



► Lowell monk's poetry goes on national tour/5

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METRO EDITION

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'May he rot in hell'

Chelmsford man shows no emotion while victim's family speaks

By Lisa Redmond
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WOBURN — Christine McGee's father called his daughter's killer — her estranged husband Jeffrey McGee — "an animal" who forced the couple's young son to live with the horrible memory of witnessing his mother's murder.



Christine McGee ... killed in 2007

"The impact on this little boy is horrific," said Donald Plouffe, Christine's father, as he choked back tears yesterday. "Our family will never escape the grief. ... May he rot in hell," Plouffe told Middlesex Superior Court Judge Kathe Tuttman during McGee's sentencing hearing.

After a two-week trial, McGee, 39, of Chelmsford, was found guilty



Donald Plouffe, the father of murder victim Christine McGee, gives a statement yesterday in Woburn.

Video too



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Friday of first-degree murder in the Nov. 20, 2007, slaying of his 31-year-old estranged wife, Christine. The murder took place in front of the couple's then-3 1/2-year-old son, Gavin, in Jeffrey McGee's Glen Avenue apartment in Chelmsford.

After beating, choking and stabbing his wife to death, McGee, who had tried unsuccessfully to commit suicide, put his young son in his car and drove along Route 110 in Methuen, where he drove head-on into a dump truck, according to prosecutor Katharine Folger.

Neither the boy nor his father was seriously injured in the crash, but the jury convicted McGee of assault and battery with a dangerous weapon, negligent operation of a motor vehicle, and reckless endangerment of a child in relation to the crash.

It was while officials were trying to find the boy's mother to tell her about the accident that Gavin told hospital personnel, "Daddy killed Mommy."

During the trial, Gavin, now 6, testified against his father.

In court yesterday, McGee, who shaved his head, wore glasses and was sporting a goatee — a transformation from his appearance during

Please see **MURDER/4**



Jeffrey McGee talks with his defense attorney, Rosemary Scapicchio, left, after receiving his sentence yesterday.

SUN PHOTOS/DAVID H. BROW

Former Scout earns honor

By Erin Smith
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LOWELL — Kevin Coughlin is a Boy Scout — an Eagle Scout to be exact.

He's also known for his community volunteer work over the years and that's why he was picked to receive the Boy Scouts' Greater Lowell Distinguished Citizen Award this year, according to Chuck



Tyngsboro's Kevin Coughlin

Marvin, finance director of the Yankee Clipper Council, the local agency for the Boy Scouts. The Tyngsboro resident is the first honoree in recent years who is a Boy Scout, according to Marvin. Last year's recipient, local lawyer George Eliades Jr., was never a Boy Scout. Neither was Middlesex Community College President Carole Cowan, who received the honor in 2008 nor local businessman James F. Conway III, tapped for the annual award in 2007. The 2006 award recipient, Trinity Ambulance co-owner John Chemaly, also was not a Scout.

Coughlin, vice president for government and community strategies at Saints Medical Center, will be honored at a dinner at Lenzi's in Dracut on April 8.

Coughlin called the honor "humbling," especially as the Boy Scout organization celebrates its 100th year. Coughlin said he was surprised when a committee of former award recipients called to tell him they wanted to honor him at this year's ceremony.

"They are the people that gets things done. You cannot say no to that," said Coughlin. "It's a wonderful experience

Please see **COUGHLIN/5**

"This place is a hidden gem."

— Chronicle producer Stan Leven



WCVB Channel 5's *Chronicle* host Mary Richardson, right, talks with artist Ashlee Welz Smith of Lowell during a visit to Western Avenue Studios for a segment on artist communities.

SUN/JULIA MALAKIE

Western Avenue Studios in 'Chronicle' spotlight

By Nancy Tuttle
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LOWELL — Mary Richardson, the co-host of WCVB-TV's *Chronicle*, couldn't get enough of artist Ashlee Welz Smith's adorable daughter Nola, whose chubby baby face is featured in a series of paintings Welz Smith created in her Western Avenue Studios space.

"Look at these close-ups of this cute baby. She's so sweet — how does she feel when she sees herself in the paintings?" Richardson asked Welz Smith yesterday. "She doesn't notice much now, but she'll probably be embarrassed when she's a teenager," replied Welz Smith.

It was one friendly exchange in several hours of amiable banter between Richardson, her producer/husband Stan Leven and photographer Bob Oliver, and several WAS artists being interviewed for an upcoming *Chronicle* segment on artist communities

in Massachusetts.

Before Richardson arrived, Leven and Oliver had visited Liz Smith's Made in Lowell studio, where Smith was making polymer clay Easter eggs and still recovering from her appearance last week on *Martha Stewart Live*.

They also checked out Frank Casazza's space and talked with photographer Adrien Bisson and artist Dave Barton. Along with Richardson, they had visited The Space, a new recording and performance space at WAS, owned by John and Robert Bell. Later, Richardson planned to stop by Heather Wang's jewelry studio.

"This place is a hidden gem," said Leven, who contacted WAS Executive Director Maxine Farkas last Friday to set up the visit after discovering WAS on the Internet.

"What strikes me is how polished it is," noted Richardson, impressed with the art

Please see **WAS/5**

Tsongas talks up health care

Congresswoman to explain costs

By Rita Savard
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LOWELL — Now that health-care reform has passed, one very big question still remains: What will it cost the American people?

As President Obama

signed into law a package of changes to the new bill yesterday Democrats like U.S. Rep. Niki Tsongas were busy reaching out to voters in their congressional districts to try and break down the complicated health-care reform law.

The so-called "fixes" bill that followed yesterday, significantly expands health-insurance subsidies for lower- and middle-income families. It also overhauls the national student-loan system by shifting government funding for loans away from commercial banks that soaked graduates with high interest rates.

The added bill increases the overall cost of the health-care reform legislation to \$940 billion over the next 10 years, \$65 billion more than the original bill that Obama signed last week.

Tsongas said the government needed to spend money for Americans to save money on everyday medical costs. According to the figures put forward by the Congressional Budget Committee, Tsongas said the new law will actu-

ally reduce the national deficit by \$143 billion in the first 10 years, and whittle it down by another \$1.2 trillion in the following 10 years.

But concern still is growing that the plan might be biting off more than it can

chew.



U.S. Rep. Niki Tsongas

U.S. Rep. Mike McIntyre, a North Carolina Democrat, voiced support yesterday for the largely Republican state attorneys general suing the federal government on the grounds that the bill is unconstitutional. McIntyre's comments highlight the fervent opposition to the reform package that exists in moderate and conservative parts of the country. McIntyre is one of 34 Democrats who opposed the legislation.

In Massachusetts, Sen. Scott Brown has co-sponsored an amendment to repeal a portion of the law that taxes medical-device companies. Brown also said he's working on legislation that would allow states to opt out of the health-care bill.

Despite the backlash, there's still much misinformation surrounding the law, Tsongas said yesterday afternoon during an interview at *The Sun*.

One example, she said, is that the health-reform

Please see **REFORM/5**

Cashman puts focus on fault-filled city office



Rosemary Cashman

By Jennifer Myers
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LOWELL — The city's Inspectional Services Department has had "poor oversight of its employ-

City Council ees, inadequate record keeping, inattentive and sometimes neglectful monitoring of some contractors and their construction projects and

insufficient concern about public health and safety," according to a memo sent by Interim Director of Inspectional Services Rosemary Cashman to City Manager Bernie Lynch.

However, Cashman adds that the department's shortcomings can be overcome through the "institution of appropriate accountability procedures."

Cashman, the former town

administrator of Tyngsboro, was brought in by Lynch to assist in the restructuring of the troubled department following the January dismissal of Building Commissioner Robert Camacho.

The department has been the focus of an investigation by Inspector General Gregory Sullivan's office for the past year. The investigation began as a

probe into the circumstances surrounding the issuance of building permits to McBee Development LLC, whose principals are Thomas Broderick of North Hampton, N.H., and Stephen Maguire of Tyngsboro. The scope of the investigation was broadened last August when Lynch fired plumbing and

Please see **COUNCIL/4**

Cultural Council presents nearly \$50,000 in grants

By Nancye Tuttle
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LOWELL — At a recent reception at the Whistler House Museum of Art, the Lowell Cultural Council distributed \$49,937 in grants to help fund arts-related projects throughout the city of Lowell. The grants are allocated by the LCC on behalf of the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.

Twenty organizations and eight individuals received grant money for projects and programming that will benefit the Lowell community in several ways.

Local visual and performing-arts organizations that received funding support to subsidize ongoing programming and new initiatives include Merrimack Repertory Theatre, Brush Artist Studios and Gallery, the Revolving Museum, Western Avenue Studios Artist Association, the Arts League of Lowell, the 119 Gallery, the New England Orchestra, Lowell Youth Orchestra and the Whistler House Museum of Art.

Nonprofit community organizations receiving

funding include the Light of Cambodian Children, United Teen Equity Center, Lowell Parks & Conservation Trust, Lowell Festival Foundation, Lowell Telecommunications and D'Youville Senior Care Foundation.

Collaboration between the organizations, artists, schools and other nonprofit groups will further expand outreach citywide and maximize cultural and educational benefits.

Funding for 2010 will also provide support for ongoing community events including Doors Open Lowell (May), the African Cultural Festival (June), Lowell Folk Festival's Art in the Courtyard (July), Lowell Open Studios (September) and Lowell Celebrates Kerouac (October.)

Funding to Lowell-based individual will help support the Western Avenue Studios Free Summer Youth Program, a documentary film on the last farm in Lowell and a curated exhibit featuring children's book illustrators.

For a complete list of grant recipients go to www.mass-culture.org/Lowell.

Scouts to honor Tyngsboro man

COUGHLIN/From Page 3

being honored in your hometown and with all the historic changes that have taken place in Lowell over the last 100 years."

Previous award recipients, board members and other community leaders select the honoree each year, according to Marvin.

"We were looking for a Scout-type person to celebrate the Boy Scouts' 100th anniversary and it just adds to the community work he does through Saints Medical," said Marvin. "We wanted to kind of recognize one of our own that has done so much for Scouting over the years."

Coughlin, who has served as an assistant scoutmaster in Hyde Park and previously served on the Boy Scouts council board for the Greater Lowell area, became an Eagle Scout in 1971. He was also the first person in Tyngsboro's history to receive the Eagle Scout award, according to Boy Scout officials. Coughlin said his Eagle Scout project involved the cleanup and restoration of historic Fletcher Cemetery

in Tyngsboro.

"It seems like a long time ago," said Coughlin.

Coughlin became the youngest elected member to the Tyngsboro Board of Selectman in 1978, was later elected to the Board of Health and held many governmental positions, including appointments from former Massachusetts Gov. Edward King, Secretary of State William Galvin and the Selectmen of Middlesex County, according to Scout officials.

He also has participated in numerous community volunteer leadership positions as chairman of the Greater Lowell Workforce Investment Board, director of the Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association, trustee of the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Lowell and a board member of the D'Youville Senior Care Foundation, Scouting officials said.

Coughlin is slated to give a keynote speech at the award dinner.

To attend the award dinner, contact Chuck Marvin at 978-372-0591 or e-mail cmarvin@bsaemail.org.



Chronicle cameraman Bob Oliver tapes WCVB's Mary Richardson interviewing artist Ashlee Welz Smith of Lowell during a visit to Western Avenue Studios for a segment on artist communities.

SUN/JULIA MALAKE

Western Avenue Studios in 'Chronicle' spotlight

WAS/From Page 3

on the walls and flourishing studios, many with doors open for visitors.

The artists put on a concerted effort over the weekend to spiff up the space, noted Farkas.

"When we heard *Chronicle* was coming, we cleaned, polished and painted," she said.

That's what makes the place special, Welz Smith told Richardson.

"I've found a wonderful sense of community here. I get useful critiques on my work. It's opened me up and taken me places I haven't been before," she said.

Speaking of places, Lowell is one of Richardson's favorites — and she's traveled the world to Europe, China, Egypt, the Arctic and Cuba in her 25 years on *Chronicle*, which she recently announced she will leave on May 21.

"I love Lowell and that can-do attitude and coopera-

tion that everyone in the city seems to have," she said, noting she'd been here before to report on Bette Davis' birthplace and the Jack Kerouac memorial in Eastern Canal Park for *Chronicle*.

The exposure on *Chronicle* will be "incredible" for WAS, according to Farkas.

"I'm dumbstruck — this will give us wonderful, tremendous recognition as a community and we won't be 5 until August," she noted.

Leven, impressed with the art and artists here, said he and Richardson will return on their own. "But," he quipped, "I'll probably have to keep Mary out of the jewelry studios."

Chronicle's segment on WAS and other Massachusetts arts communities will air within the next couple of weeks, he said.

Chronicle airs weekdays at 7:30 p.m. on WCVB-TV, Channel 5.

Lowell monk's poetry goes on national tour posthumously

LOWELL — Organizers behind the publication of a poetry collection by a deceased Lowell Cambodian monk are scheduled to launch a nationwide tour tomorrow promoting the book.

The Light of Cambodian Children and Cambodian Expressions will release the book by Ly Van Aggadipo at Middlesex Community College in Lowell.

The book describes the horrors of the Khmer Rouge regime through the eyes of Ly Van, who died in January 2008.

Following the Lowell event are stops in Chicago, Philadelphia, St. Paul, Minn., and Long Beach, Calif. Tour stops will feature readings and accompanying musical performances by two Cambodian artists. The book's editor, Samkhann Khoeun, said the tour will bring the monk's story to various Cambodian American communities across the country.

Tsongas talks up health-care reform

REFORM/From Page 3

debate often misrepresents changes to Medicare.

Nearly \$500 billion in cuts under the health-reform package include no direct reductions to traditional Medicare benefits, Tsongas said. Instead, the cuts will come largely from limits to growth in future Medicare spending over the next 10 years and lower government funding of private Medicare Advantage plans. About 25 percent of all Medicare recipients get health care through these plans, including 7,400 in the 5th Congressional District, that generally reduce what people have to pay from their own pockets for medical services.

The small premiums are from the government paying out about 14 percent more for Advantage than it costs to cover seniors in traditional Medicare, Tsongas said.

"You have to say what's fair and what's wasteful," Tsongas said. "Paying more for a select group is not fair to the majority receiving traditional Medicare and it's mispending taxpayers dollars."

While premiums for Advantage plans are likely to rise next year, "insurers cannot offer fewer benefits than the original Medicare plan, whether you're on traditional Medicare or Medicare Advantage," Tsongas added.

AARP Massachusetts, and other advocates for seniors, support health-care reform and insist the landmark bill will strengthen the overall Medicare program and benefit seniors.

Probably the most immediate win for seniors comes in the form of controls on prescription-drug costs, said

Nora Super, director of federal government relations for AARP Massachusetts.

Medicare Part D enrollees in the "doughnut hole" of drug coverage — who must pay \$3,610 in drug costs before they are covered by Medicare's catastrophic coverage provision — will get a one-time \$250 rebate this year. Next year, seniors in the hole will get a 50 percent discount on brand-name drugs and a 7 percent discount on generics. The discounts grow so that by 2020, consumers will pay the standard 25 percent for drugs, instead of 100 percent. Once they spend a certain amount on drugs, they will then pay just 5 percent.

Individuals earning over \$85,000 and couples over \$170,000, will pay more in drug plan premiums starting next year.

"The way these reductions take place over the next five years, we believe will be beneficial to all people over the long term," Super said. "Many join Medicare Advantage because they want to take advantage of the drug benefits but now everyone will get them."

Besides ending taxpayer subsidies for private insurers in Medicare, other methods to pay for health-care reform will include excise tax on high-cost employer-sponsored health-care coverage, instituting a health insurance provider fee, a pharmaceutical manufacturers fee, a medical-device manufacturers fee and a tax on indoor tanning services.

For a full breakdown of health-care reform's savings and costs as compiled by Tsongas' office, please visit www.lowellsun.com.

ARRESTS LOG

Lowell

— **Arnold Wortham**, 52, 1003 Westford St., Unit 9; warrant for driving after license suspension, warrant for driving under the influence of alcohol.
— **Leonardo Canales**, 25, no known address; warrant for assault

and battery with a dangerous weapon, warrant for intimidating a witness, warrant for larceny.
— **Jovannie Ferrer**, 22, 22 Walker St., rear; warrant for destruction of property over \$250.
— **Knak Ngoun**, 41, no known address; trespassing.

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