



DEERFIELD CURRENTS

The Engage: Deerfield Newsletter

ENGAGE: DEERFIELD

CHANNELING COMMUNITY INTERESTS INTO ACTION

The A-Bee-C's: A Conversation with Bonita & Dan Conlon of Warm Colors Apiary

Q. What inspired you to start beekeeping, and what year was it? I was working on a farm outside Dayton, Ohio, in 1966 when I was 15. The farmer kept 20 honeybee colonies and rarely got stung. What really grabbed me was how well-adapted honeybees were as honey producers. I wanted to understand how bees could make such a delicious treat. He gave me my first beehives and a copy of "The ABC and XYZ of Bee Culture." Sixty years later, I still learn something new every year.

Wherever I lived, I kept a few hives. This led to becoming a commercial beekeeper. Today, my wife, Bonita, and I own Warm Colors Apiary in Deerfield. We produce seven varieties of honey and sell directly from the apiary, in stores, farm stands and to three colleges. Deerfield has proven to be a wonderful location for honeybees.

Q. What makes a place "bee-friendly"? Franklin County is an oasis for bees and pollinators. A pollinator-friendly environment provides food, shelter and a place to raise young. We have a wide variety of flowering plants from spring to fall.

Being bee-friendly also requires little or no pesticide use. You can't fence bees in or protect them from toxins. Homeowners can help by planting native flowering plants, leaving



"Franklin County is an oasis for bees and pollinators." -Dan Conlon

parts of their property natural, providing water during droughts and stopping pesticide use.

Q. How do your bees contribute to the local ecosystem? Honeybees and plants have one of the best relationships in nature: They provide pollination in exchange for food from flowers. Honey production may be the least important activity honeybees perform. They are a critical link in the exchange of energy all plants and animals need for survival.

Q. What motivated you to start bee-keeping classes? When Bonita and I started Warm Colors Apiary in 2000, we invested sweat, tears and savings to build up our colonies. I started bee classes to encourage new beekeepers and bring back some who had quit.

My education efforts expanded to writing articles, speaking at conferences and working with the USDA Genetics Lab. Bonita and I feel blessed to have made our living with bees since 2000.

Q. We see that your classes start at the end of March, how do people learn more about them? 2025 is our 25th season of bee classes. We've introduced more than 400 people to the world of bees. The first sessions are online before the weather warms up and we work directly with bee colonies. For details, visit warmcolorsapiary.com or email Dan at warmcolors@verizon.net.

Support for the Rights of Immigrants and Refugees

If you missed the March 4 Zoom briefing by Senator Jo Comerford and Rep. Mindy Domb, here is contact information for the organizations:

- [Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition](#)
- [American Civil Liberties Union - Massachusetts](#)
- [Center for New Americans](#)
- [Pioneer Valley Workers Center](#)
- [Central West Justice Center](#)
- [Jewish Family Service of Western Massachusetts](#)
- fccpr.us/immigrant-support-resources/

Contact information for our legislators:

Senator Jo Comerford

email: jo.comerford@masenate.gov

phone: (413) 367-4656

Representative Natalie Blais

email: Natalie.Blais@mahouse.gov

phone: (413) 362-9453

Shea Theater: "Immigrant Voices"

The Center for New Americans

celebrates the artistic traditions of our immigrant students, alumni and allies in a showcase of music and poetry on May 4, 7-9 p.m., at the Shea Theater Arts Center, 71 Avenue A, Turners Falls.



Meet Your Administrative Assistant: Patricia A. Martin

Questions by Currents Staff

Q. Please give us a brief description of your job: I try to keep town hall running smoothly. I make sure that the staff in this building and in other buildings as well have all the supplies and equipment they need and their technology is in good working order. I make sure that our phones and internet are working and up to date, and I negotiate the best pricing for these services. I process all Selectboard and Board of Health permitting – both annual and throughout the year. Whatever the town needs, I take care of it or find someone who can. I am a facilitator (lol).

Q. How do you start each day? I start each day by checking my phone and email messages.

Q. What are your favorite parts of your job? I enjoy interacting with the residents, volunteers and my co-workers. My favorite job task is anything having to do with accounting. I enjoy our incoming and outgoing billing, payroll and things like that.

Q. What's on your Town "To-Do" list? I am going to continue doing the very best job that I can do during my years here. Every day presents me with new challenges, and I never know what request will come my way. I do look forward to moving into our new building in the future.

Q. What do you do for fun/laughs? Interacting with our new Town Administrator and Assistant Town Administrator has made for more fun and laughs in recent months. There is some great chemistry here. The laid-back atmosphere is fun and stress-free. Outside of the office, I enjoy my downtime with my husband, Tom, and my cat, Loki. Tom and I enjoy our frequent trips to Jamaica to soak up the warm sun and positive vibes.

Q. What's the best way to contact you? The best is by email: adminasst@town.deerfield.ma.us. Or by phone (413) 665-1400, ext. 111 (hit or miss). Walk-ins are also welcome.

Community Conversation: Weathering the Future



Event review by Currents Staff

At the March 27 Conversation, residents gathered to learn what it means for Deerfield to be a Climate Leader. **Alex Osterman** of Ashfield —where the distinction has already been adopted—and **Mark Newey** of Airtight Energy (pictured above with Engager **Emily Gaylord**) shared information and answered questions. They explained how the Specialized Stretch Code – *for new buildings only* – supports the state’s clean energy goals, strengthens building standards and benefits Deerfield by improving home efficiency and lowering long-term energy costs. They also noted that Massachusetts is steadily moving toward these standards, and by adopting them now, Deerfield can access state funding to support town projects. ([Watch online](#)).

Note: Engage: Deerfield hosted this presentation by a concerned citizens group bringing warrant articles to this year’s Annual Town Meeting.

Save the date! **April 24 Conversation: “Your Voice, Your Choice” with opportunities to meet the candidates up for election this year.**

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

Monday, April 28, 7 p.m., Frontier Gym

The town of Deerfield is offering free childcare services to help residents with children to attend. The meeting begins at 7 p.m., **and childcare – for children starting at age 4 and school age – will be available from 6:30–9 p.m.** with drop-off at 6:30 p.m. It will be staffed by the Union #38 Out-of-School-Time Program.

Activities planned; snacks

provided. **Sign up April 1–21 at:**

Child Care Sign up For Town Meeting



Community Action: Free Childcare at Town Meeting

By Pat Ryan, Currents Staff

Engage: Deerfield was determined not to let another Annual Town Meeting pass without making it easier for parents and child caregivers to attend. We saw childcare as a vital need and took action. Through outreach and collaboration, and with the advocacy of many concerned people, that need is now being met.

Special thanks to **Darius Modestow**, Frontier Union 38 Superintendent; **Tina Gemme**, Deerfield Elementary Principal; **George Lanides**, Frontier Regional Principal; **Jeremy Wells** of the Union #38 Out-of-School-Time Program; Town Administrator **Christopher Dunne**; Assistant Town Administrator **Greg Snedeker**; and Deerfield residents **Janice James** and Engage member **Annette Pfannebecker**.

On March 5, the Selectboard approved the plan. Chair **Tim Hilchey** said this year would be the pilot for a resource he hoped would continue for many years. The free childcare will be available for Deerfield residents at the Annual Town Meeting on April 28. **Engage: Deerfield** believes this model will help more people participate in local democracy and foresees other towns following suit.

YOUR VOTE COUNTS

April 18 is the last day to register to vote in Deerfield’s **Annual Town Election on May 5**. The following positions are on the ballot: Selectboard, Board of Assessors, Constable, Elector Under the Oliver Smith Will, Frontier Regional School District School Committee, Tilton Library trustee, Deerfield Elementary School Committee (two seats), and Planning Board (two seats).

- Register to vote by April 18, 5 p.m.
- Early vote-by-mail applications due April 28, 5 p.m.
- Absentee Ballot Requests due May 2, noon.
- Election Day: Mon., May 5, Town Hall, 10 a.m.–8 p.m.
- If you are not registered to vote, see the Town Clerk in Town Hall, 8 Conway St., Mon.–Fri., 9 a.m.–4 p.m.
- For more information, call (413) 665-1400, ext. 100,
- or email townclerk@town.deerfield.ma.us.

Around Town

AVAST, YE PICKLEHEADS!

Frontier High School Pickleball

For information, contact Gayle Farrick: (413) 548-4049.
Facebook: Deerfield(Ma)Pickleball.

Deerfield Railyards Pickleball: Indoor space with three courts. 6 Railroad Yard Road. Open daily from 7 a.m.–10 p.m.. Owner, Phil Nash: (413) 539-0433.

Facebook: DeerfieldRailyardsPickleball.

The Golf Club: Indoor golf, open daily year-round, thegolf-club.com. Email: thegolfclub777@gmail.com. Owner, Frank Messana: (603) 557-7756.



Brunch Now Served at Franklin Tech

Franklin County Technical School's Culinary Arts Program is now offering brunch on Tuesdays from 10:30 a.m. to noon in the Apprentice Restaurant at 82 Industrial Blvd. Lunch is served Wednesday and Thursday. Reservations: (413) 863-9561, ext. 182.



Deerfield Elementary School Deerfield Mile

Sponsorship spots are available for this May event. If your business would like to support this fun event for the Deerfield Elementary School kids, contact **Carey Etchells** by April 11 at carey.etchells@gmail.com.

Magic Wings



Victoria Tubbs and her brother, **Vytautas Sukys**, are planning on buying the Magic Wings butterfly conservatory and gardens.



"Home Is a River" photo exhibit at the Greenfield Public Library

Works by Alix Kaplan, photographic artist and Connecticut River Conservancy staffer. Library reception: April 2, 5-7 p.m. Exhibition: March 28-April 30.



Deerfield Newsmakers

Nikki Ciesluk,

Ciesluk's Market owner, spoke at the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce breakfast on March 28 about family businesses. Pictured above: Nikki Ciesluk, left, and Kayla Snow of Townline Ice Cream.

Jillian Morgan,

Development Director at the Food Bank of Western Mass., received the GCC Young Alumni in Action Award.



Town Hall Hires

- DPW Superintendent: **Matthew Morse**
- Planning & Economic Development Coordinator: **Alexandria Galloway**

Engage: Deerfield is a fiscally sponsored project of the Peace Development Fund. Make a tax-deductible donation by mail or online at: peacefund.fcsuite.com/erp/donate/create/fund?funit_id=1660. By mail: The Peace Development Fund, PO Box 1280, Amherst, MA 01004-1280. Memo line: "Engage: Deerfield"

Currents is edited by Pat Ryan and designed by Emily Gaylord. Learn more at: engagedeerfield.org/about.