banned social media usage for children under 14.

In addition to deferring a motion on screen-time to the administration, other decisions to come out of the April 7 meeting of the school committee include:

- The district’s budget for Fiscal Year 2027 passed 4-2-1, with Dube, Harding, Weinstein and Mayor Sumbul Siddiqui voting yes, Hudson and Member Arjun Jaikumar voting no, and Santos voting present.
- The committee has established a standing School Council Working Group of representatives of caregivers and educators from councils throughout the district. The working group will collaborate with the Communications and Community Relations subcommittee.
- The Harmony Academy, an independent Islamic private school for preschoolers and Kindergarteners, gained committee approval to expand instruction to later elementary grades. Massachusetts law requires school committee approval of local private school reconfigurations.
- The superintendent will coordinate with the Cambridge Public Health Department’s Epidemiology Division to schedule a roundtable in Fall 2026 to discuss results from a Youth Risk Behavior Survey, an anonymous, voluntary survey sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control that collects data about student mental health, drug use and well-being.

Mount Auburn Street will re-open Friday

By GANDHARVIKA GOPAL

Mount Auburn St. and Sparks St. will reopen Friday after prolonged closures, the city said Monday, marking the final stage of the Riverview Condominiums demolition project at 221 Mount Auburn St.

Closures on the two streets immediately surrounding the property have been in place since July 19, 2025, due to structural concerns at the Riverview building. The city closed Mount Auburn St. between Lowell and Willard streets and Spark St. between Brattle and Mt. Auburn streets. Those closures have been in place for the duration of the project. Starting Friday, “Normal traffic patterns will be restored,” the city said in a statement.

Major structural issues were uncovered at the nine-story, 66-unit condo building in 2023. Residents vacated the property at the end of 2024, and the condo association turned to the city for help with a full demolition of the building. Asbestos in the building complicated the project, forcing the construction team to demolish the building while containing and disposing of asbestos-contaminated materials. The project team announced the work plan in a public meeting last fall.

Demolition began in December 2025 and was completed at



Anita M. Harris

The demolished Riverview Condominiums at 221 Mount Auburn St.



Tom Meek

The empty Riverview Condominiums in West Cambridge before demolition began.

the end of February. Between March and April, the project team loaded contaminated debris into lined and sealed trucks that would carry the

material to a landfill in Ohio. All trucking is now complete, the city said in the recent update: “The project has reached a significant milestone.”

ADVERTISEMENT

If you’re tired of swapping your wardrobe from winter to summer it might be time to find a place with a walk-in closet.

You’ve got to have it, and we can help you find it.



MARKET PULSE

Active listings as of April 15th, 2026

CAMBRIDGE		
CONDOS	SINGLES	MULTIS
126	26	27
SOMERVILLE		
CONDOS	SINGLES	MULTIS
81	22	47

Source: MLS PIN statistics for “Market Pulse”

Holly & Seamus Donaldson

Donaldson Realty Group
Coldwell Banker Realty
1000 Mass Ave. Cambridge MA 02138

617-230-4888
Holly.Donaldson@CBRealty.com
www.DonaldsonRG.com

Two Generations of Cambridge



Affiliated real estate agents are independent contractor sales associates, not employees. ©2021 Coldwell Banker. All Rights Reserved. Coldwell Banker and the Coldwell Banker logos are trademarks of Coldwell Banker Real Estate LLC. The Coldwell Banker® System is comprised of company owned offices which are owned by a subsidiary of Anywhere Real Estate Inc. and franchised offices which are independently owned and operated. The Coldwell Banker System fully supports the principles of the Fair Housing Act and the Equal Opportunity Act.

Stohlman not re-appointed to Cambridge Election Commission

By JOHN HAWKINSON

Tom Stohlman, one of two Democratic Party election commissioners in Cambridge, was not re-appointed to his position at the expiration of his term by Cambridge City Manager Yi-An Huang, the city announced Thursday. Huang instead appointed Sara Rivera effective April 13.

Stohlman has been an election commissioner since June 2024, after Victoria Harris resigned and Huang appointed him to finish her four-year term. Two election commissioners each from the Democratic and Republican parties form the Board of Election Commissioners, which oversees elections in the city.

Stohlman, 71, said in an interview that not being re-appointed made him “really sad.” He added, “I’m sad because yesterday I sent out emails to all my poll workers checking on their availability” for the September primary election. Election commissioners are responsible for hiring and managing poll workers for Cambridge’s 33 precincts.

Stohlman, who was the first choice on a list submitted to Huang, noted “This is the first time in recent history that a sitting commissioner whose been ranked number one by his city committee has not been reappointed.”

In a statement, Huang said “We appreciated Tom’s contributions to the City and his work during the City’s elections. On behalf of Cambridge, I thank and value Tom for his service and wish him well in his future endeavors.”

Elections tension

Stohlman differentiated himself from the three other commissioners by aggressively pursuing accountability for the November 2025 election night mis-reporting of the School Committee results. He also proposed a laundry list of work items for the commission to pursue in



Tom Stohlman in a 2015 photo.

2026. The Elections Division of the Secretary of the Commonwealth’s office conducted an investigation of the mis-reporting and a spokeswoman said the division’s response was “still being drafted and reviewed.”

Stohlman was clearly not a favorite of Cambridge Election Department executive director Tanya Ford. At the Feb. 11 meeting of the commission, in a “hot mic” moment while Stohlman was speaking about adhering to commission procedures, Ford said, “he’s ridiculous.”

Stohlman paused and asked who spoke.

“I don’t know,” Ford responded. But the Zoom audio was clear and the automated transcript removed any question that Ford’s microphone was the source of the interruption.

In another incident in January 2026, Stohlman encouraged his colleagues to work on restoring public confidence after the November error. Ford then stated Stohlman’s term was expiring soon and that the Democratic City Committee needed to submit nominees to the City Manager by March.

“It sucks,” said City Councillor Patty Nolan in an interview, of the decision not to renew Stohlman’s appointment.

With regard to the November election anomalies and the commission’s election night

vote to release the erroneous results while lacking complete information, “I take my responsibilities very seriously,” Stohlman said.

“When I am asked to release election results, I try to listen to the advice of the staff, but we are given all the numbers; we look at them; if we have questions, we’re supposed to do something ... I want to make sure it doesn’t happen again, and that’s why I’m pursuing it.”

He also praised his successor. “I’m really happy for Sara. I think she’s going to be a great commissioner and she’s a solid candidate. It’s the greatest job in the city.”

Rivera, 61, said in a phone interview she has been a poll worker since age 18, and that she is a proud Cantan-rican, a Cantabrigian with Puerto Rican heritage. She has served as a warden since 2001, currently for precinct 8-3 at the Martin Luther King school on Putnam Ave.

Rivera noted that “everything needs change” and “if there’s no change, there’s no improvement.” She would like to see more education about elections in Cambridge schools, including encouraging schools to hold mock elections.

Rivera said she was not familiar with the mis-reporting of the Nov. 2025 School Committee election results or the commission’s work plan with respect to it, but looked forward to learning more. Former Democratic election commissioner Polxyane Cobb attended Thursday’s meeting of the Cambridge Democratic City Committee. In an interview afterward, she said “I don’t think it was necessarily a bad decision” to appoint Rivera. “I think the city manager is hunting for something different than we [at the CDCC] are hunting for.”

Republican commissioners Ethridge King and Charlie Marquardt declined to comment on Rivera’s appointment. Democratic commissioner Larry Ward could not be reached.

A day in the life of a nasal swab: Zephyr tracks the next pandemic



Zoe Beketova

Michael Gomez, senior research associate at SecureBio, preparing a filter.

By ZOE BEKETOVA

If you frequent the Harvard Square T station, you may have seen sign boards urging you to “Swab your nose, get \$2” in order to “Help detect the next pandemic.”

Those signs are part of a program called Zephyr, which began in 2024 to collect nasal swab samples every day from people around Cambridge and Boston. Those samples get put through a DNA sequencer to pick up the presence of any pathogens, especially ones that might spur the next pandemic.

Every morning, two or three field samplers gather at train stations across Cambridge and Boston armed with clean nasal swabs, hand sanitizer and two-dollar bills, inviting busy commuters to donate a few seconds, and a few microbes, to science.

Many walk past avoiding eye contact or ask questions but choose not to swab their nose. What exactly happens when people stop to oblige? “I believe in science!” announced one anonymous donor at the Harvard Square station, as she twirled a nasal swab, identical to the ones used for COVID-19 tests, around both her nostrils and placed the swab into the collection tube. Once 30 swabs are collected, the tube gets placed into a biosafe bag and replaced with a fresh one.

On any given day, samplers collect anywhere from 80 to 250 such swabs and have collected over 16,000 samples since the beginning of the program. After their usual 9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. collection day, the container is rushed to the lab on Kneeland Street in Chinatown — on foot, by bike or by taxi. Public transport is off-limits for the transport of infectious disease material. Speed matters, explained the team, because the viral genomic material collected is not very stable. On this particular day, the samples were being transported by taxi.

Once in the lab, the first step is stripping out as much identifiable human information as possible that can be found within our DNA, both to keep the samples anonymous and to isolate the pathogens to be studied. Zephyr’s method looks not only for various COVID variants, but also influenza, respi-

ratory syncytial virus and even rarer pathogens like Hepatitis D.

To separate human and viral material, a lab technician works to shake the swabs around in two machines: first a vortex mixer and then a centrifuge. These machines vigorously shake the swabs to first separate the microbes from the swab into a solution, and then to separate heavier pieces like human cells, skin or dirt. This heavier material is shaken into a small pellet and discarded.

What remains— viral genomic material suspended in a solution that prevents them from disintegrating — is then concentrated down through filters to get a small sample that can be studied more closely: like buying a large coffee but concentrating it back into espresso by evaporating away the water.

The whole process takes under two hours, and purified samples can be stored at -80 Celsius until sequencing begins. Sequencing itself takes around 72 hours and produces a detailed picture of the viruses circulating around Cambridge and Boston.

“We noticed that in the winter, there was an increase of COVID and Flu A, which leads to suggest that COVID is probably going to be something seasonal, not an outbreak like it was in 2020,” said Tanya Gonzalez, a Cambridge resident who works as a field sampler and lab technician for Zephyr.

The lab currently employs around 50 people and is preparing to move to First Street in Kendall Square this spring. Zephyr also has plans to expand elsewhere in Cambridge, including a new sampling site near the MIT campus and potential partnerships with private employers — including Google’s Cambridge office on Main Street — to expand swabbing beyond the public sphere.

Zoe Beketova is a student in MIT’s Science Writing Program. This piece originally appeared on Scope, a publication of the Graduate Program in Science Writing at MIT.

For more on nasal swab, scan the QR code.



ADVERTISEMENT

THE TREEHOUSE COLLECTIVE PRESENTS

MARIETTE IN ECSTASY

How far would you go to prove your faith?

APRIL 3 - 19, 2026

DIRECTED BY KATIE SWIMM

THE BLACK BOX THEATRE AT THE BOSTON CENTER FOR THE ARTS

ADAPTED BY CHRISTINA CALVIT FROM THE NOVEL BY RON HANSEN

BOSTON CENTER FOR THE ARTS

■ Do you know of a business opening or closing in Cambridge or Somerville? Send news to business@cambridgeday.com.

BUSINESS & MONEY

HomeBridge

From Page 1

- Require recipients to make mortgage payments of 30 percent of income instead of giving them the option to pay 25 percent.
- Stop unlimited two-month extensions of loans for approved applicants who don't purchase within four months; now they will get one four-month extension and then must wait a year to reapply.
- Set a financial resource floor for applicants. Approved participants with lower-income or lower-asset levels were unable to buy a home in the current market, frustrating them and stressing HomeBridge finances.

The program is for first-time homebuyers.

The changes aren't aimed at saving money, city housing director Chris Cotter said in an interview. Instead, he said, the new rules are meant to more closely "target" households that need help and can take advantage of the program. Still, a staff memo to trust members said that without the changes, the agency would probably need to add funds to the program every 18 months. The most recent infusion, also for \$10 million, was in November 2024, 14 months ago.

"The trust would like to have commitments like this less often," Cotter said. He rejected any implication that the trust, which funnels city money to affordable housing, was running short. The trust's latest financial report in January said it had \$48.5 million in uncommitted funds and almost \$57 million in funding requests under review. Much of those requests will not be filled until fiscal 2027. "We also know



Bruno Muñoz-Oropeza

Chris Cotter, Cambridge's director of housing, speaking at an Affordable Housing Trust event March 18, 2026.

that the city budget is going to be submitted. There will be another big commitment. There will be more revenue there," Cotter said.

In recent years, the city has given more than \$40 million a year to the trust, much of it from a 3 percent property tax surcharge that many residents don't have to pay because of an exemption for those who live in their homes. That surcharge is matched by the state. Cotter expressed confidence the city will continue to contribute similar amounts, and at the press conference city manager Yi-An Huang reaffirmed a commitment to doing so.

Demand for program is up

The HomeBridge program has created 121 affordable homes since the early 2000s. It helps applicants earning from 60 percent to 120 percent of the median family income in Cambridge, or \$99,240 to \$193,080 for a family of four.

The program pays a percentage of the market price for a unit

depending on its size: up to 50 percent for a one-bedroom unit, 60 percent for two-bedrooms, and 65 percent for three-bedroom units. The total price must be below a maximum set by the trust for each size and is modified periodically. Each approved subsidy is calculated individually based on the applicant's income and savings.

The program's expenses have steadily increased because of a series of changes in the housing market and from the Trust itself. Last year, it was involved in the purchase of a record 16 homes.

In 2020, the program began serving households earning from 100 to 120 percent of median income – the middle-income segment. And in 2023 the trust increased subsidy rates and raised the maximum purchase price for three-bedroom units to \$1.1 million. Demand has increased, leading to the record number of 16 homes purchased last year.

The success of the program has

created problems such as families approved for HomeBridge bidding against each other for properties. "This is increasing overall costs and we have seen anecdotal evidence that HomeBridge could be driving the market, rather than responding to the market, for certain types of units, resulting in higher costs for buyers and the program," the memo said.

Examples of the costs: in the past two years, the average price of units purchased by HomeBridge subsidy recipients was \$619,500 for a one-bedroom home; \$824,250 for two bedrooms and \$1.1 million for three bedrooms. More families with subsidies are buying three bedroom homes. Since the 2023 increase in the allowed purchase price for three-bedroom units, there have been 15 such homes purchased through HomeBridge, and all have exceeded \$1 million.

For most of the decade after the trust allowed non-residents to apply, only 10 percent of applications came from people who work here but don't live here; last year the non-resident portion rose to 25 percent of applications. And HomeBridge is now contributing an average \$500,000 to home purchases, after increasing the percentage subsidies in 2023.

HomeBridge recipients must agree to make their property permanently affordable, meaning that if they sell they can't fully benefit from a rise in market value. Still, because of the increasing home prices in the program, the trust fears that it will have to spend more after a HomeBridge owner sells, to subsidize the unit again to make it affordable to a lower-income household.

Home resale pool also needed funds

A related program is also facing financial stresses. Called the

Homeownership Resale Pool, that program is aimed at those earning from 50% to 100% of median income (\$80,450 to \$160,900 for a family of four) and offers homes at low prices when a previous owner of an affordable unit sells. That includes resales of units subsidized by HomeBridge.

The trust added \$3 million to funds for the pool at the March 26 meeting. "Several factors are creating both short-term cash flow challenges and increasing the rate that the (Resale Pool Fund) sinks, permanently reducing the Fund balance," according to a staff memo. Those factors include a 2024 change in the resale formula that increased the maximum price owners could sell their units for. "As we have previously discussed, the change to the resale formula has increased repurchase prices for units now being sold by current homeowners. This is particularly pronounced with HomeBridge units which typically have a higher initial affordable value," the staff memo said.

Another source of added expense is the need to rehabilitate some homes before reselling them. The memo noted that some units have been owned for decades "and have significant deferred maintenance or were purchased by homebuyers without rehab being completed before purchase."

Net subsidy for resales averaged \$15,000 from 2006 to 2024, and jumped to \$28,000 after then. The subsidy for the most recent 10 units averaged more than \$100,000. However, the Trust considers the expense worth paying because many of these homes had very little public subsidy to begin with so it's a relatively inexpensive way to preserve affordable homes, the memo said.

ADVERTISEMENT



Bonny Lamb

Stellar Reputation
Extensive Experience
Dependable and Trustworthy

With 25+ years in real estate, Bonny Lamb is an expert in the marketing and sale of condominiums, houses, and development projects. Because of her professionalism and integrity, 90 percent of her business is with previous clients and the family and friends they thoughtfully refer.

Bonny Lamb
617.803.8080
bonny.lamb@compass.com
bonnylamb.com

🏡 Bonny Lamb is a real estate broker affiliated with Compass, a licensed real estate broker and abides by Equal Housing Opportunity laws. compass.com.

EVENTS AHEAD

Sunday, April 19, 7 p.m.
The Burren, 247 Elm St., Somerville.

Tracy Bonham Spring Residency

\$25 to \$30. The twice Grammy-nominated singer-songwriter celebrates the 30th anniversary of her debut album, “The Burdens of Being Upright” (Island Records), recorded with Paul Q Kolderie and Sean Slade at Fort Apache Studios in Cambridge.

Sunday, April 26, 3 p.m.
Longy School of Music, Award Pickman Hall, 27 Garden St., Cambridge.

“What is Home?” concert

\$15 to \$35. This 45-minute composition, crafted by six composers, explores the question, “What does home mean to you today?” Spanning the East and West coasts, the piece reflects the multifaceted experiences that define the United States.

Wednesday, April 22, 7 p.m.
Porter Square Books, 1815 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge.

Alexis Redding on “Mental Health in College: What Research Tells Us about Supporting Students”

RSVP. The developmental psychologist offers practical strategies from student affairs professionals, faculty, advisors, counseling center staff and families.

Friday, April 24, 11 a.m. to 11:45 a.m.
Cambridge Public Library Collins Branch, 64 Aberdeen Ave., Cambridge.

Live at the Library: Lindsay and Her Puppet Pals

Free. Meet a cast of larger-than-life, hand-crafted puppet characters in this interactive variety show. Recommended for children ages 3-8 and their caregivers.

Sunday, April 19, 10 to 11:30 a.m.
Mount Auburn Cemetery, 580 Mount Auburn St., Cambridge.

April Awakening Walk at Mount Auburn

\$15. Join Stefanie Haug, ecotherapist and nature and meditation guide, for April Awakening, a mindful springtime nature walk designed to help you both slow down and “wake up.”

Monday, April 20, 7 p.m.
The Comedy Studio, 5 John F. Kennedy St., Cambridge.

College Comedy Showcase

\$15. An evening of stand-up from more than a dozen up-and-coming comics.

Harvard Book Store, 1256 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge.

Saturday, April 18 Noon

Sara Hall book signing

\$32. Sara Hall, an elite women’s marathoner, signs her new memoir, “For the Love of the Grind,” detailing her growth as an athlete, wife and mom.

Tuesday, April 21, 7 p.m.

Omer Bartov reads from “Israel: What Went Wrong?”

Free. Brown University’s Dean’s Professor of Holocaust and Genocide Studies Omer Bartov examines his native country’s intensifying turn toward violence and exclusion. Harvard’s Shaul Magid joins.

Thursday, April 16, 6:30 to 8 p.m.
Harvard University’s Piper Auditorium, 48 Quincy St., Cambridge.

Michael Wang: Lifeforms

Free. Part of ArtsThursdays, artist Michael Wang discusses his work at the intersection of nature and technology, in which he uses media such as viruses, pollutants and radioactive materials.

Friday, April 17 (and Wednesday to Sundays through May 3) 7:30 p.m.
Central Square Theater, 450 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge.

“Breaking the Code” play

\$27 to \$95. Alan Turing broke Nazi Germany’s Enigma code, which Winston Churchill hailed as the single biggest contribution to Allied victory in World War II. His untimely death helped to begin dismantling social codes against homosexuality in the United Kingdom. “Breaking the Code” covers his pioneering story.

Monday, April 27, 6 p.m.
Harvard Science Center, 1 Oxford St.

Chanda Prescod-Weinstein discusses “The Edge of Space-Time: Particles, Poetry, and the Cosmic Dream Boogie”

Free. Guided by her conviction that for humanity to go forward we must know our cosmic past and drawing on poetry and popular culture, Prescod-Weinstein discusses some of the most abstract concepts of theoretical physics to tell stories about the history of the universe. Harvard’s Evelyn M. Hammonds joins.

Friday, April 17 (and Wednesday to Sundays through May 3) 8 p.m.
Multicultural Arts Center, 41 Second St., Cambridge.

Abilities Dance Boston presents Intersections v5

\$35. Highlighting Black, Indigenous and People of Color and disabled performances, honorees work in dance, theatre and producing accessible performances. This performance will also be livestreamed.

Thursday, April 23, 7 p.m.
Arrow Street Arts, 2 Arrow St., Cambridge.

Mary Gauthier and special guests Rachel Sumner & Traveling Light

\$49. Grammy-nominated American folk singer-songwriter Mary Gauthier has released 11 albums in 25 years, including 2018’s “Rifles and Rosary Beads,” which was nominated for the Best Folk Album Grammy.

Saturday, April 18, 3 to 5 p.m.
The Rooted Café at Arts at the Armory, 191 Highland Ave., Somerville.

Molly Walsh Exhibition: Pictures of Dreamland opening reception

Free. Molly Walsh’s art is influenced by personal stories, magic in everyday moments and the great outdoors. This collection includes 25 ink wash paintings of “strange and spooky and silly dreams.”

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

Saturday, April 25, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Boston TOYCON

Free. This all-ages event is for anyone who loves and collects new and vintage toys.

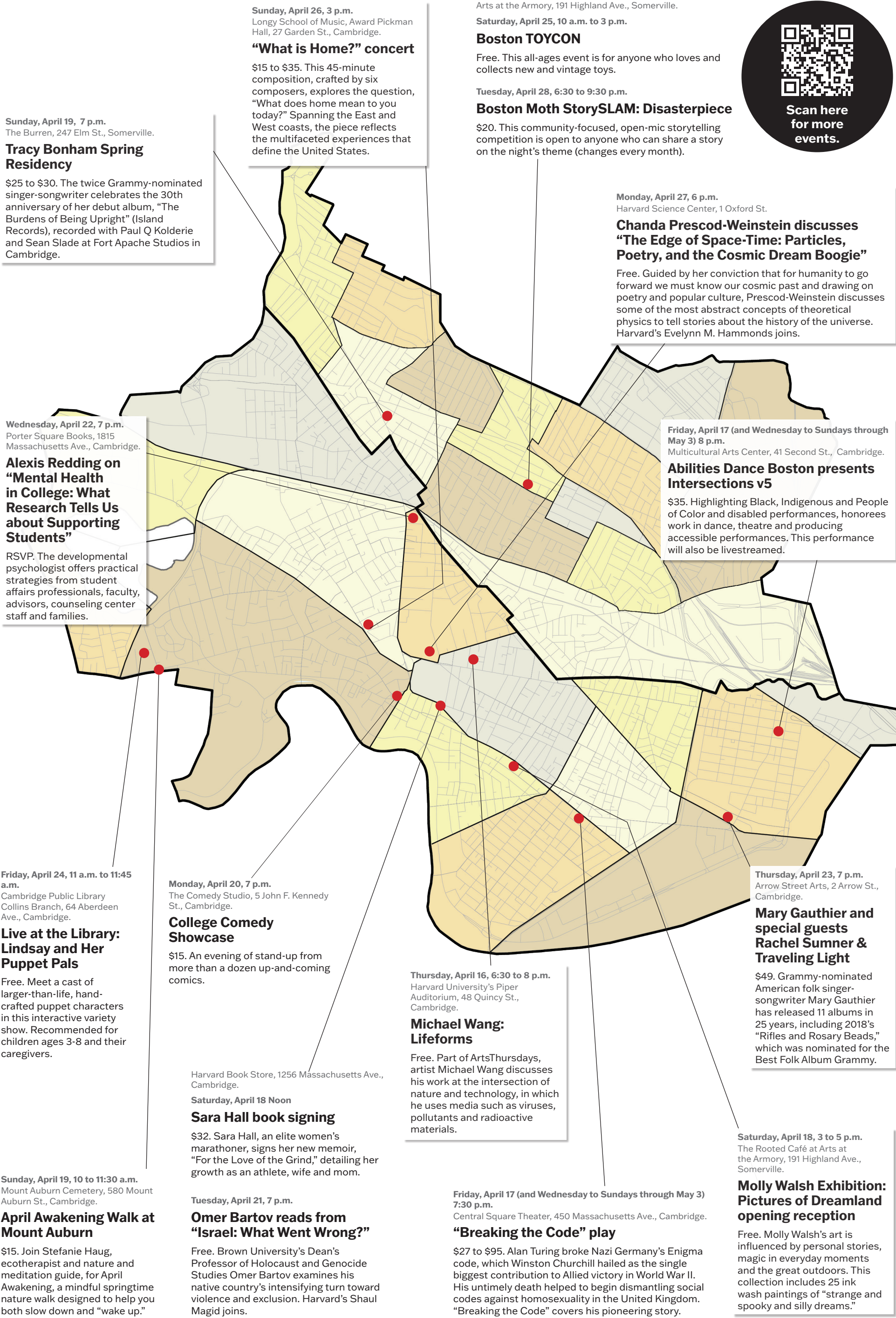
Tuesday, April 28, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m.

Boston Moth StorySLAM: Disasterpiece

\$20. This community-focused, open-mic storytelling competition is open to anyone who can share a story on the night’s theme (changes every month).



Scan here for more events.



■ Send your high-resolution images of urban wild things with location, date, photographer's name and other useful information for possible use online to photography@cambridgeday.com.

WILD THINGS



Horrid zale moth at the Cambridge Moth Ball, July 23, 2025.

Kate Estrop

WHERE ARE THE STARS?

By JEANINE FARLEY

In 1888, Vincent van Gogh wrote to his brother, Theo, “For my part I know nothing with any certainty, but the sight of the stars makes me dream, in the same simple way as I dream about the black dots representing towns and villages on a map. Why, I ask myself, should the shining dots in the sky be any less accessible to us than the black dots on the map of France?”

Van Gogh was lucky enough to witness a majestic night sky that people today can rarely experience. According to the journal Science, 83% of the world’s people live under skies polluted with light, creating a “skyglow” that hides the stars. In the United States, that number is 99%.

Today, there is so much light in the Cambridge area that we see only a fraction of the stars in the night sky and we usually cannot see our own galaxy, the Milky Way. On cloudy nights when artificial lights are reflected back toward earth, our skies are hundreds or thousands of times brighter than they were merely 200 years ago. (This probably explains why I can walk around my house in the middle of the night without turning on lights.) Can you imagine what van Gogh’s “The Starry Night” would have looked like if he saw only a frac-

tion of the stars in the sky?

The artificial brilliance of the night sky is problematic for more than just artists. All life on earth relies on the natural cycle of light and dark, which occurs when the sun sets and the moon and stars become visible. This light-dark cycle has evolved over billions of years to optimize the health of living organisms, including repro-



Richard George

A screech owl sleeps in Huron Village, May 1, 2022.

duction, sleep, food availability, and protection from predators.

But humans, going back to the Moors in Spain who used oil lamps to illuminate their streets, have altered this natural process, affecting the natural world.

Take moths. At night, moths fly from flower to flower feeding on nectar, much like bees do

during the day. Moths pollinate about one-third of our flowering plants. In fact, moths are faster pollinators than bees, and they pollinate some flowers that bees do not even visit. Moths evolved to use the moon to orient themselves when flying at night. When they encounter a porch light, for example, they think the bulb is up. They turn their backs toward this light and fly in circles around the bulb in an attempt to stay level. But just the opposite happens: By keeping their back oriented toward the light, they fly in erratic circles until exhausted, leaving flowers unpollinated.

Like moths, about 70% of mammals are nocturnal, evolving roughly 225 million years ago into tiny shrew-like creatures that did their best to elude the giant, day-dwelling dinosaurs. Most mammals today are



Tom Murray

A palm warbler, April 6, 2026, Groton.

still small nocturnal creatures. And artificial light inhibits their behavior as well.

For example, small mammals such as mice eat less food in areas lit by artificial light (presumably to avoid predators). Artificial light affects the circadian rhythm, the internal 24-hour clock of both nocturnal and diur-

nal mammals, suppressing melatonin production, resulting in poor sleep, increased stress, more cardiovascular problems, and an increased chance of tumors.

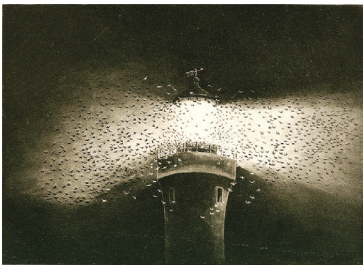
Artificial light also affects amphibians, reptiles and marine life. Frogs and toads croak at night as their mating call. Artificial light disrupts the frequency of these calls, interfering with their reproduction. Sea turtle hatchlings head toward the brightest light, which used to be the moonlit ocean. But now white, bright lights from beachfront properties pull them in the wrong direction. Heading toward these lights leads them into the path of predators, causes dehydration and even death. Fish rely on lunar cycles to migrate and spawn. Artificial light near bodies of water alters their migration timing and reproductive success.



Jeanine Farley

An American toad in East Somerville, July 30, 2023.

Our use of artificial lights has increased over the last century, leading millions of migrating birds to travel off course, fly into buildings, or migrate too early or



Painting by Marian Eagle Clark

The Eddystone Lighthouse in Cornwall, England, October 12, 1901.

too late. For hundreds of years people noticed that migratory songbirds, such as red-eyed vireos, palm warblers, and hermit thrushes, were attracted to the lights beaming out of lighthouses, especially on foggy nights. Today, palm warblers are one of the most frequently killed at lighted towers across the United States. One TV tower in Florida killed more the 44,000 birds in a 29-year period, including 2,305 palm warblers.

Artificial lights cause harm in all these ways and more. But we can do something about this. The Cambridge city council has recognized that thoughtful lighting policy protects public health, conserves energy, and preserves the natural environment. It has declared April 13–20, 2026, to be International Dark Sky Week.

Observing Dark Sky Week could involve limiting the nighttime use of lights so as not to disorient insects and birds during their spring migration. We can close our blinds or curtains at night to prevent stray light from spilling out. We can use motion detector lights when possible, so lights are on only when needed. We can cover outdoor lights so they shine downward and not upward. Focused light attracts fewer insects. We can also work to encourage governments to adopt responsible lighting practices.

By restoring natural lighting conditions, we can help preserve our nocturnal ecosystems and protect species that depend on darkness. And maybe give rise to a future Van Gogh’s own star-inspired work of art.

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.

FILM & THEATER

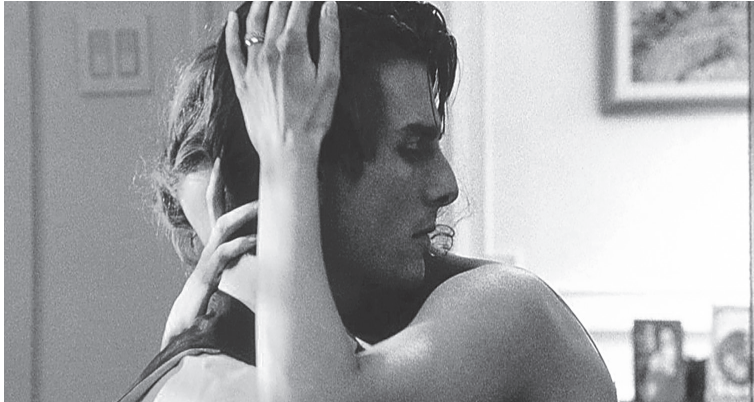
LOCAL FOCUS

Rockumentaries, space films and more

By OSCAR GOFF

If you've noticed a vinyl junkie in your life saving their pennies lately, it's likely because this weekend marks **Record Store Day**, the yearly bonanza in which independent music shops fill their shelves with exclusive reissues and other goodies. To celebrate this modern holiday, the **Brattle Theatre** has lined up a pair of excellent recent rockumentaries tailor-made for disc diggers and music obsessives. On Friday, catch **"Born Innocent: The Redd Kross Story"** (2024), about the cult Cali punk band which was formed in 1978, when brothers Jeff and Steve MacDonald were in middle school, and is still touring today as snotty as ever. Saturday brings Alex Ross Perry's **"Pavements"** (2025), a suitably snarky portrait of the seminal '90s indie band which mixes straightforward documentary footage with scenes from a staged jukebox musical and a hilariously overwrought faux-Hollywood biopic (starring Joe Keery — of "Stranger Things" fame — as front man Stephen Malkmus). In a likely serendipitous twist, one of this year's more intriguing releases is an album called "Gold Soundz: A Jazz Tribute to Pavement," making this an even better way to unwind after a long day of disc-digging.

For those whose interests lie further afield than local vinyl bins, Saturday also marks the beginning of **Massachusetts Space Week**, the yearly statewide celebration of all things astronomical. As always, MSW brings a wide variety of events and discussions to museums across the commonwealth, but most relevant to these pages are the screenings of the 6th annual **Space Film Festival**. Most screenings take place at the Brattle, including the Pixar animated classic **"Up"** (2009) on Saturday and Sunday, the affectionate "Star Trek"-inspired comedy **"Galaxy Quest"** (1999) on Monday, and Philip Kaufman's epic adaptation of Tom Wolfe's **"The**



"Eyes Wide Shut"

Right Stuff" (1983) on Tuesday. Also part of the observance is a rare IMAX screening of Ron Howard's **"Apollo 13"** (1995) at the **Museum of Science's Mugar Omni Theater**, preceded by a panel discussion featuring real-life astronauts Cady Coleman and Al Sacco, Jr. The events are perfectly timed, with a brand new generation of astronauts-to-be undoubtedly inspired by the historic Artemis II moon mission and its scientific and humanitarian achievements.

Ditch the multiplex this week for some exciting new independent films showing at the **Somerville Theatre**. On Friday, in association with the Taiwan Film Festival of Boston and the Taiwanese Association of America Boston Chapter, the Somerville presents the local premiere of Chen Yu-Hsun's **"A Foggy Tale"** (2025), a charming period piece about the unlikely bond between a down-on-his-luck ex-soldier and a young woman saving up money for a proper burial for her brother. Opening Sunday and running through Tuesday is **"Watching Mr. Pearson"** (2026), a bittersweet drama from Boston-based filmmaker Dillon Bintlage about an aging Hollywood actor dealing with dementia and his young caretakers.

The programmers of the **Revolutions Per Minute Festival** return to the Brattle Sunday with another showcase for a cutting-edge filmmaker. In **"For All Audiences:" Films by Josh Weissbach**, RPM compiles nearly a dozen shorts by the

Hampshire College alum. Weissbach's work combines liminal footage of domestic spaces with experimental collage techniques to create work which is at once unsettling and undeniably personal. All films will be projected on 16mm and followed by a Q&A with RPM Emerging Curator Michael Joseph.

The **Harvard Film Archive's** Complete Stanley Kubrick series comes to an end (almost) on Monday with the director's final film. Released four months after Kubrick's death in March 1999, **"Eyes Wide Shut"** stars Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman as a couple who get drawn into a bizarre world of sexual rituals and arcane rites among the New York City elite. Audiences at the time weren't quite sure what to make of "Eyes Wide Shut," and critical opinion was wildly divided. However, like nearly all of Kubrick's films, its reputation has grown in the decades since its release, and today it is considered something of a modern classic (that the world it depicts so uncannily echoes the recent revelations of the Epstein files has only added to its eerie mystique). (Note: tickets to "Eyes Wide Shut" were sold out at press time, but unclaimed tickets may be made available at the door.)

Monday is Patriot's Day, which kicks off April vacation for kids across the state. Rather than staying cooped up once coverage of the Marathon concludes on TV, why not take in a movie? Per tradition, the Brattle has you covered Monday and Tuesday with its annual **Muppet Madness** triple feature. This year's lineup brings together perhaps the three most celebrated movies created by Jim Henson and company. First up, naturally, is **"The Muppet Movie,"** 1979's big screen debut of Kermit, Fozzie, Miss Piggy, and friends, one of the most joyous and madcap comedies of the '70s. The tone gets more serious with **"The Dark Crystal"** (1982) and **"Labyrinth"** (1986), Henson's forays into high fantasy, which remain just as eye-popping as the day they were made. Henson was a genius of the once-a-century order, and his felt-and-foam creations will no doubt inspire wonder for generations to come.

REVIEWS

"Hamlet"

Hamlet in all its variants seems to be the name on Hollywood's lips these days, with last year's "Hamnet" and 2022's "The Northman," based on the Danish poem "Amleth," which originally inspired Shakespeare to name his son Hamnet and write the play. Now there's this bold new version, though too uneven to top the adaptations by Laurence Olivier (1948, Oscar winner), Kenneth Branagh (1996) and the 1990 spin directed by Franco Zeffirelli and starring Mel Gibson and Glen Close.

The setting is now, in the Indian section of East London, and the kingdom is a real estate empire. Riz Ahmed ("The Sound of Metal") plays the title role, and his uncle Claudius (Art Malik), responsible for Hamlet's father's death, is poised to marry Hamlet's widowed mother, Gertrude (Sheeba Chaddha) and take over the business. This modern take on the Oedipal-adjacent tale is directed by Aneil Karia, who won the 2020 Live



"Hamlet" is set in modern-day London, and features Riz Ahmed as the prince of a real estate empire.

Action Short Oscar with "The Long Goodbye" (also starring Ahmed). It's bloody, muddled and at times downright riveting, thank to Ahmed's, strong, slow simmer. At points, though, an aural din suffocates his quiet rage — the classic soliloquy comes amid the revving of a muscle car's engine and loses its effect. Shakespeare is tricky; some change it up and catch fire (Baz Luhrman's "Romeo and Juliet," "My Own Private Idaho") while others fail to spark ("Made Men" and the Ethan Hawke "Hamlet" from 2000 set in corporate New York). The Ahmed-Karia effort smolders. To be or not to be? Maybe, maybe not.

— TOM MEEK



Playing at Kendall Square Cinema

"Exit 8"

Based on the bestselling Japanese video game of the same name, "Exit 8" is far better than the other game adaptation in theaters, "The Super Mario Galaxy Movie." "Exit 8" ably captures the surreal horror and creeping dread of the source material with no need of a power-up mushroom. A young man (Kazunari Ninomiya, of the J-pop idol group Arashi) steps off the crowded Tokyo subway and receives word that his ex-girlfriend is pregnant. She wants to know if she can rely on him as a father. This proves to be the least stressful moment of his day. As he makes his way to the surface, our unnamed protagonist finds himself in an endless loop, walking down the same corridor over and over: the same posters, the same pile of trash, the same nondescript businessman passing him at precisely the same moment. Eventually, he notices a placard with a series of rules. He must pay close attention to his surroundings, and if he notices a single anomaly — even as minute as a doorknob in the wrong place — he must turn back. If he can complete this challenge eight times, he may leave the station. If he errs, he returns to the beginning — or worse.

"Exit 8" is both pretty faithful to its source and



Kazunari Ninomiya in a scene from "Exit 8."

stands on its own as a singularly effective chiller. Director Genki Kawamura uses the minimalist trappings of the setting to full advantage, keeping us scanning each frame for the slightest oddity. The station is so eerily calm that when the trap does spring shut, as when our hero suddenly notices a tall figure standing directly behind him, it's impossible not to jump in your seat. The story's inherently repetitive nature is leavened by dizzying camerawork (not a single take, but it often feels like it) and a couple of ingenious shifts in perspective which twist the narrative in unexpected ways. The only real misstep is the story of the father-to-be, which saps the momentum every time he pauses for a phone call. But then we're back in that endless, wonderfully excruciating hallway, wondering if we'll ever see the light of day. Anyone who's changed lines between Park Street and Downtown Crossing will surely relate.

— OSCAR GOFF

Playing at AMC Assembly Row



ADVERTISEMENT

News to your inbox

CAMBRIDGE DAY

Subscribe to the newsletter

Sculptures by Marcus W. Clarke

By Claire Ogden September 14, 2025

September 13, 2025

Scan to add to join

■ Do you know of a restaurant opening or closing in Cambridge or Somerville, or do you have other food news tips? Send them to business@cambridgeday.com.



Tom Meek

Andy's Diner has been serving food in Cambridge since 1958.

The Drama

From Page 1

The director and writer of “The Drama” visited before filming began locally in 2024 and, according to owner Stuart Weinberg, he liked the shop’s “visual element, the way things were framed.”

After representatives from A24 approached Weinberg about using the shop for filming, Weinberg watched two of Borgli’s films, “Dream Scenario” and “Sick of Myself,” and found that the admiration was mutual. Impressed with Borgli’s work, Weinberg agreed to shut down his shop for a day for filming.

Production designers took down the thangkas hanging on the walls and cleared the crystals from the counter. The shop that appears in the movie has a slightly different ambience than the Seven Stars, but it was recognizable enough for Xavier and Morelli.

Weinberg says the crew was professional and he was “compensated nicely” for use of the space. Additionally, the A24 marketing team, known for its creative campaigns, featured Seven Stars in a mock wedding website to generate interest in the movie.

Another local bookstore was tapped, too.

The Katherine Small Gallery, in Somerville, was scouted as a potential filming location for the film. While the petite gallery and graphic design bookstore was ultimately not used, its owner Michael Russem, says the film’s production designer bought artwork and books from the gallery’s collection and featured them in the film. The gallery also was listed on the wedding website in a list of “Things to Do in Boston.”

With all the locally-shot scenes, did “The Drama” feel distinctly Bostonian or Cantabrigian?

Weinberg says no, “it was just an urban venue.”

And Russem agrees. “I feel

like the movie could have been anywhere,” he said. “Anyone who’s not from the immediate area would not have recognized the overwhelming majority of these locations.”

Although the film barely references Boston or Cambridge directly, its setting doesn’t feel entirely coincidental.

In “The Drama,” (don’t worry, no spoilers) Emma and Charlie are engaged to be married and their relationship is tested when Emma reveals a secret about her past. This secret is shocking, in part, because it doesn’t comport with her current Cambridge life, where she and Charlie live in a beautiful apartment, wear Harvard t-shirts, and subscribe to Harper’s Magazine.

Even if the camera never zooms in on a Welcome To Cambridge sign, these subtle placesetters convey characters who are — by all appearances — stable, educated and cultured.

“I feel like the location ties in with the aesthetic of the characters and it helps with the character development,” said movie fan Morelli. Plus, Charlie’s career as an art museum curator and Emma’s as a literary editor seemed appropriate, she said. “Because they have those jobs, it’s fitting that they would live in [the Boston area.]”

And how realistic is Borgli’s depiction of Emma and Charlie’s tastes?

“Museum curators don’t tend to come here and literary editors don’t tend to come here either,” said Russem of his gallery on Beacon Street. “But it’s nice that in a fantasy world, this is a place that they would go.”

Xavier and Morelli didn’t recognize every local setting in “The Drama.” They didn’t, for example, know of Andy’s Diner, despite it being in business on Massachusetts Avenue for nearly 70 years.

Can a movie make you see what’s always been there?

“We’ll have to go there,” Xavier said to Morelli, who emphatically agreed.



Robert Pattinson and Zendaya in a scene from “The Drama.”

FOOD

WHAT WE’RE HAVING

The beloved Chez Henri Cubano

By TOM MEEK

Chez Henri on Shepard Street closed more than 12 years ago, but the restaurant’s beloved Cubano sandwich never disappeared. Over the years, Paul O’Connell, Chez Henri’s former owner and chef, has held several Cubano pop-ups at Mariposa Bakery, Noir, and the Warehouse XI in Union Square. This Wednesday, O’Connell’s legendary spin on the double pork handheld will make a pop-up appearance at the James Beard-cited Cuban eatery Gustazo in Porter Square.

For nearly 20 years, Chez Henri — located in the space that now houses Moëca — was the place to get a Cubano, where the crisp, perfectly pressed sando became an art form with a ravenous cult following. A great Cubano is the perfect sandwich: juicy pork, lean ham, Swiss cheese, pickles, and mustard pressed on pan Cubano (Cuban bread), a French baguette, or any other airy, panini-friendly bread. That combo of pickles, mustard, and pork makes for a tangy, pucker-inducing yum — and a bit of a pleasantly gooey mess.

The Cubano pop-up concept, incubated by area restaurant publicist Christopher Haynes, will kick off a weekly Wednesday offering at Gustazo, where chef and owner Patricia Estorino will later serve up her spin on the Cuban sando. Estorino will prepare her slow simmered pork as a combo of butt (meaty) and belly (a fattier cut that she says gives the blend its juice and flavor) and use Iggy’s or house-made bread.

But this week will feature O’Connell’s well-loved classic. “It’s Paul’s night,” said Estorino, who confessed to being a fan of the Chez Henri Cubano when she first came to the area.

O’Connell makes his Cubano more akin to the traditional style, with sliced slabs of tender pork, and topped with chipotle aioli. His bread of choice: Piantadosi’s soft French bread from the long-lived bakery (over 100 years) in Malden (O’Connell grew up in neighboring Melrose). O’Connell calls the bread choice — “soft” French bread from an Italian bakery — his “poorly kept dirty secret.” One of his longtime bartenders used to say about the more traditional, hard-crust French baguette, “I hate it when they give you bread like that. They should give you a Band-Aid for when you cut your mouth eating it.”

The Cubano, as both chefs pointed out in our conversations, is an American invention that originated in the late 1800s in Ybor City, a section of Tampa. “We don’t really eat Cubano sandwiches in Cuba,” Estorino said, “I never thought to put one on the menu” — until now. In Ybor, the



Tom Meek

medley of salty dill, fatty juice, and double jamon was a working-class staple, the equivalent of a staff meal, that didn’t catch fire until the 1950s in Miami, when the mustard and pickles became more of a must than a maybe, and the hot-pressed savories were sold out of mom-and-pop bodegas. To mainstream America, the Cubano — cheap and an easy grab on the go — was Desi Arnaz haute cuisine.

Estorino, a two-time James Beard nominee, knows Cuban food intimately: She grew up in Havana and immigrated here in 2000, when her husband studied at the Longy School of Music. A professional dancer in Cuba, Estorino struggled to find similar opportunities here — the only option was the Boston Ballet or New York City. Plan B stemmed from the couple’s desire for home-style food, and so they opened a small café in Belmont, shifting to a bigger location in Waltham in 2013, and opening the Porter Square restaurant in 2019. The Waltham shop later moved from the Main Street location to its current spot, up the hill on Moody Street, just as the pandemic lockdown came — not a great time for the restaurant industry.

Over the past two decades,

Estorino has quietly and steadily built a reputation and local following based on quality, passion, and service. In the past, we’ve extolled here the virtues of Gustazo’s crab tacos (plantain tortillas), roasted chicken, grilled octopus (pulpo), and silky, rich guac with plantain chips — which will certainly accompany the Cubanos. O’Connell, who recently underwent two knee replacements, is a classic, salty Boston food insider. He went to Johnson & Wales University and ran Providence in Brookline besides Chez Henri. He worked at the Parker House and beside Todd English as he launched Olive’s in Charlestown. More recently, O’Connell served up comfort nibbles with Lydia Shire (Bar Enzo) and Barbara Lynch for a family-and-friends gathering after Summer Shack founder Jasper White’s passing.

If you miss out on the pop-up Wednesday, you can always circle back the following week for Estorino’s creation. O’Connell said his version will return to Mariposa Bakery in Central Square, owned and run by O’Connell’s girlfriend, Suzanne Mermelstein.

Of his Cubano’s staying power, O’Connell said, “That sandwich just took on a life of its own.”

ADVERTISEMENT

Your Modern Milkman

Farm-fresh dairy, groceries & local favorites
delivered weekly



CAMBRIDGE

thatcherfarm.com/register

BOOKS

READING LIST

Cambridge Day asked Porter Square Books to send us their current staff picks. — John Summers

“Ruins, Child” by Giada Scodellaro. New Directions, 2026

A community of Black women watches archival footage taken of their daily lives in this cinematic, experimental novel. Repetitive and hypnotic like the film Jeanne Dielman, though messier, choppy, and the opposite of lonesome, “Ruins, Child” explores empowerment rather than subjugation. Scodellaro debut novel follows her collection of short stories, “Some of Them Will Carry Me,” a New Yorker “Best Book of 2022.” “Ruins,” no less intimate, even more surreal, won the Nobel Prize in 2024 for literary fiction in progress. — **recommended by Rachael**

“Interior Chinatown: A Novel,” by Charles Yu. Vintage, 2020

This is one of the most unique books I’ve read. Written in the form of a script for a fictional TV cop show—imagine “Law and Order” in San Francisco, with scenes in Chinatown—the reader comes to understand the stereotyped roles that Asian Americans are often forced to play, both on screen and in life. With humor and pathos, Yu reveals the immigrant experience (pre-ICE) and humanizes the characters in in this compelling drama. —**recommended by Gwen**

“The Ritz of the Bayou,” by Nancy Lemann. Hub City Press, 2026

This radical take on true crime



“Ruins, Child” by Giada Scodellaro.

returns to print forty years after its first publication. Lemann focuses less on the facts of Governor Edwin Edwards’s two corruption trials and more on the environments, systems and social conventions that make crime possible, e.g., the ways people can be turned into characters, how longstanding cultural and social networks create opportunity and permission for wrongdoing, how climate influences behavior. The crime may have been an act of corruption by the sitting governor of Louisiana, but the story is much deeper than that. How do they get away with it? Charm, society, and humidity. —**recommended by Josh**

For younger readers

“Sam’s Sandwich,” by David Pelham. Candlewick, 2015

Sam is asked by his hungry sister, Samantha, if he can please make her a sandwich. I can distinctly remember receiving this book as a four-year-old and obsessively studying the lift-the-flap pages of sandwich toppings that hid Sam’s “extra” ingredients: a

slug, ants, and, most disturbing to me, a centipede. Yuck! The story of this nightmarish sandwich is delivered to young readers just as it is delivered to Samantha: through a physical sandwich. When I saw that the book was to be re-released on its 25th anniversary, I knew I had to make it a staff pick! — **recommended by Nadia**

“Oh, Tal! Not Today,” by Tal Anderson. Violet Sky Media, 2024

When I discovered that Tal Anderson, who plays Becca King in the HBO drama “The Pitt,” was coming out with her second book my first question was what I have to do to read the first. Illustrated by Michael Richey White, whom she met through the comedy “Atypical,” the detailed and immersive watercolor pages are refreshing to see in a book for children. It evokes nostalgia for the stories read to me as a child, with the added value of finally seeing stories about autism told by autistic people. Publisher Violet Sky Media donates a portion of sales to under-represented communities. — **recommended by Avery**

To print or not to print?

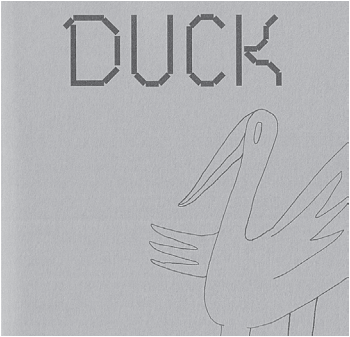
By DEAN KIM

In the same month the venerable journalism quarterly Nieman Reports released its final print edition, launched Duck, a biannual magazine deliberately meant to be in print.

Nieman Reports launched in 1946, and its quarterly circulation was about 1,100, mostly alumni of the fellowship program run by the Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard. Meanwhile, the website it launched in 2014, niemanreports.org, draws about 400,000 unique visitors a year. The Nieman Foundation publishes two other digital-only publications, Nieman Lab, which covers the future of journalism and Nieman Storyboard, a site dedicated to narrative journalism.

In the final print issue of Reports, Fall 2025/Winter 2026, Henry Chu, the Nieman Foundation’s interim curator and publisher of the magazine, wrote that “putting out a print magazine is costly and time- and labor-intensive.” He noted that it did not sell advertising or distribute copies on newsstands and was largely sent free to alumni. But, he said, “the switch also recognizes the reality that most of us read far more these days on high-resolution screens than on ink-filled pages,” and that the website already runs far more articles than appear in the magazine. The editor of Nieman Reports, Samantha Henry.

Staircase is taking a different tack with Duck, which sells for \$22 an issue and \$40 for an annual subscription on their website. “We want the magazine



Staircase Books

not to be ephemeral ... we strive to be something larger than just a magazine, really to be sort of its own book, like an anthology,” said James Fraser, who co-founded Staircase Books in 2022 with his wife, Bella Bennett. The two met as literature students at Emerson College.

Why name a literary magazine after an aquatic bird? “Ducks are so beautiful. They’re also quite playful. They’re both very dramatic yet very comical, and that’s sort of the embodiment of the best writing,” Fraser said. The magazine aims to publish enduring works of literature, primarily poetry, but branching out to fiction as well. Duck gives the publisher a way to work with a wider range of writers.

“There are a lot of people we wanted to publish,” Fraser said. “We thought the way that we could get to work with some people who we would dream to work with would be to solicit them for a magazine.”

Fraser seems to have been correct. Jonathan Franzen, Mary Ruefle and Sherman Alexie are among the well-known writers who contributed to the initial issue of Duck.

Duck also features writing by D.A. Powell, a short play by Sebastian Castillo, interviews with Ottessa Moshfegh and Garielle Lutz, and poems by Andrea Cohen, Christian Davis, Tawanda Mulalu and Bianca Stone.

While the writers come from everywhere, Fraser said it is no coincidence that the magazine is being published here. “Cambridge as a place was absolutely instrumental in the creation of Staircase and Duck magazine ... I don’t know that either would have come about in somewhere that wasn’t Cambridge.”

Duck is first and foremost a literary magazine but aims to achieve both aesthetic and literary merit. “We’re focusing on aesthetics, we’re focusing on craft,” said Fraser. “We’re focusing on beauty — sure, politics and science and religion, other philosophy, these things are all integral — but they have to be crafted in such a way that makes them aesthetically interesting on a literary level. And that’s the readership that we’re going for.”

Fraser and Bennett originally wanted to publish quarterly but shifted to a biannual publishing cycle due to logistical considerations.

ADVERTISEMENT

1369

COFFEE HOUSE

good coffee, good people

serving inman and central square since 1993

■ Send letters to forpublication@cambridgeday.com with the name, address, phone number and relevant affiliations of the writer or writers

SPORTS

CRLS Crew

From Page 1

The disease that changed her life came without warning. After a day of skiing early in 2020, LaMaster remembers waking up in the middle of the night unable to move her left leg. She went back to bed, but in the morning couldn't get up.

LaMaster then spent two weeks at Mass General Brigham for testing and care, and was diagnosed with an autoimmune disease, transverse myelitis, a rare neurological disorder caused by spinal cord inflammation. The doctors don't know why it happened.

"It's just kind of a freak thing," LaMaster said.

A sixth-grader at the time, she missed all of January and February, and because of the COVID-19 pandemic did not return to in-person schooling until the end of seventh grade. LaMaster did not need to repeat a grade. Her treatment included steroids and plasmapheresis, also known as therapeutic plasma exchange, as well as about four years of physical therapy.



Bruno Muñoz-Oropeza

Ada LaMaster with some of her teammates and one of her coaches before a practice.

She has partial movement in both legs, more so in her right, but feels more on the left. At home, she uses a walker.

"At the beginning, it was really hard, especially just because I couldn't really do anything that I liked to do before," LaMaster said. "My parents [Steve and Rachel] did a really good job of coaching me through it, making sure that I wasn't like 'oh, my life sucks.'"

Her parents looked for competitive athletic opportunities for their youngest daughter, and found rowing. LaMaster started with the Para & Adaptive pro-

gram at Community Rowing, Inc. and joined the CRLS rowing team as a freshman. Participating in a school sport gets students out of gym class, save for freshman year, so her parents suggested coxing.

LaMaster knew few of her new teammates but soon found a love for it. She studies the role relentlessly and cares deeply about success.

"It definitely is a little bit of an obsession but in a good way," said LaMaster, a National Honors Society member, AP Scholar and sings a capella. "[Crew] provides me with a lot of structure and has

definitely had a positive impact on my life."

Stitching together a team

Coxing is often described as a crew boat's thread and needle. LaMaster's job is to bring the four rowers on her boat together to maximize speed and efficiency.

How?

A lot of technical knowledge, communication with coaches, and perhaps most importantly, understanding the rowers at an individual level and how they can best work together. For example, CRLS rowing does not incorporate a "gather," a slight pause after finishing a stroke. It's incumbent on LaMaster to keep it that way.

She studies data taken from erg testing on land. In real-time, LaMaster monitors splits with a CoxBox — a device with a digital stroke rate monitor, stopwatch, and speaker — and pushes her teammates based on their expected outputs.

"It's a lot of knowing how hard people can theoretically go," LaMaster said, "and working to push them towards that and also exceed that goal so they can go faster."

CRLS crew's spring season includes about a half-dozen regattas, including the Northeast Regionals in New Jersey and Massachusetts Public School Rowing Association states along the Merrimack River in Lowell. LaMaster eyes a bid to nationals for her CRLS swan song.

"She is probably the most competitive human being I've ever met," said CRLS coach Lane Lauriat, a sentiment repeated by her teammates. "She's relentless in getting better and has done a lot of work to improve."

After a summer highlighted by a month-long Europe trip with her father and best friend, she'll head to the opposite coast in late September to start as a scholarship student-athlete majoring in neuroscience.

LaMaster doesn't view herself as an inspiration but understands why others might. She's focused on living her life and doing what she loves.

"The fact that she's in a wheelchair is part of her life, but that's not how I see her," her teammate, Moldrem, said. "She's such an amazing person. It's clear she's pushed through everything."

CRLS girls' flag football enters first year as a varsity sport

By MATTHEW WUSCHKE

Girls' flag football is starting its first season as a varsity sport at Cambridge Rindge and Latin School.

The team started as a club sport three years ago, founded by head coach Kenneth Cooper, who was looking to translate his success with the women's flag football league he started in Cambridge in 2013, Pink Sunday.

Pink Sunday gave Cooper the framework to transition to a high school setting three years ago. The team was given varsity status this season.

"We were ahead of the game, in a sense, and just kind of just built out that platform for the girls," Cooper said. "It ended up growing and growing every year. The interest in flag football is just amazing."

While the team is not yet sanctioned under the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association, it competes in the New England Patriots girls' flag football league against schools throughout Massachusetts. The program is composed of 30 girls, split across two teams.

Flag football differs from tackle football in that it is played seven on seven on a shortened field, where the contact is limited. In tackle football, a player is downed when any other body part besides the hands or feet touch the ground. In flag football, a player is downed when the flag located by the waist is pulled.

Cooper wants the team to learn more than just football. He wants to focus on building con-



Courtesy of Kenneth Cooper

The Cambridge Rindge and Latin girl's flag football team with Coach Kenneth Cooper (top left) before a game April 14.

fidence, creating opportunities and ensuring girls know they belong in this space.

In a male-dominant space like football, women and girls haven't had equal opportunities to showcase their talents. That's why Cooper said he established a girls-only team.

"We want to keep women active, keep them going, and keep them evolving in the sports world, so that people can give them the same opportunities that boys always had," Cooper said.

The establishment of the team means a lot to current and former players.

Former player Claudia Valentine now has the opportunity to give back to the program as a coach. Valentine played under Cooper during pep rallies and other events held by the school even before the club was created.

"I couldn't be more proud

for them to be adding another female sport," Valentine said. "It speaks volumes to what the city can do for girls, especially young girls who are in sports."

With a mix of returning and new faces, the coaches have taken on the task of teaching the sport from scratch. The coaches said they have already seen the players make progress.

"The athleticism and their willingness to learn and grow as a team is just amazing," said Maggie Pimlott, assistant coach and former CRLS athlete. "They're very open minded into trying new things, and that's one of the big things about this team."

Interest in flag football is on the rise across the world. It will be an Olympic sport in 2028 in Los Angeles and was showcased in NFL and Team USA events in March.

With the sport constantly

growing, Cooper wants to establish CRLS as a top team in the country and a path for more opportunities in athletics for women.

"The future in mind is to get the girls the best possible training and structure from this program so that it continues to grow," Cooper said. "I'm always going to

be at the forefront of establishing those pipelines so that these women and young girls all have the opportunities that they never had."

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

ADVERTISEMENT

Legal ad

■ Send legal ads and public notices at least six business days ahead of the intended publication date to advertising@cambridgeday.com with contact information that includes a contact name, phone number and address.

LEGAL ADVERTISEMENT REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL FOR A REAL ESTATE ACQUISITION PROGRAM

Cambridge Affordable Housing Corporation (CAHC), Essex Street Management, Inc. (ESMI), and Kennedy Management Inc. (KMI) (collectively, the "Affiliates"), are accepting proposals for the acquisition of properties and parcels in Cambridge, Massachusetts and surrounding communities within fifty miles of Cambridge to develop and/or preserve affordable housing. The Affiliates seek to acquire all unit mixes of housing, but will give higher priority to two-bedroom and larger units that are suitable for families. The Affiliates are also seeking properties that could be expanded to include new affordable housing development or to meet specialized needs, such as permanent supportive housing or temporary housing. The Affiliates may select properties for acquisition from more than one proposal. The Affiliates may also select only some properties in a proposal.

Proposals must be prepared according to the objectives set out in the Request for Proposal issued by the Affiliates, c/o the Cambridge Housing Authority, dated April 1, 2026. Proposals will be accepted at the Cambridge Housing Authority, Attn: Margaret Donnelly Moran, 362 Green St, 3rd Floor, Cambridge, MA 02139, on a rolling basis and considered no later than 12:00 PM on every Friday from May 1, 2026 through April 28, 2028. The value of the real estate acquisition will vary by type and size of the offer and will be verified by appraisal before acquisition.

A copy of the RFP, which includes minimum criteria as well as comparative criteria, can be obtained by contacting Margaret Donnelly Moran at [mmo-ran@cambridge-housing.org](mailto:mmoran@cambridge-housing.org) or (617) 520-6251. Questions can also be directed to Margaret Donnelly Moran.

A smart, steady hand in Cambridge real estate.



Lauren
Holleran
Team

Gibson
Sotheby's
INTERNATIONAL REALTY

WWW.LAURENHOLLERAN.COM

© 2026 Sotheby's International Realty. All Rights Reserved. Sotheby's International Realty® is a registered trademark and used with permission. Each Sotheby's International Realty office is independently owned and operated, except those operated by Sotheby's International Realty, Inc. Equal Housing Opportunity. All services/products are provided by independently owned and operated franchisees and are not provided by Sotheby's International Realty Affiliates LLC. Listing information is deemed reliable but not guaranteed. Dimensions are approximate and unverified. Buyers should consult a qualified professional to confirm measurements.