

# OPINION

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## Duxbury Clipper

JOHN & BOBBIE CUTLER, FOUNDERS  
DAVID S. CUTLER, PUBLISHER EMERITUS  
EDITOR, SUSANNA SHEEHAN

### Reader's View: Public-private partnership produces sidewalk on Railroad Avenue

The Duxbury Sidewalk and Bike Path Committee would like to thank Mike Juliano and Dermont Loftus for creating the pathway at 30 Railroad Ave. in front of the Oysterman restaurant. This could not have been accomplished without the help of property developers Mike Juliano and Dermont Loftus, Duxbury Planning Director Valerie Massard and Director of Public Works Peter Buttkus. It is a great example of how private property developers and the town can collaborate on creating pathways to move Duxbury forward in becoming a better pedestrian and bicycle-friendly town.

Although this is only a section of the pathway that the Sidewalk and Bike Path Committee envisions for Railroad Avenue, it fits into our overall vision of connecting Duxbury, one pathway at a time.

The Duxbury Sidewalk and Bike Path Committee looks forward to working with Mike Juliano and other abutters to complete the pathway on Railroad Avenue.

Kathy Cross  
Duxbury Sidewalk and Bike  
Path Committee

### Reader's View: Thanks to The Duxbury Library for its help digitizing a personal history

I would like to provide feedback and send accolades to the staff at our Duxbury Free Library. In particular, I would like to give special thanks to the staff in the Reference Department.

David Murphy and his staff have been very helpful to me and extremely patient as I labored through a personal project of mine. They assisted me in using the new digitizing equipment that allows us to digitize old photos and slides. I had been searching for a process to save the aged relics of our family's heritage when I read about the library's capability and contacted Da-

vid. Over a period of weeks, he and his staff patiently assisted me. The equipment has provided copies of equal quality and sometimes even better quality than my old originals.

While taking some breaks, I have also been following the construction of the new Reading Garden as it evolves under the library window. I look forward to the spring opening.

Again, thanks to the wonderful Duxbury library staff, and Happy New Year to all.

Carl F. Sundstrom, II  
Powder Point Avenue

## Special education in overdrive

By DAVID A. MITTELL, JR.

My first job after college was at a residential school and treatment center for emotionally disturbed children. We would call it special education.

Having studied psychology, almost on my first morning I got into a snit over breakfast with a severely disturbed 11-year-old boy. He went from

pouring orange juice on someone else's cereal to upending the table and throwing its contents around the dining room. Counselors were called, he was manhandled to his room and I was given complete support.

But then a funny thing happened. I realized that for all my book-learning about psychology I had been wrong and the boy had been right. I, not he, was the provocateur in a confrontation that could have been avoided with the right combination of humor and calm. To this boy I owe the most important insight of my life.

I did this work for 12 years, until the late David Cutler convinced me I was bound to be bad at anything I tried other than newspaper work. I was very much in agreement when the legislature passed the Special Education Act of 1972, which was intended to put the state and its resources behind the effort to keep children with special needs in the public schools, and out of institutions.

But 45 years-on, the state seems only willing to foist unfunded mandates upon local school districts. Special education has become a lawyered-up competition of special interests. Its costs as a percentage of education spending arguably dwarf what is needed to give special-needs students the best possible instruction in the least segregated milieu.

If you don't believe that, read up on outgoing Superintendent Benjamin Tantillo's articulate presentation of his 2018 budget proposal to selectmen on Dec. 12, as well as school Business Manager David Proule's recommendation of permanent special education stabilization fund to cover unforeseen costs to the district. These arise without fail every year. According to Dr. Tantillo, if a family wins the right to send a student to a private school, the town must then pay the high and off-budget cost of transportation.

That does give this and other districts an incentive to provide for students at school, which is good. But it also pits special education teachers against families and private schools. The underlying problem is the state's slapping mandates on communities for what rightly are its own responsibilities. The underlying danger is that school districts spend too much of their resources on special education, and not enough on the rest of the population – especially on average students who most need the benefit of their quickly ending school experience.

This is a state problem, the beginnings of a solution to which must come from state leaders. But it can't hurt if districts and communities lobby for relief.



### Reader's View: Support the Duxbury Senior Center

It's good to begin this letter with a quote from the AARP January magazine, "Isolation: is more than being along – it's being at risk."

Our senior center provides an anti-isolation environment. As a senior, I attend two or three exercise classes each week. These focus on power, balance and strength training. We all need these skills for daily safe living. The Aging Mastery Programs are professionally organized to enrich our lives. It is a pleasure to also benefit from Lifelong Learning classes. The subjects chosen as the topics were of great interest to myself and others. Our space allows for new social networking. As someone whose career was out of town, the center allows me outreach to new and wonderful people.

Although my husband has never crossed the portal of our senior center, he supports my weekly participation. Actually, he probably enjoys the time alone.

Please come and join us at the senior center. We respectfully ask you to support the building's expansion and consider the small tax increase of \$45.42 annually (which we all hate); as a safety net for our seniors.

Terri O'Donnell  
Sarah's Circle

*Editor's Note: According to information provided to the Council on Aging from Duxbury's Finance Director John Madden, the extra \$45.42 tax increase is for a home with an average assessed value of \$639,900. This amount will vary depending on the assessed value of a resident's home.*

### Reader's View: Thanks to town for supporting girls track team

We wanted to reach out to the Duxbury community to thank everyone for their support of the Duxbury girls track and field team's recent fundraiser. We set out with the goal of selling 100 beautiful, locally made "Duxbury Powder Point Bridge" ornaments. We sold those 100 ornaments in less than a day and we could not believe the excitement they created. Thanks to Anne Antonellis of the Duxbury Business Association, we were able to sell a total of 425 ornaments. Anne is instrumental in the success of Duxbury's Holly Days and without that day, our ornaments would not have been seen by many people in the town. Although Anne's children have graduated from Duxbury High School, she acted as the point person for the distribution of the ornaments. Without her assistance, our fundraiser would not have exceeded our goal.

Our team thanks everyone who purchased an ornament and a special thanks to our new friend and supporter Anne Antonellis.

P.S. Look for another ornament next year.

Katie Cass and Katerina Kraemer  
Duxbury girls track and field captains



Girls track team captain Katie Cass presents Anne Antonellis with a holiday thank you for all her hard work to help make the team's Christmas ornament fundraiser a huge success.