



Jake Adelman wins 100th career wrestling match

SPORTS, 1B

The MILFORD DAILY NEWS

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Sylvia Kaczor tries out the "Soundscape" attraction filled with lights and mirrors at Level99, a new entertainment complex for adults at the Natick Mall, June 17. Kaczor is a bartender at Level99.

PHOTOS BY KEN MCGAGH/DAILY NEWS AND WICKED LOCAL STAFF

Green initiatives coming to Milford Town Park

Alison Bosma The Milford Daily News
USA TODAY NETWORK

MILFORD — Residents will likely see construction, driven by environmental initiatives, at the Town Park within a year.

The Town Park, surrounded by Congress, Walnut, School and Spruce streets, is expected to get an infiltration system and two rain gardens through a state grant program.

The park was one of the top five — of 69 total — locations identified in Milford for stormwater treatment systems, according to the Charles River Watershed Association which prepared the grant application on Milford's behalf.

The town, like most municipalities

See PARK, Page 7A

FROM SEARS TO SURREAL

New Natick Mall entertainment complex is a Wonderland for adults

Alison Bosma The Milford Daily News | USA TODAY NETWORK

NATICK — Anthony Valleau leapt from a narrow beam into what looked like the hold of a pirate ship Thursday afternoon.

As dramatic music played overhead and lights cleverly mimicked water below, he spun around to grab his wife's hand, successfully pulling her to safety, just as she lost her balance to the plank jerking beneath her feet.

The couple was playing through one of 43 challenge rooms inside Level99, an entertainment complex geared toward adults that opened last week at the Natick Mall.

Using the space previously occupied by Sears, the creators behind Level99 designed a 48,000-square-foot Wonderland of food, drink, art and hands-on entertainment that would make even the Cheshire Cat's jaw drop.

"This is, to some degree, a fulfillment of 100 different childhood fantasies," said CEO Matt DuPlessie.

Doors of every description around every corner open into rooms without instructions. Players have sometimes as little as a minute to figure out a room's puzzle and solve it. Some challenges are more physical, while others are mental exercises.

See COMPLEX, Page 7A



Above: Visitors enter Level99, a new entertainment complex for adults, at the Natick Mall. Left: Matt Orser, 21, of Ashland, tries out Playback, a backward Simon Says-type of activity.

Polar Park evolves

Not all is finished, but amenities beyond fences continue to take shape

Bill Ballou
Special to Worcester Telegram & Gazette
USA TODAY NETWORK

WORCESTER — The Worcester Red Sox roster seems to change by the day, and so it is with their ballpark.

Polar Park is open for baseball and has been extremely well received, but it is hardly finished. The team offices on the top floor are still just a dream, and the team's non-uniformed personnel are literally working by the seat

See EVOLVES, Page 8A

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Visitors exit through a tunnel at Level99, a new entertainment complex for adults at the Natick Mall on June 17. PHOTOS BY KEN MCGAGH/DAILY NEWS AND WICKED LOCAL STAFF



Visitors enter Playback, a backward Simon Says-kind of activity.

Complex

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A snake made of light glides across the floor of an Aztec temple while a timer ticks down, and stone-like totems scowl with glowing red eyes. In another room, players scuttle over obstacles and avoid spinning, sweeping poles, trying to hit as many lit buttons as possible. Yet another is full of suspended white lights, their soft illumination magnified by mirror-like walls, while clear domes in the ceiling funnel a unique sound to the person immediately underneath.

Laughter, cheers and shouts, from both the triumphant and the momentarily thwarted, could be heard from the rooms on Thursday. DuPlessie said he already has interest from dozens of corporations looking to use the space for team-building.

"None of this is off the shelf," he said, gesturing around him. "This is all custom-built for this location."

Outside the rooms, a roughly quarter-million-dollar investment into art — largely from Massachusetts artists — is a treat, too. A pair of huge carrots creates the shadow of a rabbit on the floor, the Mona Lisa's eyes literally follow

people from her place on the wall, hot air balloons collide with lightning-infused clouds near the ceiling, and small monkeys and other creatures hang in astronaut suits by the bar.

"You can walk around with a glass of wine or beer in your hand and take it all in," DuPlessie said.

Or, he added, you can partake in the complex-wide scavenger hunt.

In addition to the rooms, there are seven "arena" games, where players face off in one-on-one challenges in full view of the open floor. Several of these look like art pieces themselves.

"They're designed to be a spectacle, in the middle of the space," DuPlessie said.

The whole idea is at least three years in the making the CEO said, with challenges designed by his Norwood company, Box Fort. The 43 rooms grew from paper to prototype to field tests before they materialized in Natick.

"It's pretty surreal," DuPlessie said Thursday, of the final masterpiece. "Since many of them had been an artist's rendering three years ago, and now they are here."

Then there's the food and drink. "We really wanted to do an elevated menu, where people would come for the food," DuPlessie said. "Where we would

stand out from a mall food court."

The Night Shift Brewing Taproom, Kitchen and Beer Hall, a separate and sizable restaurant, is near the entrance, and another section of tables is a little further into the complex. Little Branch Hospitality, the company behind Boston's Shy Bird, Eastern Standard and Branch Line, creates the food, which restaurateur Andrew Holden describes as "familiar made fantastic."

"(These are) not categories of food that are brand-new to anybody," Holden said of the menu of pizza, sandwiches and salads. "But it's ... adding a real culinary touch to them."

Hungry players can try dishes that feature chili butter, tagine seasoning, lime zest and toasted farro. There's a coffee-rubbed short rib sandwich, Korean fried chicken, rosemary truffle fries, and pizza toppings include wild mushrooms, honey, tomato-fig jam and arugula pesto.

"When people read it, they're intrigued a little," head chef Nemo Bolin said.

Located at 1235 Worcester St., Ste #3330 in Natick, Level99 is open 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Sunday through Thursday, and 11 a.m. to midnight on Friday and Saturday. Admission is \$29.99 for 2 hours, \$39.99 for 4 hours, and \$49.99 for



Anthony Valleau, of Weymouth, and his wife, Jence Salas, try out the Pirate's Plank.

the whole day, per person.

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Park

Continued from Page 1A

in the state, must raise a significant amount of money to align with the federal Environmental Protection Agency's Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System regulations, often abbreviated to MS4.

This project would bring the town closer to meeting those regulations, but is not expected to use town dollars.

"The goal of this work at Milford Town Park is to help recharge groundwater, somewhat reduce flooding ... meeting the town's goals under the MS4 permit, and capturing other pollutants," Charles River Watershed Association's Janet Moonan told the Planning Board last week.

Milford is also trying to solve a phosphorus runoff issue into the Charles Riv-

er, and has a goal of removing 1,000 pounds per year from runoff before it hits the river. The Town Park projects are expected to remove about 25 pounds per year, and an existing retaining pond at Dilla and Sumner streets removes 10 or 11 pounds per year, Town Engineer Michael Dean said.

If all 69 locations identified for stormwater treatment systems see their projects completed, the Charles River Watershed Association presentation said, phosphorus removal would total about 650 pounds per year.

At the Town Park, an infiltration chamber will be installed underground by the basketball court along Walnut Street, a rain garden next to the tennis courts, and another rain garden close to Spruce Street.

"It actually fixes a drainage problem that's been existing over on the Spruce Street side of the park," Dean told Planning Board members last week.

The infiltration system will do the majority of the phosphorus reduction, Moonan said, while the rain gardens will be more visible and educational.

"A secondary goal is to help build support for the town's investment in the drainage system," she said. "This is the third utility and there is money needing to be spent on it."

Part of the reason the Town Park was chosen is because it's located within easy walking distance of both an elementary school and a middle school, making it possible to incorporate the new elements into lesson plans. It's also a centrally located, public place, where residents may learn from reading educational signs as they walk by.

The state's Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Action grant will cover about \$419,000 of the estimated \$443,000 design and construction total, though Moonan admitted last week that the estimate might be low.

The Charles River Watershed Association kicked in an additional \$163,000.

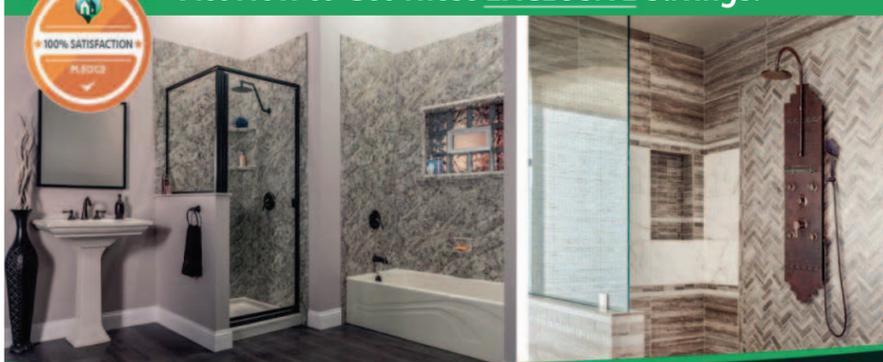
Maintenance is expected to be simple, Moonan said, with some mowing and planting needed, and will be a state-required component of the plan. As of now, the local garden club has shown interest, and middle school students may care for the rain gardens as part of their classes.

The Charles River Watershed Association has already spoken with all of Milford middle school classes, she said.

The timeline isn't yet final, though Moonan said the project is in the 75% design phase now, and design finalization and construction is expected to happen next fiscal year. As of now, it is expected to be complete by June 30, 2022.

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