

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

Lowell Women's Week Breakfast returns

Lowell park ranger named 'Because of Her' award winner

By Peter Currier
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LOWELL » The 31st celebration of Lowell Women's Week is approaching and with it comes a celebration of one of the women who has spent years playing a role to help make the whole thing happen.

Lowell Women's Week caps off the end of the March celebration of Women's History Month, and it is meant to honor women of Lowell's past and the efforts of the women of Lowell today. The first Lowell Women's Week

monym. Doors will open for the breakfast at 7 a.m.

Between the history of Lowell's Mill Girls in the early textile mills, and Massachusetts being among the first states to elect women to Congress, Lowell Women's Week Planning Committee member Paulette Renault-Caragianes said there are a lot of current and historic local women worth celebrating. In the decades since the earliest breakfast drew in a few dozen attendees, Renault-Caragianes said the event has grown dramatically, now with hundreds of people buying tickets every year.

"It is a sellout event for the ballroom at Lenzi's," said Re-

nault-Caragianes. "It brings together people from all over the city, primarily women and girls, but not exclusively, and the centerpiece of it all that evolved over time is the Because of Her Award."

The Because of Her Award is given to women each year "whose dedication to Lowell is evident through their courage, generosity, compassion, and activism," with a focus on women who work beyond the scope of their paid work through acts of service.

This year's sole Because of Her Award recipient is JoAnn Marcos, a park ranger at the Lowell National Historical Park

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COURTESY PAULLETTE RENNAULT-CARAGIANES

U.S. Rep. Lori Trahan speaks at the 2025 Lowell Women's Week Breakfast at Lenzi's in Dracut. Trahan is set to speak again at the 2026 breakfast on March 30, which will feature Lowell National Historical Park Ranger JoAnn Marcos as the "Because of Her Award" honoree.



COURTESY PAULLETTE RENNAULT-CARAGIANES

Middlesex District Attorney Marian Ryan speaks at the 2025 Lowell Women's Week Breakfast at Lenzi's in Dracut. Ryan is set to return to the 2026 breakfast as a speaker on March 30.

EXCELLENCE IN CONSERVATION

Pawtucket Farm receives statewide award



COURTESY LOWELL PARKS & CONSERVATION TRUST

Visitors attend a nature walk at Lowell's Pawtucket Farm Wildlife Sanctuary, which was honored March 13 with the Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition's 2026 Excellence in Conservation Award.

Submitted article

AMHERST » Lowell's Pawtucket Farm Wildlife Sanctuary was honored with the Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition's 2026 Excellence in Conservation Award at the 36th annual Massachusetts Land Conservation Conference, held on March 13 at UMass Amherst. An audience of over 600 was on hand for the presentation.

Each year, the Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition presents the Excellence in

Conservation Award to a land trust or collaboration of conservation partners in recognition of a project that demonstrates excellence in any aspect of land conservation work, advances the cause of conservation in a creative and substantive way, and serves as an inspiration for other conservation organizations in the state.

"This project meets all those criteria in a partic-

FARM » PAGE 8



COURTESY LOWELL PARKS & CONSERVATION TRUST

Visitors walk through a field at Lowell's Pawtucket Farm Wildlife Sanctuary, which was honored March 13 with the Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition's 2026 Excellence in Conservation Award.

The Five Minute Read

Health center works with AI

LOWELL » Lowell Community Health Center has entered a strategic partnership with Lexi, a Harvard-developed, immigrant-led team building an artificial intelligence language tool for health care.

Lowell is one of Massachusetts' most linguistically diverse communities, with around 43% of residents speaking a language other than English at home. Nationally, nearly 30 million patients face language barriers that slow care, erode trust, and, in the worst cases, lead to serious medical errors, while adding friction for clinicians and staff under constant time pressure. Lexi believes this breakdown is not inevitable.

The partnership with Lexi should be a significant step toward closing this gap.

For Lexi's co-founders, CEO Linh Pham and CPO Siddharth "UR" Umanari

Rajavelu, the challenge is deeply personal.

Both founders have witnessed the profound consequences of language gaps firsthand in hospitals, government offices and daily life. They also saw where traditional interpretation systems fall short: they can be expensive, access is often delayed and experiences can vary across languages and care settings. What began as a Harvard design engineering thesis evolved into a conviction: vital language access should not depend on wait times, complex phone tree or whether a human interpreter is available.

"We're not trying to replace people," said UR. "We're focused on removing friction during the most vulnerable moments, ensuring patients are heard immediately when it matters most."

Unlike traditional interpretation services, Lexi provides zero-wait

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COURTESY LEXI

Lexi co-founders Linh Pham, left, and Siddharth "UR" Umanari Rajavelu are regularly on-site at Lowell Community Health Center to learn workflows, onboard Lexi, and keep adapting it in partnership with their teams.

WILDLIFE

Coyote sightings are on the rise

Estimated 9,500 to 11,500 across the state

By Rick Sobey
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If you've been seeing more coyotes this time of year, you're not alone.

Local residents have been reporting a paw-sitive jump in coyote sightings, as there's a "perfect storm" of factors coming together.

Coyotes are in every city and town in mainland Massachusetts, with an estimated 9,500 to 11,500 coyotes in the Bay State. The opportunity for human-coyote interaction is high, but the mere presence of a coyote is not a cause for concern, according to MassWildlife.

"We're at the tail end of coyote mating season, and it's a time when coyotes can be more active and visible to the public and more vocal sometimes," said Meghan Crawford, community engagement biologist with MassWildlife.

"You can hear them howling to secure their mates and defend their territory.

"So this time of year, we tend to get an increase in reports due to increased sightings," the biologist added. "They can show aggression toward dogs, seeing them as potential competition."

In Newton, for instance, police recently reported a rise in reported coyote sightings throughout the city.

"While recent activity may feel new to some residents, coyotes are not new to our community!" Newton Police posted.

As coyote mating season ends, spring is coming — which means denning season is starting.

"More people are now going outside because it's early spring and not the dead of winter," said wildlife biologist Forrest Galante. "And what that does is it creates a perfect storm of situations, where people end up seeing coyotes more and thinking they're a problem. But re-

ally, it's a cyclical thing that has us crossing paths this time of year."

Coyotes are only dangerous when they become habituated, added Galante — who has more than 2 million YouTube followers, and who has hosted shows on the Discovery Channel.

He urged people to not unknowingly feed hungry coyotes. Homeowners should not leave food or garbage outside, and trash containers should be secured.

"Don't let coyotes become accustomed to eating near your residence," Galante said. "Because if you unknowingly feed coyotes, then one day you could let your dog out or kids out, and then there's a coyote waiting for you to grill your steak."

"It's unintentional, but you're conditioning these animals to think that you're a potential option for food," he added. "When that happens, then you can end up in a conflict situation, and can have a negative encounter."

The likelihood of an actual human death is incredibly low, he stressed.

"But these animals are canines," Galante said. "If you upset it or don't give it what it wants, it can snap at you, it can bite you. And it can certainly kill a child, and it will eat your pet."

Coyotes can view cats and small dogs as potential prey, and larger dogs as competition. A person's presence next to their pet is one of the most important factors in preventing an incident.

"Protect and closely supervise pets whenever outdoors," said MassWildlife's Crawford, who urged people to use leashes that are 6 feet or shorter.



MASSWILDLIFE PHOTO

Coyotes are in every city and town in mainland Massachusetts.

maintain eye contact, and make loud noises by yelling or clapping. This "hazing" reinforces a coyote's natural fear of people.

"Coyotes are quite shy when faced with conflict," Galante said. "You should be loud, aggressive and assertive. If you act like prey, they will treat you like prey, so if you turn and run and act scared, the coyotes are going to go, 'Wow! This is something on the menu.'"

"But if you look at it and go, 'Hey! Get out of here!' and you scream and wave your arms, that coyote is going to turn and run away," he added. "So if you see a coyote, be a big presence, be loud, be aggressive."

Hazing will not be effective if it's done from inside a building, from behind a screen door, or from a car. Hazing is most effective when it's done repeatedly, when a variety of techniques are used, and when many people participate.

If you encounter a coyote that's exhibiting concerning behavior like approaching leashed pets, closely following people, or not running off when effectively hazed, you should contact your local Animal Control Officer or local MassWildlife office for assistance. If there's an immediate threat to public safety, call local law enforcement.

Learn more about coyotes at mass.gov/coyotes.

WASHINGTON

Fee to renounce US citizenship slashed by 80 percent

By Matthew Lee
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The State Department has slashed by about 80% the fee for Americans to formally re-

nounce their U.S. citizenship. After years of legal battles with several groups representing Americans wanting to give up their citizenship, the department

on Friday published a final rule in the Federal Register that reduces the cost from \$2,350 to \$450. The new fee, which took effect on Friday, had been promised in 2023 but had

never been implemented. The cost is now the same as it was when the State Department first started charging Americans to formally renounce their citizenship in 2010.

Renouncing U.S. citizenship can be an intensive and lengthy process. Applicants must repeatedly confirm in multiple written and verbal attestations to a State Department

consular officer that they understand the implications of the step before being allowed to take a formal oath of renunciation. It must then be reviewed by the department.

Women

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who has been involved in Lowell Women's Week for 16 years. Marcos told The Sun the Lowell Women's Week Breakfast is an event "where people really come

out and engage with each other, but also be inspired." "The speakers on stage are talking about women's issues, and we normally have our keynote, who has an incredible story we can relate to," said Marcos.

This year's keynote speaker will be Tabina Montoya, a Lowell native with a career as

a multilingual international affairs strategist, U.S. Air Force intelligence officer and a defense and policy researcher at the RAND Corporation.

When asked about being on the other side of this event, being the honoree for this year, Marcos responded humbly. "I feel like there are other people that should be hon-

ored, not me. I've done a lot of work, I feel we have an amazing program, but there are amazing people in the community," said Marcos.

Every year the breakfast has a theme, and Renault-Caragianes said this year's will be "Celebrating the Power of Us: Connections and Courage."

Attendees of the breakfast are encouraged to donate to the Lowell Youth Leadership Program, a local nonprofit summer camp offered for free to middle-school aged kids in Lowell. Guests are asked to bring donations of shelf-stable food items or a direct monetary donation for the LYL.

Tickets to the breakfast can be purchased at lowellwomensweek.org.

A snow date for the breakfast is set for the following day, March 31, in the event of inclement weather.

"It is an incredibly uplifting event as we think about things that could be better in the world," said Renault-Caragianes.

Farm

FROM PAGE 3

ularly compelling way," noted Rob Johnson, the coalition's executive director. "Our award committee found this to be an inspiring model for how to engage a diverse community and forge creative partnerships to realize a vision for the property that addresses multiple community needs."

The 20-acre Pawtucket Farm Wildlife Sanctuary was created from what was long known as Rosie's Farm, a beloved Christmas tree farm which also sold sought-after corn and tomatoes. When its owners began planning for retire-

ment, they began a conversation with Lowell Parks & Conservation Trust about how to ensure the property would remain accessible to the public forever. After several years of fundraising and planning with partners Mass Audubon and Mill City Growers, that vision became a reality when a parking area and wheelchair-accessible trail system opened to the public in December 2024.

Mass Audubon owns the sanctuary, subject to a permanent conservation restriction co-held by Lowell Parks & Conservation Trust and the city of Lowell — which contributed Community Preservation Act funding toward the purchase. Mill City Growers is an integral partner, leasing farm fields and com-

munity garden plots on the property. The property is now open to the public and includes a 0.75-mile All Persons accessible trail. Planned for installation this year are an outdoor classroom pavilion and a one-acre food forest, where visitors will eventually be able to harvest native wild edible crops like nuts, fruits, and berries. Future plans include an education center, farm support barn, and nature play area, along with continued ecological restoration.

In designing the sanctuary, project partners orchestrated nine listening sessions in four locally dominant languages to understand what this new asset could mean to Lowell. The chosen plan reflects the

community's strong desire for fresh food, nature education programs, summer camp, and opportunities for multigenerational outdoor gathering.

"We appreciate this recognition from the land trust community that reflects the power of partnership in bringing much-needed open space to the people of Lowell and ensuring everyone everywhere has the opportunity to access the wonderful benefits nature provides," said Mass Audubon President & CEO David O'Neill. "Pawtucket Farm is a tremendous example of what can be accomplished when collaboration and community are prioritized in the face of climate change and biodiver-



COURTESY LOWELL PARKS & CONSERVATION TRUST

Formerly Rosie's Farm, known for its Christmas trees, Lowell's Pawtucket Farm Wildlife Sanctuary was honored March 13 with the Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition's 2026 Excellence in Conservation Award.

life Sanctuary is available at bit.ly/4bMfCL and bit.ly/471N6u.

Read

FROM PAGE 3

interpretation at the point of care across both common and underserved languages. When a patient prefers a language other than English, care teams can securely launch Lexi in seconds on the clinic's existing devices and systems. Lexi then interprets the live conversation in real time so both patients and providers can understand each other. This reduces delays in critical moments and helps

teams communicate naturally without disrupting care.

Lowell Community Health Center became Lexi's strategic partner, launching a pilot in August 2025. Guided by Chief Information Officer Padma Sasstry, Head of Interpreter Services Maria Cruz, and Dr. Julie Le, director of the Eye Care Center, the rollout rapidly expanded from a single department to eight departments across the organization.

"It's very accurate," said Cruz. "There's no waiting, no downtime, and it's been a

good experience." Lexi's leaders said they have been very successful in securing funding — recently raising \$1.4 million through a number of partners, led by Informed Ventures — to further develop its new AI tools.

Plus, Lexi is expanding its Patient Advisory Board to ensure the product is shaped by both patients and providers. Immigrant and multilingual community members, as well as clinics and community organizations interested in partnering, are encouraged to reach out directly.

Voting by mail in Tewksbury

TEWKSBURY

All registered voters can vote by mail in the April 11 annual town election. These ballots are known as "Vote by Mail" ballots and can be requested using the Vote by Mail Application, which must be requested in writing by 5 p.m. Monday, April 6.

Voters will need to submit a Vote by Mail application, by mail, email or fax, to Town Clerk, 1009 Main St., Tewksbury, MA 01876; townclerk@tekwbury-ma.gov or 978-851-

8610. Vote by Mail applications can be downloaded or printed at tinyurl.com/pcr9vds. Further, any written request with your signature is an acceptable application. You can simply write a signed letter to apply for your ballot. Applications must include a signature that can be compared to your handwritten signature. Electronic signatures, scanned applications and photos of applications are acceptable.

To ensure you receive your ballot with enough time to mail it back, you should apply two to three

weeks before election day.

To return voted ballots, choose one of the following:

Drop ballots off in the drop box at the Main Entrance of Town Hall 24-7 until 8 p.m. on election day.

In person at the Town Clerk's Office Monday, Wednesday and Thursday 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Tuesday 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Friday 7:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

By mail (not recommended).

Ballots must reach the Town Clerk's Office by the close of polls on election day to be counted.

Returns

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"If they're right, they're right," Norkunas said about whether the taxes were misfiled. "If they're wrong, we're going to press them all the way through."

The charge of aiding and assisting in the filing of false tax returns provides for a sentence of up to three years in prison, up to one year of supervised release and a fine of \$250,000.

U.S. Attorney Leah Foley and Thomas Demeo, acting special agent in charge of IRS Criminal Investiga-

tions in Boston, made the announcement. Assistant U.S. Attorney Benjamin A. Saltzman of the Securities, Financial & Cyber Fraud Unit is prosecuting the case.

Panyanouvong was released on conditions with another appearance in federal court in Boston set for April 22.

Jesus' healing power is true for us today!
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First Church of Christ, Scientist, Lowell
Sunday Services 10am
Wednesday Testimony Meeting 7:15pm

↙ **What does this mean?** ↘

"God made man in His image and likeness, male and female created He them....and behold it was very good".

Come hear the answers in our weekly lesson-sermons

For more information please call
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(junction of Rts. 38 & 133) Lowell, MA
www.cslowellma.org

Don't miss our Money Matters section
Available to all subscribers via our printed version or our e-edition.
Look for it on Sunday, March 15th!

Money Matters

Money **Budget** **Saving For**
Expanding **Basics** **a Rainy**
Sticks **Basics** **Day**

3 ways that can help people get their financial future on track

THE SUN
Visit us at LowellSun.com | Questions? Call 1-800-359-1300

EASTER
Worship
Guide

March 29 & April 2, 2026

Once again, we will be publishing a special Easter Worship Guide the week before Easter. This gives you an opportunity to announce the dates and times of your Easter Services.

If you would like to have your Church represented in this guide, please contact **Renee Hoey** by **Wednesday, March 25, 2026** at **978-970-4652** or rhoey@medianewsgroup.com.

THE SUN
www.lowellsun.com