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DAILY NEWS

Sunday

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 29, 2024 | MILFORDDAILYNEWS.COM

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The Daily News has released its sixth annual “Most Interesting People” for 2024. Among those selected were, clockwise from upper left, Lino Covarrubias, CEO of Jewish Family Services of MetroWest in Framingham; Pam Griffin, co-owner of Chocolate Therapy in Wayland; Mike Tilton, champion water skier from Natick; and Danielle Jordan, body builder from Marlborough. DAILY NEWS AND WICKED LOCAL STAFF PHOTOS/ART ILLMAN

MetroWest’s 25 Most Interesting People in 2024

Dan O’Brien
The MetroWest Daily News
USA TODAY NETWORK

For the sixth consecutive year, the Daily News is looking back and recognizing 25 people in the community who aren’t always in the news, but made

news in some way at some point in 2024. There’s a 68-year-old world-class water skier from Natick; a brother-and-sister team that spearheaded a town-wide pollinator garden effort in Hopkinton; the Wayland chocolatier whose chocolate bark was featured in Oprah’s

Favorite Things; and the high school football star from Hudson who became just the fifth player in state history to amass 10,000 total yards. And many more. The one thing they have in common?

See **INTERESTING**, Page 3A

Nonprofit makes one last bid to save Sawin House

Norman Miller
The MetroWest Daily News
USA TODAY NETWORK

NATICK — A group of people is making a last-ditch effort to save the first home built in town from demolition. George Sawin, a seventh-generation grandson of Thomas and Deborah Sawin, who built the home in 1696, said the group has officially registered as a 501(c)(3) organization called Natick Heritage Inc. Its aim is to prevent demolition of the Sawin House, which could occur as soon as February. Sawin said they hope to convince the Mass Audubon Society, which owns the house (it sits on the grounds of the Broadmoor Wildlife Sanctuary), to not tear down the home, but instead gift it to Natick Heritage. The group would then renovate the house and turn it into a living memorial. “We just want to save the house,” said Sawin, 68, of Westwood. Mass Audubon, in a statement released last month, said it has been working for a decade to try to find some sort of agreement to save the home. Failing that, it has applied for a demolition permit and can tear down the house as early as February.

Home was built as part of an agreement with the Natick Praying Indians

The home was built by the Sawins in

See **SAWIN HOUSE**, Page 2A

Trump’s return to office sparks fear among Haitians

Ziyue Zhu
Boston University Statehouse Program

BOSTON — Experts say the Haitian community is grappling with anxiety and uncertainty as President-elect Donald Trump returns to office, citing

fears about the future of Temporary Protected Status while their home country is wracked by lawlessness. “It is a widespread fear among our immigrants, especially among Haitian immigrants, since Donald Trump won the election,” said Dieufort J. Fleuris-

saint, senior pastor at Total Christian Ministries and president of True Alliance Center, both in Boston. Temporary Protected Status is granted by the secretary of the Department of Homeland Security to eligible foreign-born individuals unable to return home

safely due to conditions or circumstances preventing their country from adequately handling the return. “When I came here, I came here for a better life — socially, economically and

See **HAITIANS**, Page 2A

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Haitians

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mentally — for myself as well as for all members of my family,” Fleurissaint said. “Haiti is so dangerous, Christians congregants can’t even go to their churches. As a matter of fact, many Haitian churches are closed every Sunday because they’ve been vandalized by gangs and they couldn’t do that.”

False claims of ‘illegal aliens’ eating pets in Ohio

Trump and Vice President-elect J.D. Vance heightened those fears during their campaign, falsely claiming Haitians in Springfield, Ohio — who Vance falsely declared were “illegal aliens” who were “granted amnesty” — were eating pets and committing crime. In fact, they had been welcomed there.

“Absolutely, I’d revoke it,” Trump said in October to questions about the status of Haitians. “You have to remove the people, and you have to bring them back to their own country.”

Haiti was first designated for Temporary Protected Status on Jan. 21, 2010, following a devastating earthquake. As of 2022, more than 350,000 Haitians remain in the United States under the program, including about 13,000 in Massachusetts.

Immigrant says Haitians are ‘resilient’ and ‘hard workers’

Fleurissaint arrived in the U.S. from Haiti in 1981 as a tourist without legal papers. He often juggled three to four jobs simultaneously to support he and his wife while attending night school. “It is very hard,” he said. “But Haitian people are resilient and they are hard workers. They don’t mind doing two or three jobs because they know they have to care financially for members of the immediate family here, and they need to support financially parents, siblings left back home.”

While Trump repeatedly claimed immigrants are “stealing jobs,” Haitian American and former state Rep. Marie P. St. Fleur, D-Boston, countered that these workers often take on low-wage positions that many Americans decline. “If you want these jobs you can have them,” she said, referring to positions typically held by Haitian immigrants.

Statistics suggest Haitian immigrants are quietly underpinning critical segments of the U.S. workforce, particularly in health care and education.

As of 2021, about 103,000 Haitian health care workers served as nursing assistants, personal care aides and home health aides, ensuring essential care for elderly and chronically ill patients. Between 2018 and 2022, 15.3% of employed Haitian-Americans also contributed to the education and social services sectors, filling roles that many Americans overlook.



Giovanni Fleurancois, general manager for National Express, instructs Haitian asylum seekers in Framingham how to use the MetroWest Regional Transit Authority in this August 2023 file photo.
DAILY NEWS AND WICKED LOCAL FILE PHOTO / ART ILLMAN



Brothers Therry Adamsley Gerard Volmar and Kercoff Sauphony Volmar proudly display the Haitian flag while under a "Welcome to Brockton" sign in this March 2023 file photo. BROCKTON ENTERPRISE STAFF FILE PHOTO / MARK JARRET CHAVOUS

Former state rep: Deportations will create large workforce gaps

St. Fleur warns that mass deportations would leave critical sectors — hospitals, hospice care, social services and agriculture — struggling to fill workforce gaps. “Go anywhere in America today and take a look at the complexion and the ethnicity of the people who are taking care of the elderly across our country,” she said. “What happens when a lot of those folks are deported? Somebody’s got to do it.”


“There’s been fear when you don’t know what’s going to happen to you,” said Mona Louis Jacques, a Haitian mother with two children living in Boston. “We do have a lot of people that do not have papers, and a lot of them have children. “If you imagine a family of six, and then the mom and dad don’t have papers, and the children have papers, so the mom would leave the children behind. Who’s going to be taking care of those children? By deportation, it’s like sending us to a place where a lot of us don’t know — especially our children,

they don’t know the lifestyle there.” Trump previously sought to end Haiti’s TPS designation in 2017 and 2018, but federal courts blocked those attempts, citing insufficient evidence and inadequate review procedures. If Trump attempts to terminate TPS for Haitian migrants under his new administration, he will face a more rigorous legal process than when the status was first granted, according to Mary Holper, a clinical professor at Boston College Law School. “Any move to end TPS now requires a thorough, evidence-based review of conditions in Haiti to show that the reason why we designated TPS in the first place is gone, and it’s now safe for people to go back,” she said. “Apparently, Haiti isn’t.” Holper added that “you can’t just take it away without doing something a little bit more searching to see whether that’s a good decision.” “Your deliberation and your searching review of that has to actually be a searching deliberative review and not a predetermined conclusion that you’re like, ‘Get me to this result,’” she said.

State, local governments are poised to push back


State and local governments are preparing to push back against potential federal action. Boston, which has a large Haitian community, has already declared it will not cooperate with federal immigration officials. Mayor Michelle Wu reaffirmed that Boston police officers will not inquire about immigration status or assist Immigration and Customs Enforcement in routine deportation operations. “The Boston Trust Act puts strict prohibitions on local law enforcement from being pulled into becoming the enforcement arm for the whims of whatever the sort of approach of the federal immigration law might be.” Wu said. Immigration advocacy groups are also gearing up to oppose any TPS termination, citing the program’s importance in allowing migrants to fully participate in their community’s social, economic and civic life, work legally and contribute economically. Haitian migrants in the U.S. have become a vital part of industries like health care, construction and hospitality, particularly in Florida and Massachusetts.

If TPS is revoked, tens of thousands of Haitian migrants could lose their legal work authorization and face deportation. Large-scale deportations could create logistical challenges and exacerbate Haiti’s ongoing political instability, gang violence and humanitarian crises. “No matter whether you’re legal or not legal, there’s no such thing as legal or illegal people,” St. Fleur said. “It’s a narrative that we’ve created in this country. The world is owned by a higher power, and we need to stop the nonsense. “This is where we are, and so we’re creating fear.”



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TODAY 45° to 50° 41° to 46°
Cloudy, occasional rain; breezy, mild
RF: 29° to 34° / 38° to 43°

MONDAY 54° to 59° 32° to 37°
Morning rain; otherwise, mostly cloudy and milder
RF: 51° to 56° / 28° to 33°

TUESDAY 47° to 52° 35° to 40°
Mild with sun followed by increasing clouds
RF: 45° to 50° / 29° to 34°

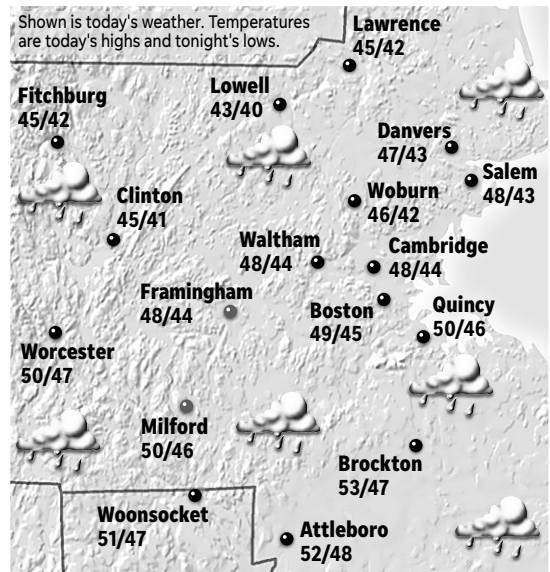
WEDNESDAY 44° to 49° 31° to 36°
Cloudy and mild with a chance of rain
RF: 43° to 48° / 21° to 26°

THURSDAY 35° to 40° 22° to 27°
Clearing and colder; breezy in the afternoon
RF: 22° to 27° / 9° to 14°

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	Today	Mon.	New	First	Full	Last
Sunrise	7:14 am	7:14 am				
Sunset	4:22 pm	4:23 pm				
Moonrise	6:27 am	7:25 am				
Moonset	2:51 pm	3:50 pm				

Forecasts and graphics provided by **AccuWeather, Inc.** ©2024

Sawin House

Continued from Page 1A

1696, and it was the first home built by a non-indigenous family. The home was built as part of an agreement with the Natick Praying Indians. The Sawins were gifted 50 acres of land. In exchange Thomas Sawin agreed to build a sawmill and gristmill to provide lumber and grind corn for the Praying Indians, a community indigenous Christian converts. Natick Heritage’s president is Henry Haugland. Town Moderator Frank Foss is treasurer. Sawin said the group hopes to meet with the Select Board on Jan. 8 and ask it to take the home by eminent domain. He said Town Meeting voters approved that measure in 2015. “We’re asking the town to take it and take a small footprint around the home so we can work on it and fix it,” Sawin said. Select Board Chair Kathryn Coughlin, in a previous interview, said she did not believe the board should take the home.

Natick Heritage spokesperson says ‘We’ll take all the risk’

Nevertheless, Sawin said the group hopes to convince the board. The cost to take the home would be minimal, he said, and the group could cover it. He said there is community support. A change.org petition to save the house had 590 signatures on Nov. 18; as of Dec. 23, that number has swelled to 1,014. “We’re not asking the town to take any risk and we’re not asking for Mass Audubon to take any risks,” Sawin said. “We’ll take all the risk.” Sawin said Natick Heritage wants to renovate and repair the home. It would be closed to the public and only viewable from the outside, except in rare circumstances. He said the group would either pay for repairs by fundraising or by applying for Community Preservation Act funds. He said if the group fails to achieve its goal, the home can revert back to Mass Audubon’s possession. “All we’re asking is to give us a chance,” he said. “If you give us a chance and we fail, you can have it back. We won’t fail.” *Norman Miller can be reached at 508-626-3823 or nmiller@wickedlocal.com. For up-to-date public safety news, follow him on X @Norman_MillerMW or on Facebook at [facebook.com/NormanMillerCrime](https://www.facebook.com/NormanMillerCrime).*

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