



THE VOICE

Winter 2026

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Honey Maid Grahams Reindeer Bark

By Aditi Yadav



Prep Time: 20 min. Total Time: 40 min.

Servings: 15

Directions

- 1.) Place grahams, with sides touching in 3 rows of 4 crackers each, on parchment-covered baking sheet.
- 2.) Pour melted chocolate evenly over grahams; spread to cover tops of grahams with chocolate.
- 3.) Top with pretzel pieces, candy eyeballs and red candy balls to resemble 15 reindeer heads as shown in photo. (link at bottom)
- 3.) Add sprinkles and nonpareils.

Refrigerate 20 min. or until melted chocolate is firm before breaking the bark into pieces to serve.

Ingredient list

- 12 HONEY MAID Honey Grahams
- 2 pkg. (4 oz. each) semi-sweet baking chocolate, melted
- 10 pretzel twists, each broken into 3 pieces
- 30 mini candy eyeballs (about 1 tsp.)
- 15 red candy-coated chocolate balls
- 1 tsp. snowflake sprinkles
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. white nonpareils

Information found at
<https://www.snackworks.com/recipes/honey-maid-grahams-reindeer-bark-431828/>

HAVE FUN!!!

ARTIST SPOTLIGHT



“A Sky Turned Red” – Political Cartoon by
Charlotte Ware

DISCLAIMER: The views expressed in the above cartoon are not reflective of that of The Voice. We strive to uphold a platform where every viewpoint has the opportunity to be represented.

Materials:

- MASON JAR
- ANY SNOWMAN OR WINTER FIGURE OF YOUR CHOICE
- GLITTER
- TACKY GLUE OR HOT GLUE GUN
- WATER

DIY SNOWGLOBE

BY KRISHNA AHIR

Instructions:

1.) Get the lid of your mason jar, and glue your snowman inside the lid facing up.

2.) Grab your mason jar and fill it with water and glitter.

3.) Glue the inner edges of the mason jar lid, screw it inside the jar, with the jar facing up, and the snowman facing down.

4.) Finally, twist your lid and voila!
An easy five minute snow globe!



Why We Shouldn't Punish Underage Substance Use

Maddie Knight

Everybody knows somebody. Someone was caught vaping in the bathrooms. Somebody was drinking at a party. Somebody did this or that. We've developed so much stigma towards underage substance use that we've become detached from empathy. I know people, as everyone does, but instead of pushing someone away like a nobody to be avoided, I see them. We're really good at judging people, but people have problems, some problems more evident than others. Others who let it show are sending a message, and we need to listen to it. The argument of not punishing students using substances in school deflects the unethical, absolutistic morality of the opposition. We need to stop punishing kids and actually help them.

My dog has arthritis. I don't remember specifically where, but it causes him to feel pain in his paws. To ease this, my dog, Frankie, spends much of his afternoons seemingly grooming them, but according to the vet, he's attempting to ease the pain. Unfortunately, this practice leads to his fur shedding off in the respective area. Frankie licking his paws is a coping mechanism. Would you lock him in a kennel for this behavior? Sure, it's bad for him; he's smart enough to observe cause-and-effect, but he is in pain. Would you give him detention, expulsion, or suspension? Would you take away his toys? Or, would you find the root of the problem? There are many reasons why teens use substances. Isolating vaping, 37.2% vape for taste, 23.5% to deal with boredom, 22.4% for a "good time," and 21.6% to relax (pms.com). A rational, healthy person does not wish harm upon themselves. Nicotine addiction and respiratory issues are known to be

harmful, yet students sacrifice their health and education for temporary stimulation. Vapers are not villains, but victims, victims of a society that has not only failed to provide them with the support to deter them from harming themselves, but counteractively seeks to punish, instead of protect. All reasons tie back to the impulse for positive stimuli. It's human nature: when something is negative, we seek out comfort. Students who find comfort in drugs need support in better places. Realizing that is the beginning of counteracting unhealthy behavior with help.

When discussing substance use in schools, discipline is pronounced as a natural consequence, but is it as effective as we believe? While some claim it is necessary to develop a negative association with the negative practice, this approach statistically sets the students up for failure. Brooke Kushwaha from Houstonlanging.org writes, "(in Texas) A 2022 survey by the National Center for Education Statistics found slightly more than 50 percent of U.S. public schools reported higher instances of student misconduct compared to 2019. Some of that increase, however, can also be attributed to a state law that went into effect in September 2023 requiring that students automatically be sent to a DAEP (Disciplinary Alternative Education Program) if they're caught using e-cigarettes on campus or at a school-related activity. Previously, school districts could discipline students for vaping at their own discretion." This well-intended program isn't as nice as it appears. Graduation rates of students attending these programs are 44%, and on top of that, more kids started to vape subsequent to the installation. ("Learning Curve: Severe school discipline spiked in Texas after pandemic, vaping law") DAEP, an environment that previously held students for assault or bringing weapons to school, escalated to isolating students who were only a danger to themselves. ("Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs - Behavior and Discipline").

People are not if-then statements; they are complex. A minor offense and lapse in judgment should not define a child, for what we learn young, we learn for life. Vaping should be treated as a warning sign, not a battle cry. This seemingly rebellious behavior indicates struggle, and their chosen coping mechanism equates to self-harm. Whether they don't care or don't realize the harms behind vaping or using substances while underdeveloped, isolating them from society in programs intended for intense cases indicates to the child that the system pushes people like them away. This cements a protective stance towards substance abuse, as it is their only positive association. Programs such as Catch My Breath seek to combat this. Through community programs, they are able to prevent experimentation with vaping by 50%. ("Vaping Education in Schools - Vaping Education Resources") Actual science-based methods of substance-abuse aversion are the way to go. Continuing to punish students in ways that contradict logic is sadistic.

Everybody knows somebody. These are not just logistics that grow and shrink. Somebodies are children, they are neighbors, and friends. They are essential workers and the homeless. They are part of all of us, but they all were once children, too. They could've been embraced, but they chose a deteriorative escape. The victims of today deserve to see hope for a better future. I've seen kids get punished and stop using out of fear. Halting bad behavior out of fear of consequence does not correct the behavior, but takes away their only perceived positive comfort, leaving them prone to making choices in adulthood to ignorantly dangerous extents. I know people. We all know someone. But I've heard worst-case scenarios, and I've seen people walk the delicate line. True security will only reach somebody if we mold the system to reflect responsive, assertive empathy -Maddie Knight



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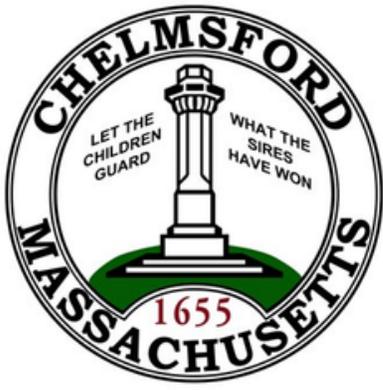
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Winter Wonderland

S	Z	R	J	B	U	G	I	G	L	O	O	E	F
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F	I	S	Q	I	D	J	R	I	E	K	O	J	O
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S	E	O	T	O	K	N	G	B	O	O	C	T	X
M	Y	W	Q	S	H	O	V	E	L	W	L	M	I
D	A	G	S	N	O	W	D	A	Y	M	E	C	T
N	V	C	M	I	T	T	E	N	S	A	T	Z	O
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- SCARF
- SNOWMAN
- HOCKEY
- CHILLY
- MITTENS
- IGLOO
- SKIING
- WINTER
- SNOWFLAKE
- FREEZE
- FROST
- SHIVER
- SHOVEL
- ICICLE
- JACKET





Chelmsford Local — Elections —

By Samhita Badhri and Jhanvi Kichannagari

Hi everyone! Although the snow has just started to melt away, welcome to the Winter edition of Five O'clock Tea: A segment of The Voice where we interview impactful people to better understand and appreciate the Chelmsford Community

This April, Chelmsford residents will cast their ballots for the local town elections. While they may not get as much attention as national races, these often have the most direct impact on our daily lives. For us students, those who hold positions in the School Committee and Board of Library Trustees impact our everyday activities making decisions on school policies, budgets, curriculum, and community resources. As election season approaches, it is crucial for voters--especially students who are or will soon be eligible to vote--to understand who the candidates are and what they stand for.

In this edition of Five O'clock Tea, we reached out to all candidates in the contested School Committee and Board of Library of trustees election to better understand their credentials, motivations, and goals for their respective committees. The School Committee primarily oversees the schools' annual budget, develops school systems policies, hires and reviews the performance of the Superintendent, and advocates for the school system at a local and state level. The Board of Library trustees similarly oversees library policies, funding, and advocates for the library, also working with the library to ensure that the institution and its initiatives reflect the needs and values of the community. Members of both Boards hold three year terms.

Readers, we encourage you to read each candidate's response and consider--taking a few minutes to learn about candidates is a simple way to stay connected with what is happening in the community. Check that you're registered to vote by March 27th at 5pm and head to the Town of Chelmsford Website to check your precinct and polling location. To those eligible to vote, be sure to do so either by mail or in person on April 7th! No matter what, it is crucial to stay up to date regarding town projects and meetings--the more we know, the more we can use our voices to support the community we care for!



Board Of Library Trustees

Candidates: Sean Thibodeau, Josh Wimble, Kevin Hamilton, Adam Schertzer

Why are you running for this position?

Sean Thibodeau: I am a huge book nerd. My budget couldn't support my book-buying habit, so thank goodness for libraries. On a serious note, libraries are not just about books - they are about people. I want to get involved and contribute what I can to my community. This position is one where I could apply my skillset.

Josh Wimble: I've been serving on the board since 2022, first on the Associate Board, and now on the advisory board. I have two young children (3 year old twins) and we use the library very often for programming like story times and because they LOVE checking out books. I'm very interested in helping to keep the library a place where people can come to learn, interact with other members of the community, and can get access to services to enrich their lives.

Kevin Hamilton: I am running for re-election to the Board of Library Trustees to support, enhance, and advocate for this beloved Chelmsford institution and the staff who serve our entire community. At 24 years old, I bring fresh ideas and a new generation's perspective to the Board, but with nearly five years of service already behind me, I also bring the experience and knowledge of a seasoned Trustee. I want to continue strengthening our Library as a welcoming space for learning, connection, and opportunity for all.

Adam Schertzer: I've had a wonderful experience serving on the board for the past 9 years, supporting the Director and staff of the library. I love being part of a team that cares about the town and its residents.

What relevant experience do you feel you bring to this role?

Sean Thibodeau: I have a Masters in Library Science and over 15 years experience working in community outreach and management in public libraries in Massachusetts, and look forward to advocating for the library on a local and state level.

Josh Wimble: I've been serving on the associate board and advisory board for about 4 years. During this time I helped form the advisory board that exists today and have been present for many important events such as helping to hire the current library director, Lesley. I've been very fortunate to get to learn so much about the library, how the board functions, and how it's an important part of the town to so many people. Outside of my time at the library I have had the chance to interact with many different corporate boards through my day job as a chemical engineer. I have a lot of experience helping to make decisions to help organizations stay on track and I love getting to do the same with the library.

Kevin Hamilton: With nearly five years of experience on the Board, I have developed a strong understanding of library governance, responsible fiscal stewardship, and the community needs that shape the Board's work and priorities. This year, in my role as Chair, I have facilitated productive Board discussions and helped guide decisions that support the Library's long-term success.

Board Of Library Trustees

Through my work at Fidelity Investments, I have gained a broad and adaptable foundation in risk analysis and governance as an Associate in the LEAD Program, a two-year leadership development program that includes four intensive rotations across Fidelity's risk, compliance, and audit functions. Beyond my core responsibilities, I also manage Fidelity's Summer Fellowship Program, a high-impact internship experience designed to expand access to financial services for high school students from underrepresented communities in Boston.

I graduated as valedictorian from the College of the Holy Cross in 2024 with a bachelor's degree in Political Science and Spanish, where my passion for public service was strengthened. While there, I served as Student Body President, advocating for students through collaboration with peers, faculty, and college administration while managing a \$1.2 million budget.

I graduated from CHS in 2020 as salutatorian, where I led the National Honor Society, sang with the Thursdays a cappella group, and performed on stage with the Theater Guild.

Adam Schertzer: 9 years experience coupled with continuing to look for new ways to improve the library and its services.

If elected, what do you hope to accomplish/what are your top priorities?

Sean Thibodeau: My main priority is to protect the right to read. I want to make sure that anyone in our community can go to the library and find books on subjects that are relevant and interesting to them. Libraries are spaces where we can meet new people, learn, and grow. I'd like to help the Chelmsford library continue to expand their exceptional programs, services and collections.

Josh Wimble: One of the things I've enjoyed the most over the last few years was helping to update the library's strategic plan. This is an important document which helps articulate the goals of the library and how we want to interact with the public. I'm very excited to help bring some of the vision of the strategic plan to reality -- in particular helping to create a space where the members of our diverse community can come together. Increasing access to the physical library and library services is something I'm passionate about. I'm also excited to think about how we can get a broader range of people's access.

Kevin Hamilton: The Chelmsford Public Library is a best-in-class community institution. The Library Director and staff offer unparalleled services to our residents, and my top priority is to support them in the work they do each day for the patrons they know best. I also hope to continue working with the Board and Library staff to reach members of our community who may not yet have found us but could benefit from the services we provide.

The Library is more than just books - it is free access to knowledge, opportunity, and connection. As a hub for information, the Library can also play a unique role in promoting civic engagement in our community. I hope to partner with Library staff to create opportunities for residents to engage more deeply in local government and to expand the Board's outreach to other Town boards and committees.

Board Of Library Trustees

Adam Schertzer: Continued support of the library director and staff while bringing new ways the library can serve our community

What role should the public library play in our community and how will you advocate for student involvement and engagement with it?

Sean Thibodeau: I believe public libraries are a critical foundational block for a democratic society. They are a community gathering place, and they support the information and social needs of persons in all stages of life. I've always loved libraries. When I was 17, I had a high school internship at my local public library and I found the experience rewarding. I want to make sure we're welcoming students in and giving them a place to be themselves, and explore the world of ideas.

Josh Wimble: I believe that one of the most important parts of the library's strategic plan is creating a space where everyone can feel safe and welcome. The library in Chelmsford serves more functions than just providing books for so many people -- printing services for important documents, tax preparation help, groups and events for people to connect in their community... and so much more. Since we don't have a community center the library ends up being that place for many and I think protecting that is an important part of what the board does.

As part of my time serving on the associate board we helped create the student representative position which I think brings a great set of new view points to our board and our student representatives so far have come up with some great ideas about how we can get students more involved with the library.

Kevin Hamilton: The Library is a place for all to learn, grow, and find belonging. We have resources and programming that help students succeed, but student engagement allows us to better understand and meet the needs of Chelmsford's youth. During my tenure on the Board, I led the creation of a student representative position at Chelmsford High, giving students the opportunity to participate in Board discussions, bring new perspectives, gain hands-on civic experience, and help us better understand their needs. I look forward to continuing to work with the student representatives to further engage students and highlight the resources that support their learning.

Adam Schertzer: It has been wonderful having a student rep at our meetings and being able to have a younger person's perspective. Not only do we learn from them, but it's a great way for them to see local government in action.

School Committee

Candidates: Susan Mackinnon, Dennis King, Lauren Cochran

1. Why are you running for the School Committee:

Lauren Cochran: I'm running for School Committee because I believe our schools thrive when policy decisions are grounded in transparency, accountability, and genuine collaboration with the people who make education happen every day: students, families, educators, and taxpayers. The School Committee does not manage classrooms or individual staff. That responsibility belongs to the Superintendent and school leaders. But the Committee *does* hold critical responsibilities: hiring and evaluating the Superintendent, setting policy and long-term direction, overseeing and approving the budget, engaging in strategic planning, and representing the community's values and priorities. I take those responsibilities seriously. My goal is to listen first, understand concerns directly from those affected, and make decisions that balance academic excellence, fiscal responsibility, and community values.

Susan Mackinnon: Strong Schools = Strong Communities. I believe in education. I have been involved in education since I was 5! As a student, as a teacher, as a volunteer, now as an advocate within our government. I believe my passion and my experience put me in a position to have knowledgeable oversight and influence on the direction our school system takes. My first term helped me solidify my understanding of the role of a School Committee member and I believe it is within a second term that I can be most effective in continuing my work on initiatives that are important.

Dennis King: I am running for reelection to the school committee, having already served 3 terms. In the 9 years that I have served, the school committee has been involved in the many initiatives that have taken place. In the high school alone we have increased course offerings including dual enrollment courses, career exploration and internship programs and innovation pathway programs. We have also reduced student activity fees and eliminated parking fees. I am running again because I feel the schools are at a critical point. Town finances are strained and we need leaders in town government that understand budgets and have shown the ability to use town funds wisely. We are wrapping up on a strategic plan that has guided a lot of the work in the district for the past four years and we will need to work on developing a new strategic plan for the next 5 years. Recently we have been accepted into a State program that will allow us to build a new school in Chelmsford for the first time in over 50 years. This building will also allow us to relieve projected overcrowding issues in the future. With all that has been accomplished and all that needs to be accomplished I feel that we need school committee members with the knowledge and experience to do this.

School Committee

What relevant experience do you feel you bring to this role?

Lauren Cochran (from her website Lauren4Chelmsford): Cochran has served as Executive Director of the Chelmsford Center for the Arts since 2023, where she creates arts programming such as concerts, theatre, writer's group, and more while managing behind-the-scenes operations (managing CCA finances, personnel, rental agreements, vendors, artists' contracts), and overseeing major building upgrades and renovations. From 1997 to 2023, she taught at Chelmsford High School, serving three years as CFT Union President, successfully negotiating contracts for staff and teachers, creating new curricula, raising funds for a Theatre Guild storage shed, and co-creating the Listening Lunch Series, while also working as CHS Activities Director for three years, Parker Middle School Show Choir Director for one year, and McCarthy 6th Grade General Music teacher for one year. Earlier in her career, she taught as St. Polycarp School as a 6th grade teacher at East Somerville Community (K-8 General Music), and at Southern Junior High School (General music).

Susan Mackinnon: I have been a Chelmsford resident for over 40 years. I co-parented four children through the Chelmsford school system. They all graduated from CHS. My grandson is currently a student at one of the middle schools. While my children were students I was active in the PTOs and the Council of Chelmsford Schools. I was chair of the Board of Trustees of the charter school. I am an elected Town Meeting Representative. I am proud to be one of the founding members of the town Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee. Serving on the Strategic Plan Steering Committee for the Town of Chelmsford helped me understand how the School Committee and the School Department fit into the overall running of the town. I was elected to the School Committee in 2023.

I hold a B.A. in Elementary and Special Education from Boston College, a M.Ed. in Special Education from Lesley University, and a Graduate Certificate in Autism Studies from UMASS Lowell. I held MA teacher licensure in Elementary Education, Early Childhood Education, and Special Education.

My teaching career started in a private school for children with moderate to severe disabilities in Lawrence. Following that I taught preschool at a small center in Westford. Next I worked for the Maynard Public Schools as a Special Needs Integrated Preschool teacher in a program much like CHIPS. I began working for the Chelmsford Public Schools in 2001, first as a K-1 Special Education teacher, then as a general ed Kindergarten teacher, and a First Grade teacher. I also assisted at summer school in a classroom for autistic children. As you can imagine, I am well versed in curriculum and the daily lives of students and teachers!

Dennis King: I have been a Chelmsford resident for over 40 years. I attended Chelmsford High School and am a proud graduate of the class of 1983. I raised my 3 children in Chelmsford and they all attended Chelmsford Public Schools. Professionally, I have been a high school science teacher and department chair for 38 years. I coached high school sports for over 30 years and started my coaching career as an assistant wrestling coach at CHS in the early 90's.

Besides serving on the school committee, I has been a town meeting rep for 9 years, served on the Town's Capital Committee and on the recently formed Parker Middle School building committee

School Committee

3. If elected, what do you hope to accomplish/what are your top priorities?

Lauren Cochran: My goal is to listen first, understand concerns directly from those affected, and make decisions that balance academic excellence, fiscal responsibility, and community values.

Susan Mackinnon:

#1 - Guiding the Chelmsford School to be the best in terms of Academics and Curriculum. My passion is Early Literacy. Cognitive Science shows that a curriculum grounded in phonics and word structure is the most effective way to teach children to read. I am committed to my goal of guiding CPS to make curriculum choices based on the research and to provide essential Professional Development to teachers in the Science of Reading.

#2) - Special Education review

I have been involved in the process of redefining and shaping the role of paraeducators in our classrooms. I have been vocal during School Committee meetings and Strategic Plan meetings about examining the roles of Special Education teachers as well to be sure that students are receiving direct instruction from the best possible educators. I will continue to focus on this as a priority for the next 5 year plan.

#3) School Culture and SEL

As I stated earlier Strong Schools = Strong Communities. Schools are small societies. It is important that students learn to work together and treat each other well. Schools play a large role in helping students learn how to be part of a community. Every student and teacher needs to feel that they belong and are welcomed at school. We have policies in place that make it clear that harassment and bullying are not allowed. I also know that incidents that cause harm do occur and I aim to make sure that the schools follow best practices to educate and remediate when they do. I aim to take a continual look at students' and teachers' experiences to make sure that CPS IS a welcoming place.

Dennis King: Discussed above in question 1

What aspects of the Chelmsford School System do you dislike or believe could be improved?

Lauren Cochran: In recent years, I've heard from many educators who feel there is a lack of open communication between administration and staff. Some teachers have even expressed fear about speaking honestly with their administrators. When communication breaks down, trust erodes, and students ultimately pay the price.

- Academic excellence (is technology or too much of it affecting brain development? I've been studying this as reading scores are going down)- I support tech just how much and when?
- Teacher Morale - as a former CFT Union President, I feel that teachers and staff are key -and I support them wholeheartedly - a belief in administration that will support teachers (and no need for so many administrators).
- Fiscal Responsibility and transparency

Susan Mackinnon:

I believe that our Special Education services could be improved by employing more Special Education teachers who are well versed in curriculum content. I would like to hire more teachers so that more students could receive direct instruction by Special Education teachers working alongside General Education teachers. Of course this requires money, so it is not so easily done.

Dennis King: I am very proud of where the Chelmsford Schools are today. In comparison to the towns around us we have some of the strongest academic programs, highest test results, best extracurricular and sports programs and we accomplish all of this with some of the lowest state funding. As is the case in districts across the State we are still trying to recover from some of the losses in academic time that students experienced during COVID by increasing support for students and for teachers. We will continue to evaluate our curriculum across all grade levels to make sure that it best fits the needs of today's learners. We will also continue to monitor the latest changes in education including the use of Artificial Intelligence to make sure that it is being used as a tool rather than replacing learning

Final Messages from Candidates!

Susan Mackinnon: For more information you could follow my page on Facebook! Search for: Susan Mackinnon for School Committee

Dennis King: I would encourage anyone that is able to vote this spring to do so. It is through voting that you can put your vision of what you think your home town should be like into action. When it comes to the School Committee, if you are looking for someone with the knowledge and experience to help keep the Chelmsford Schools strong and move them into the future I would kindly ask you for one of your votes in April

Sean Thibodeau: Thank you for your consideration.

Josh Wimble: I'm very excited for the upcoming election and getting to see all of the other great candidates serving Chelmsford!

Kevin Hamilton: I love this community and the library that sits at its heart. It has been an honor to serve, and I humbly ask for your vote on April 7 so I can continue working for a library that welcomes, inspires, and brings people together.

Adam Schertzer: Your vote in local elections makes a huge difference in your community so I encourage everyone to vote.